



DRUŽBOSLOVNE RAZPRAVE

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 - McAuliffe, Cameron (2015): Graffiti Sessions: The Art and Justice of Sociable Cities. Graffiti Dialogues. YouTube, 15. 1. 2015. Dostopno prek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dufgmQrNy8&list=PLAUgzWv9VJnZ2teo0Tq7JSID3b68Fyg1> (13. 10. 2020).
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UVOD

INTRODUCTION



Dragi bralci, drage bralke!

»Končno«, bi nekateri upravičeno rekli: v rokah/na zaslonih imate dvojno aprilsko & septembrsko številko letošnje prve izdaje revije DR/SSF. Obsežen zvezek, v katerem tokrat izrazito prevladujejo prispevki v angleškem jeziku, vključuje osem izvirnih znanstvenih člankov, ki so nastali kot delo enajstih avtoric in avtorjev z različnih strokovnih področij, različnih afiliacij tako znotraj kot tudi zunaj Univerze v Ljubljani. Gre torej za mednarodno paleto sodelujočih, ki so uspešno prestali vse uredniške postopke. Veseli smo, da so postali del naše skupne revijalne zgodbe.

Dvojno številko odpirata samostojna znanstvena članka dveh domačih avtoric – Hajdeje Iglič in Teje Kosi –, oba v angleškem jeziku. Prvi se vsebinsko sprašuje o (ne)moči populizmov v sodobnih političnih arenah, ki jih zaznamuje interval levo–desno–sredina, drugi pa se vprašanja (ne)moči loteva skozi specifično zaznavo (ženske) bolečine. Številko kot običajno zatvarja seznam recenzij knjig, za katere mojstrsko skrbi Rok Smrdelj.

Večina tokratnih prispevkov sodi v posebno tematsko številko z naslovom »Spominske študije za ljudi: Marksizem in popularna kultura v sodobnih pristopih k študijem spomina«, ki sta jo souredila gostujoči urednik Gal Kirn ter glavna sourednica in sourednica številke Natalija Majsova, za kar se jima v imenu celotne uredniške ekipe toplo zahvaljujemo. Vsebinsko raznolik, a z izbranim fokusom poenoten nabor prispevkov, ki so podrobneje opisani v posebnem uvodniku k tematski številki, prinaša svež, aktualen in za mnoge tudi precej specifičen pogled na vprašanja (kolektivnega) spomina, njegove morebitne aktualizacije ter potencialne teoretske in konceptualne moči. Šest člankov omenjenega sklopa namreč tematizira vrsto zanimivih dilem – od vloge sodobne popkulture in digitalnih platform pa vse do (ne)mogočih srečanj marksističnih teorij s študijami spomina.

Preden vas prepustimo branju posameznih prispevkov, naj na kratko orišemo nekaj razlik med običajno, »navadno« številko revije DR/SSF, in »tematsko« številko, in sicer predvsem z vidika morebitnih prednosti, slabosti in neljubih pasti. Pri slednjih ne gre toliko za osebne uredniške izkušnje, ampak nanje opozarjajo nekateri strokovni viri, ki na izjemen porast in popularizacijo tematskih števil v mednarodnih revijah gledajo vse bolj kritično. Če za običajno številko po navadi velja, da je rezultat načela »kar pride in gre skozi, se objavi«, so tematske številke vnaprej skrbno pripravljene in kurirane zbirke dogovorjenih člankov: okvirno temo, prispevke, izvlečke in cilje tematskega sklopa sicer predhodno odobri celoten uredniški odbor revije; in šele ko imajo gostujoči uredniki »zeleno luč od

zgoraj«, lahko nadaljujejo z zasnovanim delom. V tem trenutku se denimo na ta način vzporedno z zaključevanjem sedanje pripravlja še ena, zadnja tematska številka tega letnika, ki bo objavljena predvidoma decembra.

Sodelovanje gostujočih urednikov se zdi predvsem razbremenitev uredništva, saj sami poskrbijo za rekrutacijo avtorjev in urejajo roke za oddajo prispevkov, čeprav pri reviji DR/SSF vztrajamo pri varovalni praksi, da je recenzentki postopek vedno trdno v rokah uredništva. Ena od ključnih prednosti posebnih tematskih števil naj bi bila njihova večja branost in posledično citiranost. Če so dobro zastavljene, ponujajo tudi priložnost za pridobivanje vrhunskih avtorjev, povečajo geografsko raznolikost in posledično izboljšajo profil same revije. Pa vendar, kot opozarjajo nekateri, prinašajo posebne izdaje tudi svojevrstna tveganja – nosijo določeno etično ranljivost, sprožajo dvome o predhodnih postopkih in kakovosti izdaj, zaradi morebitnih zamud pa se kakovost lahko tu in tam ukloni priročnosti, sploh če ta postane pomembnejša od nadzora.

V imenu uredniške ekipe lahko zagotovimo, da vsaj doslej s pripravami tematskih števil nismo imeli slabih izkušenj; prej bi rekli nasprotno. Kar pa zaznavamo kot novost, ki jo bomo naslovili še pred iztekom našega mandata, so delno konfuzna ali vsaj ne dovolj jasna navodila za pripravo prispevkov – takšne odzive dobivamo predvsem od avtorjev in avtoric, ki delujejo v tujini in se v naši kulturi akademskega pisanja očitno slabo znajdejo. Obljubljamo, da bomo skušali upoštevati njihove tegobe in predloge za izboljšave smelo predali naslednji ekipi revije DR/SSF.

Sicer pa nasvidenje spet decembra, do takrat pa vam želimo prijetno branje dvojne pomladno-jesenske številke!

Tanja Oblak Črnič in Natalija Majsova

Dear readers,

“Finally”, as some would be right in saying: in your hands/on your screens you now have the double April & September issue of this year’s first edition of the DR/SSF journal. This comprehensive volume, which mostly features English-language contributions, includes 8 original scientific articles written by 11 authors from various fields of expertise and affiliations both within and outside the University of Ljubljana. We are delighted that this international group of contributors has become part of the journal’s ongoing efforts to present high-level academic insights.

The double issue begins with two independent scientific articles (in English) by two Slovenian authors: Hajdeja Iglič and Teja Kosi. The first one examines the (un)power of populism in contemporary political arenas characterised by a left–right–centre divide, while the second approaches the question of (un)power via a specific perception of (female) pain. As usual, the issue concludes with a list of book reviews, masterfully curated by Rok Smrdelj.

Most contributions this time belong to a special thematic issue entitled »Memory studies for the people: Marxism, and popular culture in contemporary approaches to memory studies«, co-edited by guest editor Gal Kirn and chief editor and co-editor Natalija Majsova, whose efforts are greatly appreciated by the entire editorial team. The diverse, yet focused collection of articles, as described in greater detail in a separate editorial for the thematic issue, offers fresh, topical, and for many also quite specific insights into the questions of (collective) memory, the possibility of actualising it, and the potential theoretical and conceptual power it holds. The six articles in this section address several interesting dilemmas, ranging from the role of contemporary pop culture and digital platforms to the (im)possibility of Marxist theories accommodating memory studies.

Before we leave you to read the individual articles, let us briefly mention a few differences between a regular, ‘normal’ issue of the DR/SSF journal and a “thematic” issue in terms of possible advantages, disadvantages, and unpleasant pitfalls. The latter are based not so much on personal editorial experience, but have been described by professional sources that are increasingly critical of the remarkable growth and popularisation of theme-based issues in academic journals. What appears in a normal issue is typically a result of the “whatever comes in and goes through is published” principle while, in contrast, thematic issues are carefully prepared and compiled collections of articles agreed ahead of time: the general theme, contributions, abstracts and objectives of the theme-based

section are approved in advance by the journal's entire editorial board. Guest editors must receive the "green light from above" before they can continue with their planned work. For instance, right now, apart from completing this issue, another final theme-based journal is being prepared (expected to be published in December).

Even though the editorial staff are happy to be relieved of some of their journal-related tasks when guest editors are involved, given that the guests take care of recruiting authors and setting deadlines for the submission of contributions, at the DR/SSF journal a precautionary practice is in place that the review process always remains in the hands of the editorial staff. A key advantage of special thematic issues is that they appeal to larger numbers of readers and, in turn, higher rates of citation. When such issues are designed well, they also provide an opportunity to attract leading authors, expand geographical diversity, and thereby improve the prominence of the journal itself. However, as some have noted, special issues also bring particular risks – they are associated with a certain level of ethical vulnerability, raise doubts concerning previous procedures, and the overall quality of issues, whereas delays can sometimes cause quality to take a back seat to convenience, especially when it is time to go to print.

Nevertheless, the editorial team is happy to say that, at least so far, we have avoided any bad experiences while preparing the thematic issues; in fact, quite the contrary. One new aspect we have perceived, and will address before our term comes to an end, are the somewhat confusing or at least insufficiently clear author instructions for preparing contributions. We generally receive feedback along those lines from authors who work abroad and are obviously not familiar with our domestic culture of academic writing and wish to submit articles in different formats. We not only promise to take their concerns into account, but will also pass their suggestions for improvement on to the next team at the DR/SSF journal.

See you again in December. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy reading the double spring-autumn issue!

Tanja Oblak Črnič and Natalija Majsova



ČLANKI

ARTICLES



Hajdeja Iglič

POPULISM WITHIN THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: RIGHT, LEFT ... AND CENTRE

ABSTRACT

The article examines populism from the perspective of political demand, concentrating on analysis of populist attitudes held by the Slovenian population. The article opens with a conceptual discussion, addressing the debate on whether populist attitudes should be defined and measured across two or three dimensions. The study then investigates how populists position themselves on the political spectrum, seeking to determine whether populist attitudes transcend the traditional left–right political divide. Contrary to the general trend observed across European countries, the findings suggest that in Slovenia populist voters are largely situated at the political centre, with populist attitudes showing notable convergence between the centre and the far-right. The critical line dividing these two groups appears in their views on social inequality. The research was conducted online in early 2023.

KEY WORDS: populism, populist attitudes, measuring populism, populism in Slovenia

Populizem na političnem zemljevidu: desno, levo ... in v sredini

IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava populizem z vidika političnega povpraševanja, pri čemer se osredotoča na analizo populističnih stališč prebivalstva v Sloveniji. Prispevek odpremo s konceptualno razpravo, ki naslavlja vprašanja o tem, kako opredeliti in meriti populistična stališča. V nadaljevanju raziskujemo, kako se populisti umeščajo v slovenski politični prostor in ali presegajo tradicionalno levo-desno politično razlikovanje. Rezultati kažejo, da se bazen populistov v Sloveniji nahaja predvsem v politični sredini, pri čemer prihaja do znatne konvergence stališč med

populisti v politični sredini in na skrajni desnici. Ključno ločnico med tema dvema skupinama populistov predstavlja odnos do ekonomskih neenakosti. Raziskava je bila izvedena v začetku leta 2023 preko spleta.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: populizem, populistična stališča, merjenje populizma, populizem v Sloveniji

*Somehow disruption doesn't begin to cover it.
Upheaval might be closer. Revolution maybe.*

(Baker 2024)

1 Introduction

Populism presents a significant challenge for democratic regimes, including those that are well-established and consolidated. Populist movements and political leaders portray current social conditions as dire and apocalyptic, leveraging strong emotional mobilization among their supporters and emphasizing profound social divides. They are often willing to compromise the rule of law and the established levels of rights necessary for the realization of their social vision and the affirmation of collective sovereignty. As such, populism tests the long-term sustainability of the democratic model. While most scholars agree that populism can rejuvenate democracy – particularly when it operates as opposition rather than holding power (Urbinati 2014) – it undeniably represents a precarious balancing act at the edges of liberal democracy's foundations. Rosanvallon (2021) views populism as a borderline case of democracy that risks devolving into "democratorship," an authoritarian form of political power that, unlike traditional authoritarianism, retains the potential to be overturned. Similarly, Canovan (1999) argues that populism is a perpetual possibility within democracy, stemming from the inherent tension between its two faces – the "pragmatic" and the "redemptive". When democracy assumes its "redemptive" face, the central claim of populists is that liberal regimes have hijacked authentic democracy.

An analysis of public speeches by heads of government and state in a sample of 40 countries revealed that the number of populist leaders has doubled since 2000 (Lewis et al. 2019), with most of them positioned on the right of the political spectrum. A study of 31 European countries, led by Matthijs Rooduijn from the University of Amsterdam, supports the finding of widespread populist mobilization. In 2022, as many as 32% of voters chose an anti-system, populist party, compared to 20% in the early 2000s and 12% in the early 1990s (Henley 2023). Half of these voters supported parties on the political right, which represents the fastest-growing segment of populist citizens. The remaining half

is divided roughly equally between voters supporting left-leaning and centrist parties. The 2024 elections to the European Parliament further confirmed the resilience of populism in the European Union, with 60 populist parties from 26 member states represented in the current mandate, compared to 40 populist parties from 22 member states in 2019 (Euronews 2024).

We live in a “populist atmosphere” (Rosanvallon 2021), characterized by the rejection of mainstream political leaders and parties. New political parties and coalitions win elections, bringing to power leaders whose most notable trait is being “a new political face” with no prior political career. Dissatisfaction with democratic politics and low trust in political institutions are fuelling the growing personalization of politics. Populist political parties and movements, particularly those on the right, tend to exhibit centralised decision-making processes, typically advancing a top-down political programme that relies on the support of citizens construed as “followers”. This populist political supply, provided by new parties, movements, and leaders, is further bolstered by the populist reconfiguration of traditional right- and left-wing political parties.

The renewed electoral success of Donald Trump, the political ties between the Slovenian right and the reconfigured GOP, and the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2026 have triggered speculation in the Slovenian media regarding the mobilising power of populism in Slovenia – a phenomenon influenced not only by political supply but also by political demand. This article therefore seeks to present preliminary findings on the demand side of populism in Slovenia by assessing voters’ susceptibility to populist policies and rhetoric, and by estimating the share of the electorate that may be classified as populist. In line with this, the article pursues two specific objectives.

The first objective is methodological: we seek to evaluate the applicability of two distinct conceptualisations and operationalisations of populist attitudes within the Slovenian context. While recent empirical research has predominantly adopted a three-dimensional conceptualisation of populism – comprising *anti-elitism*, *anti-pluralism*, and *people-centrism* – certain theoretical perspectives advocate for a two-dimensional approach that omits the people-centrism component. This study examines whether these two alternative measures of populist attitudes produce significantly different empirical results.

The second goal is empirical and descriptive, involving an analysis of the political map of populism in Slovenia. Specifically, we examine whether populism cuts across the traditional left-right structure of the political space – replacing it with a vertical conflict between elites and the masses – or whether the ideological divisions between the political left and right persist within populist mobilization as well. Developments in other Western countries indicate that both ends of the

political spectrum are increasingly fragmenting under the influence of an intense “up-and-down” conflict. This dynamic has succeeded, among others, in mobilizing previously disengaged segments of the electorate and in bridging the divide between voters who have traditionally supported opposing political camps.

The 2008 global financial crisis, the 2015 migration crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated long-term processes that have been eroding the social fabric and fueling the rise of populism over the past three decades in European countries and beyond. The most significant of these processes include deindustrialization, globalization, growing economic inequalities, the erosion of social prestige for various social groups, and the emergence of new media capable of bypassing traditional information gatekeepers (Müller 2016; Brubaker 2017; Kaltwasser et al. 2017; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Arato and Cohen 2021).

The article examines the populist attitudes of Slovenia’s residents, as measured by cross-sectional quantitative data collected at the beginning of 2023. This was one year after the last parliamentary election – in which Golob’s Freedom Movement (Gibanje Svoboda) party secured the majority – and one year after Janša’s government repealed the Ordinance on Temporary Measures in Health Care to Contain and Control the COVID-19 Epidemic. This period was marked by high inflation, which reached 8.83% in 2022 and 7.45% in 2023, alongside a declining unemployment rate (from 5.1% in Q4 2020 to 3.5% in Q4 2022). Comparable post-pandemic social and economic conditions have toppled or severely weakened many incumbent parties worldwide. In Slovenia, the Freedom Movement capitalized on the strong public dissatisfaction with the previous government, winning a record 42 out of 90 seats in the parliamentary elections. The historical development of populism in Slovenia has been extensively examined by Fink-Hafner (2016; 2019). In her analysis, she specifically focuses on the post-transitional period, during which she identifies three key instances of populism: Ivan Kramberger’s messianic populism, the political mobilization led by Jelinčič’s Slovenian National Party, and Drnovšek’s Movement for Justice and Development. She associates these cases with distinct forms of populist mobilization – namely, pre-modern populism, modern national populism, and post-modern populism. Drawing on Crooks et al.’s (1992: 2) claim that various forms of modernity can coexist and interact within evolving societies, Fink-Hafner argues that this also applies to the different types of populism observed in Slovenia. A decade later, in the early 2020s, we once again witness the coexistence of very different forms of populism. These include the Wednesday protests, organized by the Stevanović’s political party Resni.ca; the Friday protests, whose participants were later among the supporters of the newly formed Golob’s Freedom Movement political party; and the Retirees’ Councils movement, which maintains close affiliations with the

Janša's Social Democratic Party. Their common characteristic is a rhetoric of rejecting ruling elites and expressing deep distrust in political and other societal institutions.

2 Populist electorate and left-right ideology

In democracies, populist politics emerges from the interaction between populist leaders (the supply side) and voters (the demand side). Political parties and movements seeking power strive to secure as many votes as possible, while voters typically cast their votes strategically, based on preferences that best reflect their interests and identities. Most studies on populism aim at analyzing the supply side, examining party platforms, leaders' political styles and mobilization strategies, their discourse, and organizational resources. Only recently has scholarly attention shifted toward the populist electorate, with research examining the psychological, sociological, and communicative characteristics of individuals who support populist parties or display populist attitudes. A comprehensive study by Marcos Marne et al. (2023) identified 138 articles – most published since 2017 – that investigate populist attitudes both as dependent and independent variables.

Mudde (2017: 5) laid the groundwork for studying populist attitudes through the so-called ideational approach, which conceptualizes populism as “a discourse, an ideology, or a worldview” observable both at the level of political parties and movements, as well as among individuals. Populism is understood as a thin-centred ideology that “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, the ‘pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 6). As a thin-centered ideology, populism can attach itself to various host – thick-centered – ideologies such as conservatism and socialism. This flexibility of populism in terms of its attachment to broader ideological frameworks accounts for the diversity of populisms in terms of their placement along the left–right political spectrum (Akkerman and Rooduijn 2015; Müller 2016; Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017; Kochi 2023).

Rosanvallón (2021) argues that today the ideological positions of left- and right-wing populists are increasingly converging, resulting in ideological eclecticism. Their stances on various issues are growing more alike, blurring the traditional differences. To mobilize the followers, populist leaders use discourse centered on “the people,” seeking to form a broad people's front emerging around selected common issues rather than a traditional left- or right-wing ideological coalitions. Thus, contemporary European left- and right-wing populists

increasingly share patriotism, nativism, Euroscepticism, and leniency toward Putin's authoritarianism. They also display certain programmatic convergences on economic issues and attitudes toward inequality, with limited "economic nationalism" now part of the New Right's populist political platform (for example, Ausserladscheider 2022). An analysis by Mudde and Greiling (2024) of voting patterns among far-right party representatives in the previous European Parliament legislature, which focused on socio-economic issues, revealed that, despite their pro-worker rhetoric, far-right parties did not consistently adopt a pro-worker stance. However, these parties do exhibit considerable internal variation with regards to socio-economic issues and their policy positions are often contradictory.

Drawing on the French context, Rosanvallon (2021: 55) notes that the key remaining line of demarcation between left- and right-wing populism is their stance on immigrants and refugees, and that the political future of populism hinges on whether this division endures. Several indications suggest it may not hold as populists across the political spectrum are becoming increasingly hostile to migration. Few trade unions in the West today regard migrant labour as an opportunity to strengthen overall worker power.

In the United States, political right seems to be outpacing the left in crafting a hegemonic populist platform by fusing moral conservatism, which centers on anti-immigration and anti-social inclusion attitudes, with economic populism (Javers 2024; Ullmann 2024), transforming the traditional right-wing political party in the process. Economic populism in the form of "economic nationalism" aligns with the "spontaneous ideology of the people" (Norris and Inglehart 2019) since populism on the right is not just a revolt against established institutions and elites. It is also a challenge to the dominant ideas and values advocated by experts and educated elites, who are seen as agents of progressive social change and policies favouring social inclusion. Clearly, the situation in the United States is not an inevitable outcome of the blurring of lines between left-wing and right-wing populism. We can also observe instances where an ideologically eclectic populist wave is appropriated by the political left, or even by centrist parties.

Lipset's (1955) classic analysis of American far-right populist movements offers insights into the conditions fostering the link between economic populism and values that promote social exclusion. Lipset argues that during economic depressions, left-wing movements advocating for greater income and wealth redistribution gain prominence. In contrast, during periods of economic growth – particularly when high employment is accompanied by inflation – movements focused on social status issues become more influential. According to Lipset, frustration stemming from status dynamics triggers strong emotional reactions,

such as anger and hatred. People begin to perceive certain social groups as the “culprits” threatening their current or desired (yet unattainable) status. Conversely, leftist movements tend to generate less emotional intensity and hostility, as the issues they address can often be resolved through redistributive policies within the political system.

3 Conceptualization of populist attitudes

In this section, we discuss two approaches to conceptualizing populist attitudes, each highlighting the dilemmas involved in examining individuals’ predisposition to populism. The first approach, advocated by Mansbridge and Macedo (2019), distinguishes between core and peripheral elements of populism. This approach adopts a milder definition of populism, considering only *anti-elitism* and *anti-pluralism* as core elements. The second approach, proposed by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017), is more restrictive, adding *people-centrism* to the two-dimensional concept of populism outlined by Mansbridge and Macedo.

According to Mansbridge and Macedo (2019: 60), the two core elements of populism stem from the belief that “the people” are engaged in a morally justified struggle against the elites. While “the people” are viewed as morally virtuous and exploited, the elites are portrayed as immoral, corrupt, and exploitative, with the relationship between these two groups inherently antagonistic. From this perspective, an unjust social order necessitates mobilizing those at the bottom against the existing authorities and those at the top.

The identity of “the people” is largely constructed through the process of populist mobilization (Laclau 2005: 202), although it is also shaped by the boundaries of the political community in which a populist movement emerges – particularly when this mobilization is orchestrated by a political party seeking power within that community (Arato and Cohen 2021). “The people,” often described as ordinary citizens or people like ourselves, may encompass a range of social groups: workers, farmers, small business owners, and their middle-class allies; residents of declining urban centers and rural areas; young individuals lacking opportunities; and disadvantaged older populations. These diverse groups are unified into a single social body that stands in opposition to cohesive financial, political, capitalist, military, and cultural elites – those who concentrate social power and act contrary to the people’s interests and demands.

“The people” present themselves as the societal majority, an essential normative element in democratic regimes, which reinforces the legitimacy of their resistance: in democracies, the majority’s interests should be the central norm of politics. Thus, “the people” and the elites form two opposing blocs –

not necessarily homogeneous in terms of religion, ethnicity, or historical ties, but unified in their opposition to one another. This aspect of populism is encapsulated in its *anti-elitism* dimension.

All aspects of social conflict between “the people” and the elites are reduced to a single axis, with any conflicts outside this framework dismissed as irrelevant. The antagonism between the people and the elites runs so deep that no peaceful or rational solution is seen as possible. The people view the opposing side not merely as competitors with differing interests but as morally inferior enemies in an all-or-nothing struggle where only one party can prevail. They perceive the elites as a social group that has become morally and socially detached from the society inhabited by ordinary people.

Populism, therefore, entails a radicalization of politics – fundamentally different from the liberal perspective, which holds that conflicting interests and demands can be reconciled through compromise. The “us versus them” divide is regarded as insurmountable, and populist movements place a strong emphasis on emotional appeals. This aspect of populism is referred to as *anti-pluralism*.

In addition to the minimal, two-dimensional core described above, Mansbridge and Macedo (2019: 62–65) identify several non-core characteristics frequently associated with populism that influence its practical politics. These include the demographic and religious homogeneity of “the people” and their exclusivity, calls for greater direct popular rule, nationalism, extreme hostility toward vilified out-groups, and the valorization of “authentic folk knowledge”.

Since these characteristics are not part of the core definition that classifies an individual as populist, they will not be further analysed here, except for the concept of direct political rule. Populists typically emphasize the need for more direct participation in governance, advocating a departure from liberal democracy. In their view, representative democracy – with its party structures, bureaucratic procedures, and constitutionally enshrined rights – obstructs the realization of the people’s will.

Populists therefore seek greater direct influence over decision-making, often clashing with constitutionally protected pluralism, minority rights, separation of powers, and the rule of law. For populists, the “illiberal” character of democracy is, paradoxically, seen as a prerequisite for authentic democracy. Achieving this vision often necessitates radicalizing politics and dismantling the existing liberal political order. Greater public influence over political decisions may be pursued through direct democracy tools, such as referendums, or by enhancing the powers of the executive branch when a populist leader – viewed as the embodiment of the general will – holds executive office.

Proposing an alternative definition of populism, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) expand its core structure from two to three dimensions by incorporating an emphasis on the direct will of the people – referred to as the *people-centrism* dimension. Many scholars engaged in the operationalisation and measurement of populist attitudes have adopted this approach. Similarly, Calhoun (2018: 2) highlights in his historical survey of populisms that a recognizable form of populism necessitates some concept of citizenship in which political legitimacy, at least partially, derives from the people's will and well-being.

Defined by the three dimensions outlined above, populism has a long historical trajectory and is not confined to democratic regimes; it also manifests in non-democratic contexts. One early modern figure frequently identified as a populist is Girolamo Savonarola, a Dominican preacher in Florence and contemporary of Machiavelli. His brief rule was characterised by book burnings, the destruction of artworks, and fierce denunciations of aristocratic and clerical lifestyles. However, Savonarola's populist appeal proved short-lived, as it relied excessively on mass support and emotional mobilisation, ultimately failing to establish stable political relations (Calhoun 2018: 6)

The debate over whether populist attitudes should encompass two or three core elements reflects a broader conceptual dilemma: how expansively should the boundaries of populism be defined, and to what extent should the concept account for a wide range of empirical phenomena? The fewer the definitional components included, the broader its empirical reach. While all scholars discussed here acknowledge the Manichaean framing of "the people" versus "the elite" as central, those who advocate a three-dimensional definition of populism caution that omitting the element of popular sovereignty risks categorising any political campaign that fervently denounces corruption or governmental inefficiency as populist, thereby weakening the concept's theoretical precision and analytical utility.

Conversely, advocates of a two-element definition warn that an overly narrow focus might restrict the understanding of populism to just one form – primarily that which emerges on the political left because, typically, left-wing populism – such as Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece – emphasizes mechanisms of direct democracy that encourage the inclusion of diverse perspectives and highlight the plurality of popular sovereignty (Roch and Cordero 2023). Right-wing populism, by contrast, often portrays the populist leader as the embodiment of the general will and places less emphasis on direct democracy.

4 Operationalisation of populist attitudes

In order to assess the extent of voters' support for populist ideas, the concept of populist attitudes must be operationalised. To this end, several indices of populist attitudes have been developed in previous studies, and their quality has been evaluated in the study by Castanho Silva et al. (2019). This evaluation included indices proposed by Stanley (2011), Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (2014), Elchardus and Spruyt (2016), Hobolt et al. (2016), Oliver and Rahn (2016), Schulz et al. (2018), and Castanho Silva et al. (2018). The findings indicate that most of these indices exhibit notable methodological and validity shortcomings in at least one of the dimensions they seek to measure.

Drawing on these insights, we developed a new measure of populism by selecting items that demonstrated the strongest performance in previous studies. The resulting index is economical, employing only two items per dimension, with each item specifically designed to capture a single dimension. Table 1 displays the questions used to measure the three core dimensions of populism – anti-elitism, people-centrism, and anti-pluralism – yielding a total of six items. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree).

Table 1: Operationalization of the three dimensions of populist attitudes.

Anti-elitism

1. Politics today is hijacked by elites and other influential groups in society.
2. Politicians mostly pursue the interests of powerful minorities, which are contrary to the well-being of the society.

People-centrism

3. People, not politicians, should make the most important decisions.
4. Politicians in the parliament should always follow the will of the people, because people know best what is good for them.

Anti-pluralism

5. People can be defined as good or bad, depending on the kind of politics they support.
6. What people call political compromise is, in reality, a betrayal of their political principles.

We ensured that the two items assessing anti-elitism were not confined to political parties and politicians, but allowed respondents to define "powerful minorities" themselves and answer with various elites and interest groups in mind – such as political, economic and financial elites, intellectuals and professionals. Such approach increases generalizability across different political contexts. The people-centrism dimension comprises two attitudes: one favouring direct democracy, asserting that the people should make the most important decisions;

and another emphasizing popular sovereignty, which holds that the people know best what is good for them. The third dimension, anti-pluralism, was measured by an item expressing a division of people into “good” and “bad,” as well as another that equates political compromise with betraying one’s political principles.

Research on populist attitudes varies in its criteria for labelling someone as populist – whether an individual can be considered populist by scoring high on just one dimension or must score high on all three dimensions (Wuttke, Schimpf, and Schoen 2020). In the former approach, scholars construct an additive populism index, where a high score on one dimension can compensate for lower scores on others, or they may analyse each dimension separately. In the latter approach, an individual is labelled populist only if their score on each dimension exceeds a certain threshold set by the researcher, meaning the presence of populism requires the simultaneous manifestation of all core components. Our analysis adopts the latter approach, treating populism as a non-compensatory, multidimensional concept.

Finally, it is important to highlight the need for a specialized instrument to measure populist attitudes. Other widely used measures – such as those measuring institutional confidence, external political efficacy, and satisfaction with democracy – are sometimes utilized to assess populist attitudes. However, evidence suggests that populist attitudes are not merely “old wine in new bottles.” Instead, political confidence, external political efficacy, and populism represent distinct latent dimensions, as demonstrated through confirmatory factor analysis, and they exhibit different associations with populist voting preferences (Geurkin et al. 2020).

5 Results

Data on populist attitudes in Slovenia were collected within the framework of the research project *“The Relational Basis of Everyday Life, Politics, and Work”* (RCSG, 2023). Data collection was carried out using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI), conducted through the Jazvem online panel, owned by the company Valicon d.o.o. The survey was conducted over a period of two weeks, with an average completion time of 35 minutes. The sampling frame for the study included all panel members aged 18 to 65, totalling 17,496 individuals at the start of the research. Eligible panellists were divided into strata, defined in agreement with the research client as a combination of 2 gender categories, 4 age groups, and 12 statistical regions. This resulted in 96 quota cells, which served as the basis for distributing survey invitations. To maximize the number of responses, up to four reminders were sent. From the final dataset, surveys were excluded if respondents completed the survey in a time significantly shorter than the minimum

threshold set by the client, or provided illogical or inconsistent responses. The response rate was calculated based on the number of fully completed surveys (achieved sample) in relation to the total number of invitations sent. A total of 4,189 individuals were contacted, of whom 1,027 responded, resulting in a response rate of 25%.

In what follows, we present the results of analyses addressing the following issues: the prevalence of populist attitudes in Slovenia (section 5.1); the positioning of populists on the left-right political spectrum (section 5.2); the voting preferences of populists (section 5.3); the role of party mobilization as opposed to personal characteristics in defining populists (section 5.4); the social issues that mobilize populists (section 5.5).

5.1 The Prevalence of Populism

The empirical analysis begins by examining the prevalence of populist attitudes among Slovenia's population. Table 2 displays the frequency distribution for two populism indexes. The first column presents results for Index I, which incorporates three dimensions of populism (anti-elitism, people-centrism, and anti-pluralism). The second column shows results for Index II, which includes only two dimensions (anti-elitism and anti-pluralism).

An individual is classified as a populist (coded as "1") if they score above 6.5 on all relevant dimensions – three for Index I and two for Index II – using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Conversely, a person is not considered a populist (coded as "0") if their score on any dimension falls below 6.5, even if they achieve very high scores on the other dimensions.

Table 2: The prevalence of populism.

	Index I		Index II	
Populism	N	%	N	%
(0)	682	78.1	620	71.0
(1)	191	21.9	253	29.0
N	873	100	873	100

According to the stricter (three-dimension) definition of populism, nearly 22% of the Slovenian population can be classified as populists. Using the broader (two-dimension) definition raises this share to 29%. Thus, at least one-fifth of the population aged 18–65 believes that political decisions in Slovenia predominantly favour elites at the expense of ordinary people, while rejecting political compromise and perceiving the opposing side as immoral and corrupt.

Index II—which includes only two dimensions—captures a larger share of individuals than Index I. This is because some populists place relatively low importance on direct public involvement in political decision-making, yet still adhere to a Manichean view of the conflict between elites and “the people”.

Further (unreported) analysis reveals that attitudes toward popular sovereignty significantly distinguish Index I from Index II. The average scores across all three dimensions – anti-elitism, anti-pluralism, and people-centrism – are lower for Index II populists than for Index I populists, with the most pronounced difference appearing in the people-centrism dimension. Individuals identified as populists only by Index II (and not by Index I) score the lowest in people-centrism within the entire sample. These individuals tend to be older, more educated, and more likely to have voted for opposition parties in the most recent parliamentary election. They are, therefore, better described as “critical elitists” rather than populists: citizens who are strongly critical of elites – particularly the current government – but unconvinced that the solution lies in more (or more authentic) democracy. Based on this result, we will use only Index I, which defines populists across three dimensions, in future analyses.

5.2 The left, the right ... and the centre

It is commonly assumed that populism aligns easily with political extremes – either the far-right or the far-left – because both promote anti-establishment views and rely on strong emotional mobilization. However, in Europe, populists predominantly emerge on the right end of the political spectrum, where traditional far-right parties have adopted populist outlook and adjusted their political platforms accordingly. The far-right positions itself as the sole defender of workers’ interests and as an advocate for social groups disadvantaged by neoliberal globalization and deindustrialization. In contrast, the far-left, which also seeks to address the social challenges faced by “those left behind,” has been less successful due to internal tensions between economic populism and cultural progressivism. While left-wing economic programs propose more comprehensive solutions to economic deprivation and inequality, the far-right appeals to voters by espousing moral conservatism. Additionally, some populist voters favour a “politics of opportunity” over the left’s emphasis on a “politics of solidarity”.

Centrist parties, often seen as representing the middle and especially the upper-middle class, are generally considered the least populist in terms of their membership, programs, and rhetoric. However, it is believed that even centrist parties are increasingly compelled to adopt and normalize aspects of populist discourse in their competition for voters.

Table 3: Coss-tabulation of populism (Index I) and political orientation.

Political orientation	Index I		
	Non-populists	Populists	Total
Far-left (1,2)	59 79.7 % 10.8 %	15 20.3 % 9.8 %	74 100.0 % 10.6 %
Left (3,4)	177 81.2 % 32.3 %	41 18.8 % 26.8 %	218 100.0 % 31.1 %
Centre (5,6)	178 83.0 % 32.5 %	59 24.9 % 38.6 %	237 100.0 % 33.8 %
Right (7,8)	98 82.4 % 17.9 %	21 17.6 % 13.7 %	119 100.0 % 17.0 %
Far-right (9,10)	36 67.9 % 6.6 %	17 32.1 % 11.1 %	53 100.0 % 7.6 %
Total	548 78.2 % 100.0 %	153 21.8 % 100.0 %	701 100.0 % 100.0 %

To determine the position of Slovenian populists on the left–right political spectrum, political orientation was measured using a self-placement question, whereby respondents located themselves on a scale ranging from 1 (far-left) to 10 (far-right). For the purposes of analysis, these values were grouped into five categories: far-left (values 1–2), left (3–4), centre (5–6), right (7–8), and far-right (9–10).

The mean political orientation score in the sample is 5.08, closely mirroring the national average reported for Slovenia in the 2023 European Social Survey. Approximately one-third of respondents (33.8%) identify with the political centre (see Table 3). Around 10.6% and 7.6% position themselves on the far-left and far-right, respectively, while the remaining respondents align with either the left or right. The left group is marginally larger than the right, a trend similarly observed in previous Slovenian studies.

Among populists identified by Index I, the average political orientation is 5.24, compared to 5.03 among non-populists. Thus, both groups fall within the political centre. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that over one-third (38.6%) of populists place themselves in the political centre, followed by the left, with 26.8%. The extreme

poles, the far-left and far-right, together account for only one-fifth of populists. Therefore, populism in Slovenia is thus far predominantly a phenomenon of the political centre and, to a lesser degree, of political left, but not far-left.

However, when examining the prevalence of populists within specific political orientations, it becomes evident that the highest proportion is found on the far right (32.1%), followed by the political centre (24.9%). Thus, although the majority of populists are located in the political centre, the far right exhibits the greatest concentration of populist individuals relative to its overall composition. In contrast, within the political centre, populists are comparatively diluted among non-populists.

In summary, populists in Slovenia are relatively dispersed across the left-right ideological spectrum, reflecting the broader ideological distribution of the Slovenian population. This supports the conceptualisation of populism as a "thin-centred" ideology, which can be readily combined with a range of left- and right-wing ideological orientations, as indicated by individuals' self-placement on the ideological continuum. While individuals retain their broader ideological commitments, they simultaneously exhibit populist tendencies. As the analysis will later demonstrate, shared positions on key societal issues that typically mobilise populist sentiment serve to unite individuals from across the ideological spectrum. This convergence creates fertile ground for the emergence of new political actors (or the transformation of the old ones), capable of subordinating traditional ideological identification to a more pronounced populist alignment.

Centrist voters ultimately determine the outcome of elections in Slovenia, and parties on the left and right compete for their support. Centrist voters generally lack strong ideological affinities and can easily shift somewhat left or right during elections. Their political involvement is typically weaker, and they exhibit the lowest levels of political interest compared to other groups. For many, centrism reflects their distancing – or even alienation – from politics. This also applies to centrist populists.

So far, centrist populists have not, for the most part, been drawn to extreme political positions, including far-right populist rhetoric, as such positions require a strong commitment to right-wing political ideology – something the average Slovenian populist does not find appealing. Furthermore, Slovenian centrist populists exhibit stronger populist attitudes than those on the left or right, suggesting that they are predominantly mobilized into the political arena by "thin-centered" populist appeals offered by the centrist parties.

5.3 Populists as voters

In the previous section, we analysed populists based on their political orientation. Here, we examine their voting choices in the 2022 parliamentary election to determine the extent to which they voted strategically for larger parties with a realistic chance of entering parliament, or whether they preferred smaller, non-parliamentary parties that reject compromise and refuse to be absorbed under the umbrella of major parties. Since an uncompromising attitude is a key characteristic of populism, we would expect to find many populists among the voters of smaller parties that failed to enter parliament.

The analysis reports results for each parliamentary party separately: Freedom Movement (Slovene: Gibanje Svoboda, GS), Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovene: Slovenska demokratska stranka, SDS), New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (Slovene: NovSlovenija – Krščanski demokrati, NSi), Social Democrats (Slovene: Socialni demokrati, SD), The Left (Slovene: Levica), while grouping non-parliamentary parties into one category labelled “Others”. The category “Others” includes Marjan Šarec List (Slovene: Lista Marjana Šarca, LMŠ), Resni.ca (Slovene: Državljanско gibanje Resni.ca), Pirate Party of Slovenia (Slovene: Piratska stranka Slovenije), Slovenian National Party (Slovene: Slovenska nacionalna stranka, SNS), VESNA - Green Party (Slovene: VESNA – Zelena stranka), Connect Slovenia (Slovene: Povežimo Slovenijo) and others. Respondents who answered “I don’t know” or “I prefer not to answer” were excluded from the analysis.

The sample’s distribution of party support differs somewhat from the official election results, with Slovenian Democratic Party voters underrepresented and The Left voters overrepresented (Table 4). Drawing on the average political orientation of each party’s voters (Table 4, last column), the Freedom Movement falls within the left, with an average score of 4.38 (its supporters are roughly equally split between left and centre). Positioned further to the left are the Marjan Šarec List (3.58), the Social Democrats (3.36), and The Left (2.69). On the right side, the New Slovenia – Christian Democrats voters average 6.87, and the Slovenian Democratic Party voters average 7.81. In the following discussion, we refer to The Left party as far-left and the Slovenian Social Democratic Party as far-right, based on how their voters position themselves on the left–right ideological spectrum.

According to the political orientation of voters, non-parliamentary parties span the entire political spectrum, though most are located near the political centre. For example, the average political orientation of voters who voted for Resni.ca is 5.00, for Pirate Party of Slovenia 5.22, for VESNA – Green Party 5.00, and for Slovenian National Party 5.83. Their voters are more issue oriented and do not identify with the comprehensive and complex political programs characteristic

for the traditional parties on the right and left. Among these are parties that base their appeal on a highly critical stance towards political and social institutions, which they perceive as having been captured by corrupt elites.

Table 4: Coss-tabulation of populism (Index I) and political party.

Political party	Index I			Political orientation
	Non-populists	Populists	Total	
The Left	51 83.6 % 10.3 %	10 16.4 % 7.2 %	61 100.0 % 9.6 %	2.69
Social Democrats	42 82.4 % 8.5 %	9 17.6 % 6.5 %	51 100.0 % 8.0 %	3.36
Freedom Movement	165 70.5 % 33.3 %	69 29.5 % 50.0 %	234 100.0 % 36.9 %	4.38
New Slovenia – Christian Democrats	42 89.4 % 8.5 %	5 10.6 % 3.6 %	47 100.0 % 7.4 %	6.87
Slovenian Democratic Party	80 81.6 % 16.1 %	18 18.4 % 13.0 %	98 100.0 % 15.5 %	7.81
Others	116 81.1 % 23.4 %	27 18.9 % 19.5 %	143 100.0 % 22.6 %	5.35
Total	509 78.2 % 100.0 %	141 21.8 % 100.0 %	650 100.0 % 100.0 %	5.03

The results indicate that the centre-left Freedom Movement attracted 50% of Slovenian populists, followed by predominantly centrist non-parliamentary parties with 19.5%, and the far-right Slovenian Democratic Party with 13.0%. However, this latter figure should be interpreted with some caution due to the underrepresentation of Slovenian Democratic Party voters in our sample. Still, the substantial difference in support for the Freedom Movement and non-parliamentary parties, and the Slovenian Democratic Party, cannot be attributed solely to sampling bias. All other parties captured less than 10% of the populist electorate.

Like other voters, populists tend to vote strategically, opting for parties with a realistic chance of entering parliament, provided these parties can address their

anger and disappointment. In the last election, this role has been successfully fulfilled by the newly formed centrist Freedom Movement, which emerged shortly before the elections, led by a businessman without a long-established political career but who nevertheless managed to inspire political trust in the otherwise low-trust Slovenian political context.

Thus, currently, approximately half of Slovenian populists are represented in parliament by the newly established centrist party, the Freedom Movement, while roughly one fifth remain unrepresented. As the Freedom Movement is not yet an institutionalized party with loyal membership and electoral basis, it remains to be seen whether it will succeed in retaining populist voters in the next parliamentary election, or whether these »disillusioned« voters will once again seek an alternative political home.

5.4 Political mobilisation or personal characteristics?

Political parties serve the dual functions of aggregating and presenting the political preferences of citizens while simultaneously shaping these very preferences. This chapter examines the extent to which populism – or the likelihood of holding populist views – depends on personal characteristics as opposed to party mobilization. The personal characteristics analysed include gender, age, education, income, and political orientation. The first four variables capture the effects of economic deprivation and cultural backlash, two dominant theories explaining the long-term rise of populism in Western democracies (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

Men (influenced by "bro" culture) and older adults (due to generational effects) are expected to develop populist attitudes as a reaction to rapid and comprehensive cultural changes, as posited by the cultural backlash theory. On the other hand, the rise of populism is also attributed to deteriorating economic conditions and a lack of material security among the lower middle and working classes – an effect measured here by income. Education can have a dual impact: on the one hand, it may be linked to lower income and thus economic deprivation; on the other, it may also involve resistance to the social changes advocated by the progressive upper-middle class and younger generations.

We present the results of two regression models. First, we assess the isolated influence of political parties on populism; then, we add socio-demographic variables and political orientation to the regression. Comparing the two models reveals to what extent an individual's likelihood of being populist is shaped by party mobilization and personal characteristics.

According to Model 1 (Table 5), the Freedom Movement voters are more likely to be populist compared to voters of other parties. The reference category for these

comparisons is the “Others” group (i.e., non-parliamentary parties). Voters of the New Slovenia – Christian Democrats and the Left show a statistically significant lower probability of being populist than voters of non-parliamentary parties. Even after accounting for other variables (Model 2), the effect of the Freedom Movement remains highly positive and statistically significant. New Slovenia – Christian Democrats continues to show a lower probability of having populist voters, joined in this regard by the Slovenian Social Democratic Party.

Table 5: Logistic regression of populism (Index I) on political party, sociodemographic characteristics and political orientation.

	Index I		Index II	
	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)	Model 3 Exp(B)	Model 4 Exp(B)
Political party				
Left	.843 *	1.257	1.023	1.149
Social Democrats	.921	1.175	.985	1.005
Freedom Movement	1.798 **	2.004 **	1.467 *	1.442
New Slovenia	.512 *	.347 *	.879	.623
Slovenian Democratic Party	.968	.325 **	1.332	.667
Others	base	base	base	base
Political orientation				
Far-left		1.015		1.381
Left		base		base
Centre		1.921 **		1.600 *
Right		2.401 **		2.257 **
Far-right		5.872 ***		2.543 **
Gender (women= 0)		1.742 **		1.602 **
Generation				
Generation (18-28)		base		base
Generation (29-43)		1.389		1.180
Generation (44-58)		2.199 **		2.153 **
Generation (59-65)		2.036 *		2.768 **
Education		.935		1.003
Income		.742 **		.842 *
Constant	.233 ***	.069 ***	.347 ***	.129 ***
Nagelkerke R Square	.035	.119	.011	.078
N	650	565	650	565

NOTE: * sig. < 0.10 ** sig. < 0.01. *** sig. < 0.001

Thus, whereas the centrist Freedom Movement succeeded in mobilising populist voters in the last parliamentary elections beyond what would be expected based on their individual characteristics, the far-right Slovenian Democratic Party appears unable to attract support beyond those voters whose personal traits already predispose them to favour the party. Separate analyses (not reported here) indicate that, for the latter party, the voter composition – characterized by a relatively high proportion of men, individuals with low education levels, and far-right supporters – accounts for their susceptibility to populism.

The influence of socio-demographic characteristics and political orientation on populism is as expected. Populists are more common among older individuals and men, supporting the cultural backlash hypothesis. Meanwhile, lower income increases the likelihood of populist attitudes, providing evidence for the economic deprivation theory. Education level does not show a statistically significant effect, likely due to its previously mentioned contradictory effects on populism. Political orientation also has a strong influence, especially on the far-right, where many views overlap with the commonly adopted populist ideology (e.g., on migration, LGBT communities, and climate change). In contrast, left-wing parties and a left-wing orientation do not foster populism, a finding consistent with their rejection of the currently dominant synthesis of populism and moral conservatism that tends to accompany populist movements.

5.5 Social issues mobilising populists

Finally, we discuss whether there is convergence among populists of different political orientations regarding the core social issues around which the populist electorate typically mobilizes. This analysis includes the following social issues: wearing masks during the pandemic, opposition to the rights of homosexual couples, opposition to immigration, concern about inequality, and denial of human responsibility for climate change. Table 6 shows how populists and non-populists differ in their attitudes toward these issues. A brief glance reveals that they differ in all of them: populists are more likely to oppose mask-wearing, gay rights, and migration; they are more likely to strongly agree that inequality is a significant social issue; and they more often reject scientific theories suggesting that human activity causes climate change.

On every social issue considered, populists score higher than non-populists, indicating that they tend to agree more strongly with these positions. This suggests a certain degree of convergence among populists concerning the selected social issues. The differences between the two groups are particularly pronounced regarding attitudes toward gay rights and migration, followed by concern over inequality.

Table 6: Agreement with various social issues by populism (Index I) and political orientation.

	Anti-mask		Anti-gay		Anti-immigration	
	Populists	Non-populists	Populists	Non-populists	Populists	Non-populists
Far-left	.443	-.135	.427	-.223	.429	-.311
Left	.114	-.160	.430	-.237	.188	-.309
Centre	.233	-.137	.458	-.223	.537	-.015
Right	-.160	-.216	.416	-.070	.469	.152
Far-right	-.274	-.339	.477	.213	.880	.394
Total	.158	-.088	.438	-.112	.461	-.084
N	873		781		861	
	Inequality too big		Climate denier			
	Populists	Non-populists	Populists	Non-populists		
Far-left	.453	.231	.178	-.450		
Left	.272	-.071	-.263	-.300		
Centre	.262	-.151	.308	.024		
Right	-.088	-.483	.234	.306		
Far-right	-.030	-.168	.743	.327		
Total	.241	-.078	.180	-.060		
N	871		857			

NOTE: Entries are average values. Variables are standardized.

A more detailed examination by political orientation reveals that within the populist group, there are no significant internal differences in attitudes toward same-sex couples' rights or the acceptance of intercultural diversity. The only notable variation is that left-wing populists deviate more sharply from left-wing non-populists than right-wing populists do from right-wing non-populists. Therefore, we can conclude that, although populists span the entire political spectrum in terms of their self-placement on the left-right axis, their populist stance aligns them more closely with the right-wing pole on key mobilizing issues. The positioning of populist voters in the political centre – or even on the centre-left – reveals an inherent contradiction between their support for specific populist issues, on the one hand, and their thick-centered ideology (or its absence thereof) which defines their self-placement on the left-right spectrum. This contradiction may prove to be temporary, potentially resulting in a substantial realignment of the populist electorate toward the right-wing political spectrum in future elections.

Ultimately, what keeps populists away from the right-wing pole – despite their similarity in the attitude to the same-sex rights and migration issues – is their stance on inequality. The view that inequality in Slovenia is excessively high mobilizes both centrist and left-wing populists. Although right-wing populists share this view far more than their non-populist counterparts on the right, they still diverge significantly in terms of the importance they assign to this issue. In Slovenia, the perception of inequality represents a demarcation line that keeps populists in the political center and in the left. Unsurprisingly, the belief that inequality is too high is strongest on the far-left – where it is shared by non-populists as well.

Another dividing line between populists on the centre and left, and the right is their attitude toward mask-wearing, which is a consequence of the unique circumstances of the pandemic. The right-wing coalition in power during the pandemic introduced measures to curb infections, including mask mandates. Strong opponents of these measures can be found among populists in the political center and on the left. As mentioned, we do not expect this issue to mobilize populists in the next election anymore.

Denying human responsibility for climate change is a relatively new issue that mobilizes populists. Based on current data, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions. However, it is evident that among non-populists, this scepticism is mainly found on the right. Left-wing voters largely disagree with such scepticism. Nonetheless, a sizable share of centrist populists also deny human responsibility for climate change. The same holds – though to a lesser extent – for far-left populists, suggesting that this issue may be developing into a new axis of convergence that could cut across the traditional left–right divide.

In the next step, we produced several regression models in which the extent of agreement with various issues serves as the dependent variables, while the independent variables include both political orientation and socio-demographic factors (Table 7). The analyses have been conducted on a subsample of populists as defined by Index I.

Overall, support for certain viewpoints is closely tied to socio-demographic characteristics and, to a lesser extent, political orientation. Still, political orientation continues to play a noticeable role. When personal attributes are controlled for, the smallest variation linked to political orientation appears in attitudes toward the rights of same-sex couples. With respect to this issue, the differences within the populist group are more associated with gender and age—specifically, men and older individuals are generally less tolerant and have lower levels of education, than with political orientation.

Table 7: Multiple regression of different social issues on political orientation and sociodemographic variables (for populists only, defined by Index I).

	Anti-mask β	Anti-gay β	Anti-immigration β	Inequality too high β	Climate denier β
Political orientation					
Far-left	.003	-.037	.068	.030	.096
Left	base	base	base	base	base
Centre	-.085	-.067	.158 *	-.106	.228 **
Right	-.169 *	.025	.061	-.125 *	.091
Far-right	-.175 *	-.076	.155 *	-.180 **	.283 ***
Gender (women= 0)	.047	.235 **	.002	-.100	.206 **
Generation					
Generation (18-28)	base	base	base	base	base
Generation (29-43)	.051	.062	.001	.463 ***	-.194 *
Generation (44-58)	-.057	.251 *	.043	.609 ***	-.198 *
Generation (59-65)	-.149 *	.234 *	.021	.511 ***	-.229 *
Education					
	.062	-.202 **	.142 *	-.173 **	.043
Income					
	-.121 *	.045	.083	.026	-.033
R-Square (Adj. R-Square)	.084(.025)	.166(.105)	.061(.038)	.240(.191)	.157(.102)
N	165	146	163	165	164

NOTE: * sig. < 0.10 ** sig. < 0.01. *** sig. < 0.001

Regarding immigration, centrist and far-right populists are quite similar to each other and both diverge significantly from their left-wing counterparts, with political orientation exerting a stronger influence than socio-demographic factors.

Again, the inequality issue creates a divide between left- and right-wing populists, with centrist populists aligning closer to the left than the right on this issue. Inequality is emphasized as a concern by all generations except the youngest, as well as by the less-educated segment of the populist electorate. Among the general population – not just populists – younger individuals are generally less sensitive to the issue of economic inequalities. However, this changes already in the next age category, encompassing individuals aged 29 to 43.

Centrist populists also align more closely with the left regarding attitudes toward mask-wearing during the pandemic. As expected, a less pronounced opposition to masks is found among right-wing populists, older individuals, and those with higher incomes.

On the other hand, attitudes toward climate change reduce the differences between centrist and far-right populists. Both groups deviate significantly from the base category, which is represented by left-wing populists. Among populists, climate change denial is more prevalent among younger individuals and men.

6 Conclusion

Populism has the potential to draw into the political sphere citizens who would otherwise exhibit low levels of political interest and weak partisan identification, thereby encouraging their participation in various forms of political engagement, including voting. It can also trigger political realignment, as individuals gradually relegate their thick-centered ideological commitments to the background and begin making electoral choices primarily based on thin-centered populist appeals. Political dynamics in this context largely revolve around the question of which political actors will play a leading role in shaping this process and where populists will ultimately align. Will they remain anchored to the traditional left–right ideological spectrum, transcend it by embracing a more eclectic political program, or will one side – left or right – prove more successful over time in drawing them toward one of the ideological poles? While populism is most often associated with the far right and far left, our study underscores the possibility that the political center, too, holds the potential to mobilize populists independently of their incorporation into far-left or far-right ideologies.

The analysis of Slovenian populists reveals that about one-fourth of the population can be defined as populists who, in the 2022 elections, were predominantly situated in the political centre and voted for the Freedom Movement, a newly formed party that has attracted a variety of voters, among them voters dissatisfied with the previous government and its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, anti-vaccination voters, tactical left voters, etc. Populists unwilling to join the broad centre-left coalition under the umbrella of the new Freedom Movement party tended to support smaller, non-parliamentary parties, with the far-right Slovenian Democratic Party and other parties following. This was undoubtedly influenced by strategic party decisions and the adaptation of political programs as well as by the unique circumstances of the pandemic.

To adopt a dynamic view of populism, it is crucial to examine the extent of issue convergence among populists and to determine whether there are dividing lines between them and how strong those lines are. Our analysis included several issues around which populists are typically mobilized: attitudes toward same-sex couples' rights, immigration, the environment, masks, and inequality. The relationship between populism and attitudes toward the EU has already been

studied in the Slovenian context (Lovec 2019), so we did not deal with this issue in our research.

The results show significant convergence with respect to main mobilizing issue of populists across the left–right spectrum. In some cases, differences are being completely diminished—for example, in attitudes toward same-sex couples’ rights. In other cases, there is considerable proximity between right-wing and centrist populists, as with attitudes toward immigration and climate change. The key dividing line that distinguishes Slovenian populists positioned in the political center or on the left from those on the right is their stance on inequality—an issue that appears to serve as a relatively stable point of differentiation. As long as moral conservatism and economic populism remain distinct political programs, it can be expected that the majority of populists will continue to align with the centre-left political coalition.

The emergence of climate change as a new field of political mobilization is also notable in Slovenia. Younger populists, who lack strong positions on inequality and are generally less hostile toward same-sex couples’ rights, exhibit the strongest opinions on the environment compared to other generations. They often believe that scientists exaggerate the role of human activity in climate change. Similar to the UK, a segment of young people, positioned in opposition to the Youth Climate Movement, consistently rejects the latter’s goals (Horton, 2024). This stance is particularly characteristic of young men aged 18 to 28.

Finally, the study confirmed a need for a specialized indicators to measure populist attitudes, rather than relying on the proxy measures. Such specialized measures are typically not included in major national and international social surveys. This is an important contribution of this research. The analysis confirms the validity of the indicators used to measure populism, as they produce meaningful results in terms of the statistical relationships with various independent and dependent variables. The comparison of Index I (three-dimensional concept of populism) and Index II (two-dimensional concept of populism) suggests that the latter measures “critical elitism” rather than populism. It remains unclear whether this group consists solely of individuals strongly opposed to the current government or whether it reflects a more enduring critical attitude toward politics and political institutions.

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Teja Kosi

“DRAMATIC”, “CRAZY”, AND “UNWORTHY” WOMEN: ENDOMETRIOSIS AND THE (MEDICAL) PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE PAIN

ABSTRACT

Taking a critical feminist cultural studies approach, this article describes, analyses, reflects and theorises women’s pain in the case of endometriosis. Western historical discourses on endometriosis over the last 2,500 years offer a basis for analysing the position the disease holds in contemporary society. Using locally limited digital ethnography (the stories of 33 women published on the website of Endozavest – Society for Raising Awareness for Endometriosis between 16 January 2017 and 24 April 2023), supported by secondary sources, three ways in which women’s pain is perceived and managed are presented and contextualised: dramatised pain, mental illness, and “female deficit”. The article reveals how patriarchal violence within the medical system perpetuates aspects of physical pain that directly/indirectly discipline women’s bodies and push them into a variety of unwanted sexual and reproductive roles.

KEY WORDS: endometriosis, female pain, medical violence, contemporary perceptions of femininity, unwanted patriarchal roles

»Dramatične«, »nore« in »problematične« ženske: Endometrioza in (medicinske) percepcije ženske bolečine

IZVLEČEK

Članek s feministično-kulturološke kritične pozicije opisuje, analizira, reflektira in teoretizira žensko bolečino na primeru endometrioze. Zgodovinski diskurzi o endometriozi, ki so (bili) prisotni na zahodu zadnjih 2500 let, ponujajo podstat za analizo endometrioze v sodobnih družbah. Z lokalno zamejeno digitalno etnografijo (33 ženskih pripovedi, objavljenih na spletni strani Društva za

ozaveščanje o endometriozi – Endozavest med 16. 1. 2017 in 21. 4. 2023), ki jo podpirajo sekundarni viri, se predstavi in kontekstualizira tri načine dojetanja in upravljanja z žensko bolečino: dramatizirane bolečine, duševne bolezni in »ženskega primanjkljaja«. Članek osvetljuje vlogo fizične bolečine znotraj medicinskega sistema, ki s tem, ko ohranja telesa v bolečini, ženske potiska v nezaželeno seksualne in reproduktivne patriarhalne vloge.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: endometrioza, ženska bolečina, medicinsko nasilje, sodobne percepcije ženskosti, nezaželene patriarhalne vloge

1 Introduction¹

This paper attempts to make a feminist cultural studies contribution to the field of (social) medicine by analysing and reflecting on endometriosis – a disease in which the presence of endometrial tissue outside the uterus (Chapron et al. 2019: 666) often manifests through horrific pain, infertility and sexual difficulties (Cole et al. 2021: 172). Endometriosis is characterised by an unusually high degree of uncertainty, ambiguity and conflicting information about its most basic features, which affects how it is managed and treated – or, rather, often untreated – taking an average of 7.5 years to reach diagnosis (Hogg and Vyas 2015: 134), with some studies presenting even higher numbers of up to 10 years or more (Seear 2014: 8; Ghai et al. 2020). Grogan et al. (2018) pointed out that suspiciously unusual (non-)treatments are recorded even after diagnosis. In recent years, critical social science research has drawn attention to these characteristics of the medical management of endometriosis. Since the 1990s, the disease has also been given more space in the medical and self-help literature, traditional media and social media. However, it has persistently been constructed as an enigma, rightly earning the “disease of theories” moniker (Seear 2014), as it is surrounded by layers of myths, stereotypes, patriarchal norms and coercion.

Establishing the premise that beneath the surface of constructing endometriosis as an enigma, chaos or something messy and mystical hides a melding of various aspects of (neo)patriarchy,² I proceed to offer a slightly different cultural studies

1. This work was supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS) within the “Young Researchers” programme and by the ARIS research and infrastructure programme “The Production of Meaning and Knowledge in a Time of Crisis: Cultural, Religious and Scientific-Developmental Aspects of Societies in Slovenia, the Balkans, and Europe”.
2. Neopatriarchy is the continuation of patriarchy, “a structure and culture of male domination over women, manifested in everyday life in both the public and private spheres” (Zaviršek 2018: 176). Neopatriarchy, one of the forms of patriarchy, emerges or is renewed after apparent historical victories of feminist and other equality movements. It acts as a dark shadow that reminds us of how the post-feminist conjuncture is often “more of the same”, which calls for new feminist interventions.

analysis that proposes and tests a scheme of understanding of this "mysterious" disease, which takes into account the existing literature on endometriosis and its medical management as well as personal testimonies captured by digital ethnography. As existing conceptualisations inadequately capture cultural realities and meanings, I attempt a new articulation of happenings that will shift the debate around treating endometriosis within the medical system and situate it on the spectrum of the politics of female pain. I argue for it to be conceptualised and understood as a form of patriarchal medical violence.

In deploying the term patriarchal medical violence, I am first of all referring to the structural violence in the medical system that arises as a consequence of omnipresent patriarchal forces. In 1969, Johan Galtung introduced the term structural violence to describe violence that "is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (Galtung 1969: 171). In recent decades, certain flaws of the term have been recognised (Herrick and Bell 2020; Macassa et al. 2021; Raguz 2021), however, it still offers a potent ground for highlighting the ubiquitousness of hegemony and analysing the complex interactions between institutions and other powerful social, political and economic forces guiding our everyday life (e.g. hierarchies of race, gender, economic position, language, ethnicity, etc.), which harm individuals or groups (Stonington et al. 2018: 1959–1960). Such modes of functioning are usually not recognised as violent, since they are perceived as "given", "natural" or "just the way things are" (Galtung 1969: 173; Shapiro 2018: 3; Macassa et al. 2021: 8). Thus, even though some voices call for the abandonment of such terminology, it is vital to use the word violence to translate actions into words as precisely as possible and enable problems to attain visibility and recognition (Chadwick 2021). In this study, I argue that the female body is a site where structural and direct violence meet, which is heard in the voices of those who suffer.

This article features a short historical overview of the discourses on endometriosis in the last 2,500 years, which can help reflect on how past ideas on women's health and pain persist in the present with minor variations. What follows is an analysis of the contemporary perceptions of female pain in the context of endometriosis. By examining the politics of pain and the relationships of power in medical discourses and systems, I try to reveal how patriarchal violence more or less secretly perpetuates aspects of physical pain that directly or indirectly discipline women's bodies and push them into a variety of unwanted sexual and reproductive roles.

In line with the general need to disrupt patriarchal language and formalised academic and medical forms, I occasionally combine my observations with more personal and directly political tones, aware that biased political knowledge is not only legitimate within cultural and gender studies but also a cherished tradition.

2 The burden of the past: (gendered) histories of endometriosis

We are the stronger, and they the weaker. They are obliged to believe all that we tell them. They are not in a position to dispute anything we say to them, and we, therefore, may be said to have them at our mercy. We, being men, have our patients, who are women, at our mercy.

(Seymour Haden, British Medical Journal 1867: 396, in King 1998: 247)

As an extension of the introduction, this chapter offers a short historical overview of Western discourses on endometriosis in the last 2,500 years – from antiquity to the present. The overview is schematic: it does not strive to be comprehensive, detailed or perfect but seeks to create the basis for understanding the perceptions and treatments of endometriosis in the past. The stroll through the labyrinths of the past and the readings of history are highly subjective and porous. In the generalised historical discourses of endometriosis as a totality of statements and experiences of a certain time, I highlight certain myths, stories and sayings that act as “atoms of discourse” (Foucault 2001: 86); I create historical collages and compose a story – almost a historical fiction – based on historical testimonies and insights.³

The written history of endometriosis usually starts in 1860 when Karl von Rokitansky provided the first pathological description (Chaichian 2019), although Nezhat et al. (2012: 1–2) convincingly showed that signs of endometriosis corresponding with contemporary clinical interpretations of the disease could be found much earlier. Therefore, it is worth pointing to classical and late antiquity when one of the most well-known medical documents was created – The Hippocratic Corpus – in which Hippocrates and other Greco-Roman authors described the *hysterikos*–*hysterike* family of disorders based on the assumption that the uterus was not an ordinary organ and was more akin to a living animal hungry for motherhood. This gave rise to one of the most deeply held dogmas of ancient medicine: the idea that if a woman did not fulfil her socially desirable roles – first and foremost, marriage and motherhood – her womb would not fulfil its purpose and would begin to wander around, contributing to the development of various diseases (Laqueur 1990: 110; Nezhat et al. 2012: 2–3; Dean-Jones 1992: 61–62; Veith 1965: 9–39).

In the Middle Ages, theological influences and supernatural explanations of phenomena began competing and interfering with as well as actively destroying

3. Due to space constraints, the historical part remains incomplete and invites readers to explore the topic through additional sources.

scientific heritage (Nezhat et al. 2012: 11). Explanations reached a new peak around the 17th century when endometriosis pain, perceived as the so-called "suffocation or strangulation of the womb", was increasingly read as a sign of demonic possession (Maines 1999: 28; Veith 1965: 57), madness or witchcraft (Nezhat et al. 2012: 15; Veith 1965: 56–73).

Until the mid-19th century, most physicians did not treat endometriosis surgically despite the availability of anaesthesia and aseptic techniques. Instead, they opted for either lighter techniques (e.g. hot douches and morphine to treat pain) or more invasive techniques, such as bloodletting or applying leeches to the cervix. As doctors believed that the patients were in pain because of their displaced wombs, they invented other unusual forms of treatment.⁴ The more dangerous methods included attempts to puncture nodules, which had a 70% mortality rate. Electric shock treatment was also used (Nezhat et al. 2012: 42–44, 46).

Even though hysteria could already be found in The Hippocratic Corpus and that its everchanging symptoms resembling endometriosis had since been present, in the 19th century, the period of "the great confinement" (Foucault 1988: 38) when people were exiled to various institutions (Foucault 1988), hysteria was deemed a pandemic (Maines 1999: 5). Furthermore, since it was perceived as a form of madness, it was treated as such (Nezhat et al. 2012: 35). It had sufficiently broad definitions and symptoms, which were frequently updated for application to non-standard expressions of femininity; for this reason, some contemporary researchers call it the "dumpster diagnosis" (Jones 2015: 1095–1096). Meanwhile, in 1860, clitoridectomy, the removal of the clitoris, briefly became popular (Ehrenreich and English 2005: 136), and then towards the beginning of the 20th century, physicians expanded the definition of hysteria to its limits, making it so all-encompassing that, around 1900, it was bereft of all meaning⁵ (Jones 2015: 1096).

By the 20th century, advances were made in a variety of "scientific arenas", with significant impacts on endometriosis (Nezhat et al. 2012: 37). Despite surgical developments, the idea of endometriosis as a mental illness remained intact. Some physicians described the womb as the "controlling organ" that affects the entire female body and thoughts, while others believed the same about the

4. One such treatment included the physician manually manipulating the uterus to try and move it into its "natural" place, while another aimed to achieve the same goal by riding in a carriage or during a rough horseback riding session (Nezhat et al. 2012: 42–46).
5. Until the American Psychiatric Association officially removed it from the canon of contemporary diseases in 1952, hysteria was the most often diagnosed disease in history (Maines, 1999: 2; Jones, 2015: 1090).

ovaries. As these two organs were the main culprits of all female diseases, female sexual and reproductive organs became the main targets for medical treatments⁶ (Ehrenreich and English 2005: 132, 134–135).

In 1927, John Sampson – considered the father of endometriosis, whose research and findings were internationally recognised – proposed the name endometriosis in a study. In the 20 years following his high-profile publications, endometriosis was found throughout the body, including in adolescents (Nezhat et al. 2012: 49). As presented above, based on historical traces and mutations, endometriosis can be considered old; however, it is not insignificant that it only took on its name and classification at the time of the decline of hysteria about a century ago. Thus, it can be concluded that the ashes of hysteria moulded the terrain for endometriosis to grow.

Since the 1960s, endometriosis has often been called “the career woman’s disease” and has remained associated with women who decide against having children (Shohat 1992: 65). Such conceptions strongly influence treatment type. According to Nezhat et al. (2012: 51), “Perhaps most remarkably, some treatments have remained the same for hundreds of years with only minor variations”. In recent years, there have been some notable developments in the medical treatment of endometriosis mapped in the medical literature; nevertheless, as I discuss later, the idea of the wandering womb as a patriarchal fantasy, a prescription for traditional gender roles and sexualities, still echoes in the medical management of the disease today.

3 Endometriosis and female pain: an ethnographic study

To the woman, God said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in child bearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”
(Genesis 3:16)

According to the widespread definition created by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP 2020), pain can be understood as “An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage”. Despite generalised understandings identifying pain as an unpleasant bodily sensation or disorder that can be

6. For example, in the second half of the 19th century, surgery became more focused on controlling what were called “female personality disorders”. The most common surgical intervention “in the female personality” was the removal of ovaries, also called “female castration” (Laqueur 1990: 176–177; Ehrenreich and English 2005: 136).

accompanied or replaced by emotional distress and suffering (Kumar and Elavarasi 2016: 88), as a cultural studies scholar, I understand pain as a phenomenon in which bodily (some may say natural) factors intermesh with cultural layers (Morris 1991), as people and cultures do not narrate, represent and understand pain in the same way (Patterson 2021: 315). "General cultural beliefs" and the "dominant medical culture" influence pain, and besides the impact of space and time, pain is also gendered (ibid.), being common knowledge that there is, indeed, a "gender pain gap" (Bimpong et al. 2021). Several evidence of gender pain bias in the medical system can be found in the literature (some of it presented below), still reflecting the acute need for practical changes and additional empirical data and theorisation with the help of different disciplines that can offer diverse methodological and theoretical bases with their own passions and concerns.

This research is based on digital ethnography. I analyse 33 stories (personal confessions of women with endometriosis in Slovenia) published on the website of Endozavest – Society for Raising Awareness for Endometriosis⁷ between 16 January 2017 and 24 April 2023. The main method – locally, culturally and geographically limited digital ethnography – was partly supported by secondary sources in digital and print forms (academic and other productions, such as articles, comments, platforms, etc.), which were publicly available and accessible between 2020 and 2023. Additional sources confirmed the presence and persistence of some of the trends and tendencies presented in the study. In one part of the article, ethnography and autoethnography⁸ were also carefully embedded. I used a "flexible cultural studies methodology" (Pužar 2011: 82) to summarise stories that were read (*digital ethnography*), observed (*classical ethnography*) and lived/embodied (*auto-ethnography*) into a new model based on the perception of women's pain. This strictly qualitative approach uses personal experiences as evidence⁹ (Berry 2011: 166) and prioritises complexity (Haggis

7. Endozavest – Society for Raising Awareness for Endometriosis was founded in 2016 by women who had endometriosis themselves and wanted to discuss it, raise public awareness and help each other. During almost a decade of existence, it became known as a strong, persistent and professional force that offers a space for education, support and efforts to improve patient care (Endozavest 2025). My position here is not that of an insider or community member.
8. The autoethnographic method reports on the researcher's personal and emotional life and analyses social science concepts and perspectives through introspection (Bloor and Wood 2006: 18).
9. There has been a recognised need for such qualitative evidence that produces insight that can guide healthcare services and improve structures of care (Cunnington et al. 2024: 1–2).

2008: 165), contextuality (Denzin 2003; Saukko 2003) and reflexivity (Berry 2011: 166–167) over “the usual axes of individualization and generalization” (Pužar 2011: 83). I sought to understand lived experiences, recognise recurring cultural patterns and varying interactions of multiple factors integrated into a system (Berry 2011: 169–170; Haggis 2008: 161), a process that demanded sensitivity to the experiences of others, a certain level of vulnerability and accountability for the findings and interpretations herein.

Extensive ethnographic and autoethnographic material stored in the author’s cultural archive showcases that pain bias extends beyond the medical system and unveils the persistent normalisation of female pain in everyday life. The gendered normalisation of pain occurs by routinely ignoring pain in girls and women and through culturalisation. The process starts during childhood, where women are told to bear a little pain. When they begin menstruating, the general advice is to accept any sort of pain to get used to it over time and live with it. Women’s pain is often trivialised, thus disqualifying their experience: they are told that they are “whining for nothing”, that “that’s just the way it is” and that, according to the Slovenian proverb, “all will be well after marriage”. Women’s pain is normalised to the point that it is sometimes described as part of women’s nature or fate.¹⁰

The gendered normalisation of pain is grounded in social and political motives, where pain can be understood as a disciplining tool if a woman transgresses the desired perceptions of femininity and social roles, which in patriarchal and prevalently heteronormative environments, still often act as a patchwork of motherhood, heteronormative partnerships and panoptical homemaking.

Reflecting on the previous chapter, when it comes to the relationship between female pain and motherhood, childbirth has historically been privileged over women’s pain (Virdi 2019). This is similar to genital pain, which many women experience outside of sexuality; however, in the medical system, penetration

10. Katarina’s (Endozavest 2022) testimony on the Endozavest website reflects this: “I thought that this is how it should be, that this is part of a woman’s life”. Many similar examples can be found in popular culture. In the second season of the TV series *Fleabag*, one of the conversations in the third episode went like this:

Women are born with pain built in. It’s our physical destiny: period pains, sore boobs, childbirth, you know. We carry it within ourselves throughout our lives, men don’t. /.../ We have it all going on in here inside, we have pain on a cycle for years and years and years and then just when you feel you are making peace with it all, what happens? The menopause comes, the fucking menopause comes, and it is the most wonderful fucking thing in the world. And yes, your entire pelvic floor crumbles and you get fucking hot and no one cares, but then you’re free. No longer a slave, no longer a machine with parts. You’re just a person.

appears as a criterion for measuring genital pain and, consequently, treatment success (Farrell and Cacchioni 2012: 331). Even if a woman does not participate in a heteronormative partnership and/or motherhood, the politics of pain, with its ideological structures and mechanisms, often results in women staying at home, away from the public sphere, where they and their voice are relegated to controlled niches (Pužar 2019: 72). Thus, the normalisation of pain can be seen as a form of gendered systemic violence that ensures that women's autonomy and agency remain limited.

When an individual tries to break out of the described social order by claiming the right to manage her own body and pain – which could fall outside the categories of givenness, unchangeability and normativity – there are various "defence mechanisms" to ensure that any such attempted "attack" is nipped in the bud. These include the more or less indirect methods of silencing women and pushing them back or trying to push them into the frame of patriarchal norms. To support this thesis, this chapter offers three ways in which female pain in the context of endometriosis is perceived and managed: 1) when women are not believed and their pain is labelled a lie or its milder form – dramatisation; 2) when pain is (mostly) acknowledged but its symptoms are understood to be of psychological origin and 3) when women are believed – "even" the fact that the symptoms are of physical, not psychological, origin – but various reasons transfer responsibility to the one who inhabits the body, the one who causes all these ailments.

These three perceptions of female pain (dramatised pain, mental illness and "female deficit") reflect three figurations of women with endometriosis (endo women): the "dramatic woman", the "crazy woman" and the "problematic" or "unworthy" woman, which are often interlaced in everyday life, as shown in the testimonies herein. They can also be seen as an updated version of the historical femininities described in the previous chapter. Thus, the following section can also be read as a reproduction of patriarchal power structures through the ages, an illustration of "how the form and position of femininity hardly changes, how they usually only assume the appearance of change and how the forms that do change give the impression of constancy" (Pužar 2019: 67).

3.1 Dramatised pain

In the medical system, doctors' qualifications make them the ultimate actors in deciding and socially legitimising pain and suffering (Johansson et al. 1999: 1800). In the case of endometriosis, pain can sometimes not be proven with material evidence, but merely by the words of a woman (de Souza São Bento and Nunes Moreira 2017: 3030), whom doctors can decide whether to believe.

Often, women's pain is not recognised as real and/or serious, which can be seen in two things. To diagnose endometriosis, surgery is needed to determine the bodily signs of the disease and pain. It is the organic, bodily state that must prove the legitimacy of the "really painful" pain. Furthermore, women have testified that physicians have advised battling pain with "psychological solutions" – relaxation – often disregarding their symptoms or mockingly telling them to their face that no one has ever listed so many symptoms before (Manica, Endozavest 2022). This is a form of humiliation and insult: even if a doctor does not tell her directly that she is lying, their words and actions convey the same message.

The fact that women are not believed and that their self-reports of pain are classified as exaggeration, dramatisation, hysteria or half-truths can be explained through Miranda Fricker's (2007:¹¹ 33, in Barnes 2020) concept of the "credibility deficit": as gender stereotypes portray women as untrustworthy and irrational, they are perceived and treated as a less reliable source of information. As women are perceived as more emotional and sensitive, their pain is tied to psychological issues despite physical characteristics or the physical origin of the disease (Hoffman and Tarzian 2001). Endo women are often labelled overly sensitive, fragile and weak, as illustrated by the following story¹² (Saša, Endozavest 2022):

I call my gyno to tell her my problems. She says that it's normal, that menstruation hurts, that I'm just weak because I can't bear the pain. My next period, the story with pain repeats, and then the next one and the next one and the next one. Pain is becoming unbearable. I felt like my body is constantly in pain, even in the days without my period. One day, pain was simply too much for me to get up. My partner carried me to the ER. I had an ultrasound. They saw nothing. I was given a painkilling injection and sent home. I was only diagnosed with endometriosis at an infertility clinic. Before that, my pain was just painful menstruation, and I was "weak" because I couldn't stand the pain.

The "credibility deficit" that attributes women lacking credibility points to how untrustworthy or biased the medical system is. Gender bias and stereotypes within the medical system are well documented in the empirical literature (e.g. Hoffman and Tarzian 2001: 13; Chang et al. 2008; Billock 2018; Samulowitz et al. 2018: 8–9; Barnes 2020). Such actions are, of course, neither neutral nor

11. Fricker, Miranda (2007): *Epidemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

12. In many stories, the medical professionals involved were themselves women. In order to better understand the main sources for their involvement in the creation and reproduction of certain patriarchal patterns, additional analysis is needed.

coincidental, with their presence evident especially when it comes to women's sexual and reproductive health.

The questioning of the existence and reality of a woman's pain in performing her sexual and reproductive roles is certainly not a contemporary invention. In the past, scientists often posed the question of whether female pain was really horrible or whether it even existed. In 1949, the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* published a groundbreaking study on labour pain, which seems rather inappropriate from a contemporary perspective: the focus was on whether women actually felt pain during labour or whether it was simply a hysterical response to a stressful situation (Hardy and Javert 1949). To confirm that childbirth was indeed painful, we would have to wait until it was possible to measure pain on men (Barnes 2020). This "proof" of labour pain fuelled the belief that it was influenced by the proximity of the husband during labour (Norr et al. 1977) and the woman's emotional stability during pregnancy (Nettelbladt et al. 1976). Until the 1970s, scientists assured women "that little or no pain should be possible – in fact, birth should be positively enjoyable – if only they could just *calm down*" (Barnes 2020).

Women's pain was not treated as a serious issue worthy of medical attention in the past, and this persists today. In the case of endometriosis, this shows in the fact that during consultations, women begin by apologising to their doctors for wasting their time with something as unimportant and trivial as their pain. In the medical system, a woman's pain is perceived and treated as something redundant, unnecessary and distracting. Physicians and other health professionals react accordingly. Women are sometimes sent away by nurses and do not even make it to their physician or a specialist (Karmen, Endozavest 2022):

Ten years ago, I wanted to speak to my gyno about how I think I have endometriosis, and the nurse sent me away saying: "You're too young for that!" I doubt that she even knew in that moment how old I was. My only regret is that I was afraid to insist, despite my age. I was actually ashamed because she said that in front of other patients, and I almost sank into the ground.

If the physician believes that her pain is not real, the woman is often not referred to a specialist or sent for further testing, or she must "fight" for it, as pointed out by Patricija (Endozavest 2022):

I was diagnosed when I was 34. Ever since I was 20, I suffered chronic pain and painful period, painful ovulation and painful intercourse. [...] After years of unsuccessful debates with my gynaecologist, she finally sent me into tertiary care. Endometriosis was found in my ovaries, my bowels and my bladder.

In cases when the door to a GP, gynaecologist or other specialist remains closed to women, they often turn to self-funding services:

I got diagnosed by coincidence. My mom read an article on endo. She encouraged me to self-fund a check-up with a specialist. In October last year, it was confirmed that I have endo. I waited for a diagnosis for at least six years (Laura, Endozavest 2022).

Notably, self-funded services are often (financially) inaccessible, and in general, such medical “management” of female pain and disease reveals structural discrimination. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 2017, the first published guidelines on the management of endometriosis by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in the United Kingdom succinctly stated, “Listen to women” (Boseley 2017).¹³

Before moving to the next section, which deals with the perception of female pain as a mental illness, two things need to be further emphasised. First, neither this nor the next section argues that “real” or “serious” pain is necessarily physical or bodily in origin. Pain hurts the same, whether it is predominantly of a physical or mental origin, but its origin is important in light of treatment (Barnes 2020). Second, an occurrence that is often forgotten or deliberately omitted from the discussion of believing endo women is that a doctor’s inability to locate the physical origin of female pain does not necessarily mean the absence of it.

3.2 Mental illness

When physicians fail to check or cannot locate the physical origin of female pain, it is often ascribed to a psychological origin, falling into the mental illness category. Diagnoses and treatments taken from the pool of mental illnesses often depend on whether physicians believe their patients. If physicians believe that women feel pain, they can be diagnosed with a somatisation disorder, in which emotional and psychosocial issues are expressed through physical symptoms (Jones 2015: 1102). If they believe that a woman’s symptoms are imagined, they can give a hypochondria diagnosis, which is perceived as an imaginary disorder that exists only “in her head”. Endo women can also be diagnosed with other mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder (Turner 2022). Some doctors still believe that endometriosis is a mental illness or that the poor mental health of

13. The debate on the problem of disbelief in women is much wider than the scope of this article. For example, it was an important part of the #MeToo movement, the notorious Harvey Weinstein case and the recently concluded trial of Amber Heard and Johnny Depp. It features in various online spaces, for example, on Twitter, with the #BelieveWomen hashtag (Barnes 2020).

women causes it (Freedman 2017), which supports women's well-founded claim that some GPs lack knowledge, awareness and compassion – instead filling the void with personal opinions that support myths about endometriosis (Jones et al. 2015). As shown in the above historical overview of the disease, female pain, especially pain in the region of the reproductive organs, has always been subject to fantasies (Shohat 1992: 60), often meandering through the mental landscape of women. The next part of this paper presents several cases depicting how the updated historical project is carried out in contemporary Slovenia, often under the guise of care, kindness, and good intentions.

After the appointment (or an examination that reveals nothing remarkable), doctors often kindly enquire whether women are feeling alright or are experiencing difficulties in life. Laura's (Endozavest 2022) situation is typical:

The last time, my doctor told me that she can't help me and asked me if I was otherwise feeling fine. She wanted to know if I had any trouble at home or in school. She hinted that my issues were psychological. After three years of constant examinations, they decided that I was making my pain up.

Adolescents and women are generally assumed to be buzzing with too much emotion, with hypersensitivity and overload as the basic building blocks:

My GP also began ascribing my issues to emotional teenage problems, but I knew this was not true. [...] When I insisted that the issue lies elsewhere, she showed her scepticism, but with a lack of other ideas, she sent me to see a gyno and check if perhaps this is where my troubles originate (Branka, Endozavest 2017).

Many stories revealed that to help overcome the burdens and distresses of everyday life on women, psychiatric treatment is conveniently and well-meaningly offered to heal pain. This advice – a "break" that will "heal" the woman – is presented as something that may replenish her's energy to functionally (and "voluntarily") continue to participate in the patriarchal regime, with all its burdens, although such "well-meaning care" acts as a "form of political rationalisation of violence" (Zaviršek 2018: 13).

If a woman declines an offer of psychological treatment, this is another reason for the blame to be put on her. If she accepts psychological help and is then labelled mentally ill, she is further oppressed by the system of regulation and subjugation; she is subjected to further stigmatisation and, in some cases, new forms of humiliation, submittal and theft of her dignity. The common denominator of the listed options is the creation of new reasons to cease the search for information regarding the physical origins of pain or to stop or neglect the physiological treatment of endometriosis, regardless of a confirmed diagnosis. This can be seen in

Urška's (Endozavest 2017) story "IT'S ALL PSYCHOLOGICAL": "Ever since my first period, I battled pain in my abdomen, cramps, vomiting, dizzy spells, extremely strong bleeding; seeing my GP and gyno, I was quickly sent away, saying that this is normal and that it's all psychological". Along with an extremely long period of not being diagnosed despite seeing her GP and gynaecologist, what stands out are the effects of hormonal medication, especially what her gynaecologist told her during a check-up: "First go to a psychiatrist to cure depression, then we'll treat endometriosis" (ibid.). Disappointed, she turned to a self-pay gynaecological clinic; she wrote her story while waiting for an operation (ibid.).

As Slavoj Žižek (2018) poignantly summarised, the most effective lies are those that include truth. Notably, it has been proven that endo women experience more mental distress than other women. In a synthesis of 42 studies, Culley et al. (2013: 634) demonstrated changes in the mental health of endo women and that compared with the control groups and the general population, endo women averaged a higher level of depression, anxiety and other psychological issues. This is unsurprising, given that these women describe their lives as an endless battle with pain (Grogan et al. 2018), briefly summarised by Urša (Endozavest, 2022) here: "I can no longer live in a body that is constantly in pain".

Pain is always connected to psychological and emotional distress (Guidone 2020: 274) and has negative effects on mental health. However, other factors can cause patients to suffer mentally, for example, misdiagnoses of physical states that cause "iatrogenic" symptoms and diagnoses that develop as a consequence of systemic and human-ethical deficits or result from "wrong and harmful treatment" (Ule 2003: 225).

For example, Manca's (Endozavest 2022) testimony draws attention to the consequences of medical descriptions and understandings of female pain in endometriosis as "psychological flaws":

My story is no better. I have also been plagued by symptoms from A to Z for years, and I had a HORRENDOUS pain that I can't describe with words. Nobody would listen to me either. My doctor didn't believe me [...] She asked me if I had any other issues, mental. She sent me home with a referral to a psychiatrist. I cried for hours and hours. I told myself I wasn't crazy ... but I knew I'll go mad if I'd have to continue living with this pain.

In the second part of Manca's story, the reader also learns that it took her 11 years to be diagnosed – a period that she describes as "a struggle" (ibid.). In some situations, women feel the pressure to accept the identity of a "crazy hypochondriac woman" (Cole et al. 2021: 182) and see themselves through the eyes of others.

3.3 "Female deficit"

What happens when endometriosis symptoms, especially pain, show in ways that cannot easily be dismissed as a lie, exaggeration or madness? Today, unlike in the past, we know that the belief that the wandering uterus causes mental illnesses or endometriosis is wrong, but the logic behind it has survived, albeit with slight modifications or corrections. Nowadays, hormones, among other things, are blamed for causing these states. Female hormones – oestrogen and progesterone – are often blamed for endometriosis. There is also the "theory of estrogen dominance" that supposedly "proves" that "all women are potentially endometriotic" (Jones 2015: 1101), that is, that endometriosis comes with the female gender, just like pain. Alongside hormones, numerous psychological and physical characteristics are linked to endometriosis, such as being underweight, egocentric, having above-average intelligence, higher levels of anxiety and a need for perfection (Shohat 1992: 62). With that, certain characteristics are pathologised and, thus, situated as problems within the woman's body or mental state.

An example is Simona (Endozavest 2022): "During my gynaecological examination, I mustered the courage to mention my difficulties. A few short questions and useless advice later, she sent me home saying that nothing was wrong apart from my lack of confidence". In the case of endometriosis, as in other cultural phenomena, norms and pressures are adapted to current ideological updates, and in this particular case, the notion of confidence culture (Orgad and Gill 2022) can easily be identified. Female confidence is "frequently framed in terms of overcoming deeply rooted internal obstacles and correcting a psychological deficit" (ibid.: 6), while lack of confidence is considered "individual toxic baggage" (ibid.: 144) that treats women as isolated and excluded from the culture that normalises the pathologisation, objectification, control, guilt and hate speech against them (ibid.). Again, this puts the cultural focus on individuals; the problem is turned inwards, depoliticised and refigured as work that women need to do on themselves.

Finally, in a range of discourses, endo women are constructed and perceived as unsuccessful women. As reflected in the ethnographic material and secondary sources, there are two important aspects of the attributed failure: the first one being that these women might not be ideal sexual partners. In a 1997 self-help book by Valerie Worwood and Julie Stonehouse (2007: 48, in Jones 2015: 1096), *The Endometriosis Natural Treatment Program*, the authors concluded that "When sexual intercourse is painful, she cannot always be the willing, relaxed lover she would like to be". This concise phrasing offers two insights: first, women

must always be available to offer pleasure to the man; second, they must perform this role willingly and smilingly and must internalise it regardless of pain.

Similarly, the contemporary medical literature still features theories on how a lesser degree of procreation leads to a higher risk of endometriosis, hinting that the body punishes the childless woman. Such ideas are also showcased in Slovenian ethnography: "The kind lady interviewed me on a multitude of things and also concluded that all my troubles will disappear when I give birth" (Patricija, Endozavest 2022).

I started taking pills every day in the morning and at night. After six months, the situation was not good. I was still in pain. Every time I saw them, they answered: you are not well, it would be best for you to get pregnant... (Urška, Endozavest 2017).

Returning to Worwood and Stonehouse (2007: 48, in Jones 2015: 1096), the authors continue their account of endo woman: "And finally, the ultimate cruelty, she may be unable to conceive /.../ For many sufferers, endometriosis is an affront to the female experience on all levels". In such discourses, the endo woman is subject to pity and contempt because she cannot (or does not want to) conceive and bear children (Jones 2015: 1097), which points to the fact that even today, childbearing and motherhood are still part of the irreplaceable "aura of femininity".

4 Conclusion

In the field of pain studies, it is well known fact that "pain exposes deep problems of meaning" (Charon 2021: 33) on both individual and societal levels. In cultural studies, pain is one of many examples of the misleading dichotomy between nature and culture, both of which contribute to the discursive, affective, material and social textures of everyday lives.

This cultural studies account looked into (medical) perceptions of female pain in the context of endometriosis, with three main hypotheses regarding 1) the bare existence of patriarchal medical violence, 2) structural and direct violence, (ab)using female physical pain as a disciplining tool and pushing women into particular sexual and reproductive roles and 3), by doing so, producing many dehumanising effects.

My goal in investigating patriarchal medical violence was not to discredit the medical system, but quite the opposite: to advocate that medicine matters and that different disciplines can support and learn from each other, perhaps even when their contributions are (or seem to be) in conflict. Despite some opinions claiming that my work is overly critical and negative towards the medical system, I try to engage with the topic in a productive and meaningful way, using "intellectual

empathy" (Chadwick 2021: 343) and effort to unveil the work of culture, its power and consequences – which, through the research process, present many paradoxes and ethical dilemmas – with the hope that this can contribute to "useful knowledge" production (Grossberg 2010: 24).

The material, which was gathered by combining ethnography and secondary sources, demonstrates the persistent desire for static femininity, as endo women with aching bodies, perceived as "dramatic", "crazy" or "unworthy", usually cannot wriggle out of the panopticon of home. While motherhood once chained the traditional woman to her home, for the endo woman, it is her physical pain.

It can be argued that although, in principle, care is reserved for women (Zaviršek 2018: 176), as it is associated with femininity (Snitow 1983: 249), contemporary societies are always "concerned" about the position of women, they show a certain "care", and in the case of endometriosis, instead of concern for the health status of women, the primary concern is what women lose to the disease. The politics of female pain in endometriosis unveils how the cultural (patriarchal) mourning of the roles of mother, homemaker and ideal heterosexual partner is felt on individual bodies. Despite the illusion of post-patriarchy, at least partly, there is a notable loyalty to seemingly outdated patriarchal patterns. However, cultural analysis of discourses and meanings also offers a reversal in meaning-making. Thus, what is regrettable and can be mourned is what endo women in current structures of everydayness actually lose – their dignity, security and the possibility of making decisions about their own lives. The loss of possibility is the loss of autonomy.

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UVOD V TEMATSKI BLOK

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC BLOCK



Memory studies for the people: Marxism and popular culture in contemporary approaches to memory studies

Memory is a phenomenon, process, and social fact that has attracted much discussion. Even before memory studies emerged as an interdisciplinary research field in the 1980s, memory, among others referring to its (de)formation, selection, unconscious, affects, social use and (re)mediation, was studied and understood both in relation to individuals and from a more collective perspective. The latter has pointed out the range of institutions, from monuments and graveyards to history textbooks, state museums, international institutions (e.g., UNESCO) and, more recently, also digital infrastructures that deal with the processes of the storing, forming and reproducing of communicative, political, social and cultural memory. In the last century, studies of collective memory have sought to address the broader "memory culture" that has long formed a vital part of society, and recurring questions like what is being left behind, what will be remembered, and what forgotten, why, and in whose name – in the context of very different academic disciplines.

Even though sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science have for quite a while considered individual and collective memory as a relevant research object, memory studies as an academic interdisciplinary field was only born in the 1980s following Maurice Halbwachs' (1925/1992) work on the "social frameworks" of memory, Pierre Nora's conceptualisation of "realms [also: sites] of memory" (1989), the advent of "archive fever" (Derrida, 1996), and the demise of Marxism. In the past 20 years, memory studies has consolidated its place in academia, with its own international Memory Studies Association (MSA) along with numerous dedicated working groups, workshops, international conferences, networks, academic journals, and series issued by established academic publishers. Memory studies is today a constantly expanding community of scholars and activists who seek to engage with both "traditional" and current issues, from the way national heroes and revolutionary events are represented in textbooks to the slow means for and quiet forms of commemorating gradual transformations and constants, such as climate change, inequalities, and systemic violence.

This issue engages with the broader historical "origins" of the field of memory studies. It does so by considering both the relevance and limitations of established approaches to the study of memory in the context of transitions to postsocialism, neoliberalism, and also the ever more digital, platformised and datafied cultural experience. The issue has two aims: to articulate the potential held today by

Marxist approaches to memory studies, and to foreground contemporary popular culture as a significant dimension of collective memory that calls for particular methodological approaches. To that end, this issue contains two sections, each with three articles.

An inspiration for this issue is Enzo Traverso's hypothesis in the book *Leftwing Melancholia* (2017). He contends the missed encounter between the fields of Marxism and memory studies is not only due to their methodological differences and research objects, but is also a peculiar coincidence of historical time. After the theoretical power of Marxism eventually reached its limits in the 1980s, memory studies not only arose as a new field of research, but enjoyed a veritable "memory boom" in the 1990s. The decline of Marxism, in turn, was linked to the crisis of the whole chain of political references, of socialism, the working class, and the Communist Party, coupled with the welfare state and regulation. These markers are becoming objects of nostalgia and of a retroutopian imaginary or, at worst, as signs of a (future) totalitarianism that must be prevented at all costs. Meanwhile, memory politics, abuses of collective memory, and burgeoning research in the field of memory have all been an increasingly influential part of our everyday life in transition, and of how we imagine the world, see the past, assess the present, and imagine the future.

Each of the three articles in the first section of the issue provides a theoretical and historical response to this debate, and advocates not only possible but even urgent materialist and Marxist interventions in the field of memory studies. Placing the field of memory into the broader spectrum of social dynamics, we can no longer ignore the deeply antagonistic forces of the neoliberal transition that additionally hold strong material implications for memory studies and memory culture.

The opening article by Gal Kirn, "A contribution to Marxist memory studies: The structural need of capital to forget violence and eternally remember debt" makes it clear that the theoretical dealing of Marx/ism with memory studies has actually entailed a series of fascinating encounters: from thinking about the primitive accumulation of capital and the iconoclast powers of capital to the emancipatory and redeeming dimensions of the memory of the oppressed. The article goes on to describe a metatheoretical social bind between the structural logic of capital which, albeit necessary, forgets the histories of violence in the recurring cycles of capitalist accumulation, and the other structurally necessary remembrance of debt. Kirn's extension of the Lazzarato's notion of indebted subjectivity – revealing that the moral and memorial aspects of debt have been often overlooked by Marxism – leads this text to argue this to be an area for a productive encounter with Marxist memory scholarship, especially as concerns the topics of reparation, restitution, and debt cancellation.

The question of the remembrance of the violence of the civil war and dictatorship in Spain has since 1936 been an example of disputed/contested memory and memoryscapes, as extensively studied by Daniel Palacios González. His article “Memory as reproductive labour: From traumatic remembrance to institutionalised victimhood” considers the memory of the mass graves and its remediation and reproduction with the help of Marxist feminist scholars, such as Lise Vogel, Alba Gotby, Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Silvia Federici, and Hannah Proctor. Based on ethnographic research and evaluating mourning and monumental practices, institutional political action, Palacios González addresses the importance of emotional labour as part of memory where the possibility of consciousness-raising is confronted by the state and its apparatuses, whose imperative is to reproduce the mode of production.

The section concludes with a text by Maria Urbina: “The narrative of a transformative leader: Neoliberal memory politics and the reframing of Augusto Pinochet in Chile”. Here, Urbina looks at the historical “origins” and creation of the public memory of the very first neoliberal transition; namely, the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Urbina argues that the reframing of the coup by Chilean institutions was intended to dismantle any evidence of collective solidarity and agency among the working class. The core of the presented argument examines how Pinochet’s death in 2006 caused a shift in the memory process, emphasising the neoliberal narrative of the transformation having been a pivotal moment for modernisation and national renewal. The article builds on previous work that called for a bottom-up approach to memory to counteract the institutionalised methods, and primarily focused on Chile and how the top-down approach to collective memory has romanticised the Pinochet regime as a historical moment that brought about a positive transformation and a turning point, positioning the country as an economic exception in its own right, in contrast to the image of Salvador Allende as a fallen hero.

While Urbina’s article introduces popular culture as a powerful site of collective memory, it also encourages the reader to consider the methodological complexity of studying popular culture and its impact on people’s attitudes, behaviours and actions. Accordingly, the article may be viewed as a soft introduction to the second section of the issue. In this section, the connection of collective memory to cultural production, distribution, consumption and reception is placed in the context of contemporary popular culture and popular imaginaries, which are considered at the intersection between cultural industries and self-reinvented spaces, venues and practices, and digital, analogue and hybrid forms. In the outlined framework, the three articles in this section address both the eventual and gradual dimension of memory and remembering, and their media and material conditionality.

Therefore, the three articles that follow all consider popular culture as a transmedia memoryscape, each unpacking a specific methodological and conceptual dilemma regarding memory mechanisms and memory work (Kuhn 2010) – active and reflexive engagement with the past – in the post-Yugoslav context.

In the first article in this section, Jernej Kaluža and Natalija Majsova's article "Modern, postmodern and metamodern structures of feeling: big data analysis of memories of Josip Broz – Tito in the 21st century" investigates the reach and explanatory potential of the concept of metamodern memory by investigating how memories of socialist Yugoslavia – notably of Josip Broz - Tito – are articulated and mediated by generational, political and media dynamics. With that goal in mind, the authors perform innovative big-data analysis of 179 memory interviews with senior persons who spent their childhood, youth and adulthood in socialist Yugoslavia, as they engaged with a corpus compiled by six generations of undergraduate students, to trace how memories are not just recollections of events but reflect evolving popular imaginaries underpinned by political contexts and media ecologies. Kaluža and Majsova identify modern, postmodern and metamodern structures of feeling as entangled in the interviewees' memories, and determine how Tito as a symbolic figure evolved in these complex memories, from heroic moderniser to pop-cultural trickster.

Nina Cvar and Jasmina Šepetavc's contribution "Bold smugglers and DIY heroes: Collective memories and erasures of Yugoslav gaming histories" continues the discussion on the dialectic of ruptures and continuities in collective memory processes. The authors analyse the recent global "technostalgic" momentum from a local perspective, examining how – and to what mnemonic effect – socialist Yugoslavia's unique geopolitical position and self-managed socialist experiment fostered vibrant do-it-yourself (DIY) computing and gaming cultures. The authors dissect the recent nostalgia for late Yugoslav computing and computer games by considering extant historical sources and juxtaposing them against more recently constructed memory sites, such as documentaries and memoirs, to provide a critical perspective on contemporary commemorative practices. Cvar and Šepetavc argue that practices in the domain of commemorating slow technological transformations often reinforce mnemonic hegemony, privileging male-coded heroism and entrepreneurial myth-making while marginalising women, queer voices, and class-based experiences.

The section concludes with an article by Robert Bobnič and Jan Kostanjevec entitled "Yugowave and Serbwave on YouTube: Audience analysis by community detection", which introduces a third perspective on popular culture as not merely a site of memory, but a mechanism of memory work, and a generator of mnemonic communities of practice. The authors apply this view on memory to Yugowave

and set out to analyse the aesthetically specific audiovisual phenomenon, its communities, and genre-offshoots, on the YouTube platform. In the article, the authors examine the genre's evolution and using the Leiden algorithm map audience communities in a bipartite network linking commenters to their public YouTube subscriptions, drawing on data from 433 videos and 14,344 commenters associated with them, and establishing that the majority of the videos feature Serbwave war aesthetics, and attract a wide transnational audience, its commenters holding recurrent interests in history, militarism, and gaming.

Taken as a whole, the six articles that make up the present issue refer to some pressing conceptual and methodological challenges caused by the heterogeneity and fluidity of contemporary memoryscapes. Responding to these issues, the first section introduces materialist/Marxist research into the memory studies field, and highlights a major blind spot most evident in the lack of dealing with politico-economic changes. These three articles thereby provide starting points for original conceptual frameworks that allow researchers to grasp memory as a matter of lived experience and labour under specific socio-political and economic circumstances that, paraphrasing Marx, are not necessarily chosen by those living under them. The second section, in turn, zooms in on the case of post-Yugoslav popular culture to present several methodologically innovative responses to the challenges accompanying the attempts to address popular-cultural imaginaries as transmedia memoryscapes generated and (re)mediated at the conjuncture of affective, political and media infrastructures that must be constantly reassessed.

Gal Kirn and Natalija Majsova
Editors of the thematic issue

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ČLANKI

ARTICLES



Gal Kirn

A CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST MEMORY STUDIES: THE STRUCTURAL NEED OF CAPITAL TO FORGET VIOLENCE AND ETERNALLY REMEMBER DEBT

ABSTRACT

The text departs from Traverso's hypothesis concerning the impossibility of Marxism and Memory Studies encountering each other, and juxtaposes it with a few theoretical areas in Marx that may be useful for contributing to Marxist Memory Studies. The dialectical relationship within capitalism between the structurally necessary forgetting of violence and the structural remembering of debt is described before the concept of the primitive accumulation of capital and Lazzarato's (2013) crucial notion of indebted subjectivity is deployed. The moral and memorial aspects of debt have been often overlooked by Marxism, while the relationship of memory to debt and capital has been completely ignored by the majority of memory-studies scholars. In the conclusion, it is argued that this missing link provides fertile grounds for Marxist Memory Studies and for furthering debates, especially on the topics of reparation, restitution, and debt cancellation.

KEY WORDS: *Marxist memory studies, indebted subject, remembrance of debt, absence of violence, cancellation of debt, Enzo Traverso, primitive accumulation of memory, memory economy*

Prispevek k marksističnim spominskim študijam: Strukturna pozaba nasilja in večno spominjanje dolgov kapitala

IZVLEČEK

Besedilo izhaja iz hipoteze Enza Traversa o nemogočem srečanju med marksizmom in študijami spomina ter v nasprotju s tem poda serijo teoretskih točk v Marxu, ki bi lahko bile koristne za marksistične študije spomina. Postavi

začetne koordinate za mišljenje dialektičnega razmerja med strukturno nujno pozabo nasilja in strukturno nujnim spominjanjem dolga v kapitalizmu. Članek si pomaga tako s konceptom primitivne akumulacije kapitala kot z Lazzaratom (2013) konceptom zadolženega subjekta. Moralni in spominski vidik dolga je marksizem pogosto spregledal, ravno tako kot so študije spomina vprašanja in razmerje spomina do dolga in kapitala pogosto ignorirale. Besedilo ugotavlja, da je prav ta odsotna povezava lahko plodno mesto za marksistične študije spomina, zlasti za nadaljnje prispevke k temi reparacije in odpisa dolga.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: marksistične spominske študije, zadolžena subjektivnost, spominjanje dolga, odpis dolgov, odsotnost nasilja, Enzo Traverso, primitivna akumulacija spomina, spominska ekonomija

1 Introduction to memory studies: Heterogeneity with a blind spot¹

The large majority of authors working in Memory Studies agree that this latter is a and not an academic discipline. The question remains open, however, as to how strong the cohesion of this research field is in terms of shared canonical texts, topics and – most notably – methodology. Most contemporary theorists connect the birth of Memory Studies to the 1980s, typically associating it with works from Pierre Nora's national , or Aleida and Jan Assman's various forms of collective memory. From the outset, what has challenged is, as Astrid Erll has incisively put it, its self-understanding as a "multidisciplinary" field (Erll 2022). This constellation avoids any systematisation that would ascribe to it a unique methodology. Given that at least five fields/disciplines are central to this research field – psychology, history, literary studies, cultural studies and sociology – achieving methodological unity is evidently a difficulty. A new generation of scholars has elaborated further epistemic paths and has been posing new questions, adding memory activism, the critique of racism, and decolonial and environmental lenses (for an overall account, see Feindt et al. 2014; Craps 2023).

Despite the multi-dimensionality of the topics and the open-endedness of its methods, this article suggests that Memory Studies could benefit from addressing a notable epistemic blind spot. Memory Studies is in many ways defined by an epistemic dominance of violence and traumata (for criticism, see Rigney

1. This article is the result of work done on two research projects: "Protests, art practices and culture of memory in the post-Yugoslav context" (J6-3144) and "Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture: Murals, Film, and Popular Music as Memory Work" (J7-50215), both financed by ARIS.

2018), but a crucial epistemic blind spot insists, as I argue and shed light on in this article, in its relation to Marxism. How is it that, despite its aforementioned methodological openness, there has been so little focus on developing a Memory Studies? The symptomatic absence of Marxism from the current landscape can be difficult to comprehend, notably given that many Memory Studies scholars often refer to the work of Marxist thinker Walter Benjamin as central to their thinking about memory.

This article departs from the central hypothesis of Enzo Traverso's book *Leftwing Melancholia* (2017), according to which this missed encounter has to do with differences in their respective research objects and the corresponding differences in methodologies (Traverso 2017: 54). Furthermore, it seems that the rise of MS was essentially secured by the decline of Marxism during the 1980s, adding to the impossibility of the relationship. It could also be said that Marxism has been, at least temporarily, not only de-linked from memory studies, but also from the humanities and the social sciences in general. Despite the intensification and return of various (neo)Marxist currents in the last decade – informed by intersectional, feminist, decolonial approaches – Marxist theory still remains devoid of a unifying political subjectivity.²

Rather than insisting on a missed encounter between Marxism and MS, this text articulates the grounds for an encounter between these two fields. In the first part of the article, I reconstruct concepts from Marx's work, such as those of the primitive accumulation of capital and the iconoclasm of capital, which, I argue, are useful for thinking about memory, heritage and capital today. In the second part of the article, I suggest, first, a reading of the logic of primitive capital accumulation in relation to the (structural) forgetting of violence and structural remembrance of debt that is a precondition for the launch of any new capitalist cycle of accumulation. In the last part of the article, I elaborate on a few key passages from Maurizio Lazzarato's *The Making of the Indebted Man*, and notably his concept of "indebted subjectivity", in which he sketches the moral and memorial dimensions of debt and capital. Adding a decolonial Marxist perspective, I then propose a way in which thinking together debt and remembrance can contribute to the field of MS, most notably to the debates about debt cancellation, reparation and future-oriented justice.

2. Traverso's first two chapters examine this constellation in detail. I would argue that this predicament has changed over the last fifteen years due to the growing crises of capitalism as well as to a critical discourse that has reanimated Marxist theory and the "idea of communism".

2 Underground currents: Marxist memory studies

In a recent article, I articulated three possible considerations regarding Marx's conception of memory that also feature prominently in his analysis of capitalism: "(1) the iconoclasm of capital as the forgetting of tradition; (2) the exploration of complex transitional temporalities regarding memory; and (3) the formative role of memory for working-class consciousness" (Kirn 2022: 1474). The aforementioned text focussed only on Marx's namely the idea the investigates the complex transitional temporality of capital through the notion of the "primitive accumulation of capital" and memory, while here I expand on the two remaining aspects. Let us start with *the first aspect*: iconoclasm of capital. This trope is most prominently found in Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. In the passage where they tackle the ever-changing nature of capital, and how its global expansion of capital brings dramatic changes, they also touch the question of tradition and the "civilizing" of precapitalist social formations. As Marx and Engels see it, capital has, as a revolutionary force, no issue breaking with past tradition, which can result either in erasing and forgetting the past, or in fetishizing/romanticizing old feudal conditions and more genuine personal relationships and practices. While Marx and Engels' conviction was that capital has a "civilising" nature, history has shown this to be overly optimistic. Capital is able to combine very different modes of production and oppression, on the proviso that the constellation in question generate profits. Moreover, an idea that is central to the proponents of racial capitalism (Robinson 1983) is that capitalism could not have developed without the slave trade and slavery as an economic, political and ideological system. In this respect, a more nihilist dimension of capitalism should be highlighted: it is not simply that capital does not care for tradition, it even forgets its own deeds.

In the times of Marx and Engels, the specific (r)evolutionary and teleological view of history as a process of Enlightenment, tied to an idea of social progress, was part of the . Today, notably in critical discourse, it is far more difficult to come across arguments that defend the progress and iconoclasm of capital. If we take into account most scientific research and expert discourse on climate change, as well as the claims made by environmental movements, then it seems clear that the system of capital growth has reached its structural and environmental limits, such that to talk about sustainability under capitalism becomes oxymoronic. Instead, the path forward would seem to be to revindicate Walter Benjamin's idea of capitalism as a layering of ruins and disasters, where progress becomes increasingly synonymous with "disaster capitalism" (Klein 2007). *Capital keeps producing its own necropolis, full of monuments, museums, dead corpses and*

destroyed buildings: everything from abandoned factories and destroyed landscapes, to sunk slave ships and migrants drowned in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, including genocides of indigenous populations, or workers made redundant by machines and artificial intelligence. It seems that dead capital no longer haunts the living, as Marx said, but that the living are haunted by future artificial intelligence. Capital's iconoclast power has never let up and ceaselessly takes the role of the global gravedigger of everything human and non-human. Ruining the earth does not present capital with a moral concern or scientific doubt. To paraphrase Reinhart Koselleck, our age has replaced the idea of progress with that of crisis as its central structuring idea; Marx's visionary trope that *all that is solid melts into air* receives an openly dystopian and polycrisis dimensionality (Morin and Kerne 1993).

However, despite the grim prospects of our immediate future, history is not a finite and decided process. In the 1990s, Jacques Derrida wrote poignantly against the then obsession with Francis Fukuyama's notion of the end of history and the consequent attempt to throw Marx's legacy into the dustbin of history. Derrida claimed that even after this apparent defeat a "remainder" would continue to insist, forever haunting the capitalist present. As concerns environmental change, the functioning of the remainder and of the trace can be seen to be brutally materialised in their retroactive efficacy: our past dealings with the environment are increasingly felt in what Andreas Malm refers to as the "warming condition" (Malm 2018). If catastrophes of apocalyptic dimension are becoming increasingly normalised in our discourse and the way futures scenarios are envisaged and managed, then *what* and *how* will one remember all that which, in times of digital memory, is being increasingly expropriated by large corporative platforms?

Marx's notion of the "normative role of memory and tradition for working class consciousness" (Kirn 2022; see also Matsuda 1996) has been taken up by various thinkers.³ One of the most quoted texts in relation to the role of memory and the tradition of utopian imagination is Marx's essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte". The text sets out from a reflection on the status of tradition in past and future revolutions: "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living".⁴ That such a nightmare is not only inscribed on consciousness but also in the flesh, bones and effects of its afterlives should

3. For more details on the theory of memory that concerned Marx, and especially on the relation of Benjamin and Derrida and their respective notions of the "promise of memory", see Fritsch (2005: 15–21) and the aforementioned work of Traverso (2017).

4. *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* (herein MECW) (1975), vol. 11: 103.

not be surprising given the long history of defeats suffered in the struggle against capital. While Marx's horizon of the future "social revolution" does not open to a romantic return to the precapitalist past, nor could Marx, today, remain resigned to the apologetics of capital's iconoclasm and the corresponding attitude according to which "there is no alternative". Rather, we might argue, along with Marx, that revolutionary politics needs to deploy a new alternative imaginary, drawn from a revolutionary poetry of the future. The following passage expresses a thought that reverberated widely among the avant-garde of the twentieth century:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition about the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead (MECW: 106).

Does this last sentence entail an alternative iconoclasm, one carried out, this time, by the working class itself, after it has come to terms with the past: *let the dead bury their dead*? Could this be read as a sort of (re)conciliation? Or does it rather point to a Nietzschean emancipatory force of forgetting? Does being freed from the debt of tradition help the oppressed to awaken into a new future (Kuljić 2021)? Whatever the case, this new memory is, as Enzo Traverso correctly refers to it, a "memory of the future" and thus carries a certain eschatological dimension (Traverso 2017: 58–72). This claim stands in conflict with the concurrent notion of education that has been key for much of modern romantic literature (i.e. education as a sort of *Bildungsroman*), whereby the central protagonist undertakes a journey by moving from point a to point b in time and mature internally as he or she does so. This protagonist learns through mistakes and from tradition, and on this basis is claimed to be able to make history. But Marx cuts through this Enlightenment notion *cum grano salis*. Not only does history repeat itself as tragedy and farce, so, too, do humans never make history alone, as solitary individuals. Emancipation, just like freedom and equality, needs to be collective, and is the result of political work. Throughout his work, Marx thought continually about the possible formation of the proletariat, that is to say about where and how a political subject of working men and women could emerge from subjugation to capital.

As for the relationship between and politics, past and future, the question is one that Marx posed only in the margins of his theory. It fell to Benjamin, along with some of his contemporaries, to provide the first elaborated theorisations or answers to this question. Benjamin's text "On the concept of History" espouses, besides many other things, the idea of a cultural history that does not accumulate

historical facts – as if one was counting stolen riches – but that instead is tasked with recovering a “tradition of the oppressed” (Benjamin 2003, see Thesis VIII). It is not on the side of the victors and dominant history that we ought to seek critical knowledge and emancipation, but in the tradition of the oppressed themselves. The latter, he claims, is the true repository of knowledge (ibid., see Thesis XII). If the dominant historiography and its material reality adhere to a linear continuity of progress, then the oppressed are disposed to rupture and temporal discontinuity. If anything, revolution does not accelerate time, but decelerates and suspends it. Traverso has warned that if we are to keep the revolutionary remainder alive after 1989, we are destined to have a sort of melancholic attitude, to be kept in a certain exiled or diasporic state, while still attempting to mobilise through and beyond the defeats of our grandparents (as the old Left).

It was a contemporary of Benjamin’s and another key thinker, Ernst Bloch, who groundbreakingly formulated a conception of the future as unfinished, utopian and open. The task of Marxist philosophy, as Bloch saw it, was to recover and investigate the utopia inherent in our world, insofar as it can be traced in even the most everyday moments and rituals of life. These discussions were taken up in various forms and guises by critical theorists before being addressed by more recent Marxist scholars, most notably by Frederic Jameson, whose idea of history – and, one can add, that of memory – can be defined as an unconscious structure that shapes historical narratives and memory templates (Jameson 1981). Besides Jameson, Darko Suvin (1979) also used a Marxist dialectical method to analyse a large body of works of literature and science fiction, as well as artistic formations and currents through which to account for micro and macro changes within art and the relation of these changes and imaginaries to political, ideological and economic shifts. Both thinkers sought to think through the utopian dimensions of time and of what could also be categorised as a memory of future and its shrinking space within global capitalism. These key theoretical references, however, are only marginally present in MS, and when they are, it is only in a rather essayistic fashion without much elaboration.

3 Memory studies does political economy

If one is able to reconstruct an underground current between Marx/ism and memory, what can be said of a possible encounter between Marxism and Memory Studies? That is, *what specific analyses of the political economy have arisen from the memory studies field?* The political economy is not a central research object of Memory Studies. However, it might be expected – since much investigative work on memory is focused on violent and transitional periods in

various societies – that many theorists would also inquire into the economic dimension of such transitions. Memory scholars often address issues about how to rectify injustices, symbolically repair injuries, come to terms with a traumatic past or tackle questions concerning the practices-apparatuses that work on a politics of memory. However, journals such as *Memory Studies*, *Memory Studies Review* and *Memory, Heritage and Conflict* have as yet published very few explicitly (neo-)Marxist studies. *Memory Studies*, for example, has included one article by Breznik and Močnik (2021) offering an Althusserian critique of nostalgia studies in which the authors deploy theoretical lenses to analyse contemporary conditions of memory hegemony and the ways in which the discourse on memory co-constitutes power relations, especially through what are called “memory apparatuses”. It has also published an article by Palacios González (2023) that bears a Marxist analysis of the production of monuments, and of how these monuments are used and disseminated, notably in commercialisation and state memorialisation projects related to the contested fascist past in Spain. Also published in it is my aforementioned study, which demonstrates, using the concept of the “primitive accumulation of memory”, the ways that economic changes get preceded by ideological transformation, and most notably by memory revisionism (Kirn 2022). Finally, it has also published an article by Kékesi and Zombory (2024), in which the authors criticize the often-ahistorical frame of Holocaust cosmopolitanism, and call for a return to anticolonial, antifascist and internationalist memory so as to historicise solidarity and social struggles.⁵

An array of critical, and not necessarily Marxist, studies have treated the field of memory and economic change as related to postsocialist, and also decolonial and postcolonial, conditions. From the standpoint of postsocialism, a multitude of studies have been done on nostalgia as it relates to the loss of socialism and the process of de-industrialisation, the demise of working-class politics, the concept of work, the figure of the worker and the evaluation of shock concomitant with the rise of neoliberalism.⁶ A recent edited work by Wawrzyniak and Pehe (2025) includes incisive research into the neoliberal turn in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, and related to the commercialisation and management of memory (Kuljić 2021), there have been various studies that discuss “thanatourism” (Stach 2021), and some even engage in advocacy for the valorisation of “mnemonic labour” (see Reading 2019)

5. See also the article from Hofman and Petrović (2021) that rethinks class in Yugoslav memory studies.

6. Probably the most famous studies are by Boym (2001) and Todorova and Gille (2010). For the post-Yugoslav context and nostalgia over Titoism, see Velikonja (2009). An incisive panoramic entry on Yugonostalgia and its diverse uses can be found in Popović (2025).

and “memory work” (Kuhn 2000). The activity of memory work/labour can make all living beings, even nature itself, part of the production, and even dissemination, of collective memory. Some memory labour forms get captured/extracted by more instrumentalised memorialisation projects, or by knowledge institutions and museums. It is here that an approach informed by Marxist intersectionalism could be helpful in exploring and clarifying the precise relations between well-traced notions of mnemonic capital and labour (Reading 2019).

Another trajectory that connects the economy to memory work can be placed in a longer process of decolonisation and in discussions about reparations and restitution. Most recently these discussions have taken two dominant turns. One demands that the former colonisers return the looted artifacts and artworks, while the other calls for a discussion and/or removal of the colonial monumental legacy. What should not be forgotten is that many early discussions departed from a politico-economic reflection, in which the question, precisely, was: how, in the early age of independence and anticolonialism, ought the former colonisers to compensate for the ongoing primitive accumulation of capital? How ought the stolen and ruined lands, objects, lives, forced and enslaved labour to be evaluated; in short, what is the bill for the dispossession of commons and the genocide of indigenous peoples? Even if today’s critical discourse often focuses on the cultural and pedagogical levels, on alternative epistemologies, we should not forget the initial debate that connected the issue of reparations to socio-economic justice already back in the 1960s.

The most striking text from that time is *Black Manifesto, or the Case for Black Reparations* (Forman 1969). This work sets out from an economic calculation: how much debt in monetary terms has been incurred by past practices of slavery and apartheid? More recently, Robert Meister has broached this question by suggesting that we move beyond cosmopolitanism and “humanitarian” ideology, fixated as they are on the “loss-victim-model” (Meister 2010) and that offer, if anything, a simple symbolic apology. For Meister, any transformational memory politics that takes transitional justice seriously should be based on the “gain” model for the oppressed. He proposes to see past injustices as “options” for the future, almost like a financial derivative of justice that links politico-legal mechanisms with the socio-economic demands of those who have been previously (and are still being) harmed. Reparation ought not simply to end in the miserable consolation of an economic transaction, which supposedly settles the debt of the former coloniser once and for all. Rather, Meister (2010) suggests that the colonised – as injured groups – should have the right to redress and to reopen the issue of colonial/authoritarian/fascist debt at any point in future insofar as the circumstances of social and racial injustice do not actually change. The injured

and still impoverished classes can then demand to be paid – this is part of what seems to be Meister's more general attempt to counteract economic asymmetries. I leave aside the fact that this logic remains an economic logic, and so, to borrow Audre Lorde's dictum, uses the master's tools to dismantle the master's house. Socialist experiments also remained growth and production oriented; in other words, they enlisted their productive forces in a competition with capitalism. And it was this move that, apart from the political failures, was central to socialism's implosion. In terms of a utopian memory of the future, it remains difficult to see how capitalism can be beaten with capitalist means. Despite making an extremely important contribution, the approach remains within an economic matrix that could at best formulate a memory policy at the level of distribution. On this point, Pérez asks an extremely pertinent question:

How can we calculate trauma and history into a just measure, which renders, if not an exact amount, then a certain revelatory content? In particular, what compensatory offers can fiction make to the (racialized) subject of capital to help assuage this predicament and open new avenues of psychic, social, and historic investment? (Pérez 2014: 192)

Expanding on the ongoing process of "primitive accumulation of capital" in its full complexity, Robinson makes an incisive argument by which he enlarges the Marxist field of intervention and tasks it with confronting the "varying dimensions of debt" found in the conjunction between economic processes (such as forced labour and slavery) and the imposed erasure of memory and culture of the oppressed (Robinson 1983). What ought to be recognised here is that any memory gesture that only works on the level of a symbolic apology or of a short-term legal settlement of past injuries can never be sufficient for those suffering collective injury. Moreover, after having been subject to various injuries, the victims of collective injury are then subjected to further symbolic harm: why force someone, or a whole group, to reconcile with their perpetrators, especially in ways that rehabilitate the former fascist, colonial or apartheid authorities? What comes to the fore here is a deeper structural question: what are the material interests behind the various strategies of reconciliation? In whose name does a memorialisation project unfold in a given society? It is here that an MS critical investigation into the commodification and the political management of (post-)conflict societies can contribute to a Marxist understanding of the relation between capital, state and the oppressed.

4 Memory and capital: Questions of debt and violence, forgetting and remembering

The formative role of violence for capitalism, and the structural relations between the emerging nexus of state and capital formed the core of Marx's reflections on "the primitive accumulation of capital". It is here that the importance of non-economic – that is, legal, political, ideological and military – instances were highlighted and asserted as "structurally necessary" for creating the capitalist mode of transition. Also importantly, according to various Marxist thinkers the making of capitalism should not be "remembered" as having long gone "primitive" origins but instead understood as a continually renewed process. David Harvey's term of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003), and Silvia Federici's analysis of the multiple transformations within capitalism that have targeted women especially (see Federici 2003), are some vital contributions in this regard. I would like to point out how two features of this process can be especially useful in grasping economic changes from an MS perspective. I suggest that we engage with the dialectic of forgetting and remembering as follows: firstly, through the lens of violence, which, being constitutive of capitalism, is multi-directional and held together by the interests of the dominant classes in the Global North; and secondly, amid increasing financialisation, the status of debt has undergone a qualitative change within capitalism (through the production of indebted states, corporations and individuals). This double insight provides the material basis behind two ideological operations that can be extrapolated to the field of MS: operations of the structural *remembrance of debt* and the corresponding *forgetting of violence*. The ideological reproduction of the capitalist system would be impossible without this double bind of the memory of capital.

In the case of structural forgetting under capital, we run parallel to what was already discussed under the neutralising perspective of the iconoclasm of capital: all the "origin" stories about some ideal figure, some omnipotent entrepreneur – whether the early figure of Robinson Crusoe or the current one of Elon Musk – who arrives to tame nature and capture the market to expand capital, have in common an utter denial of capitalism's violent core. Here, the entrepreneurial spirit and the invisible hand of the market supposedly rise up, victorious, from the economic "state of nature". They work, it is claimed, to improve lands and turn the space-time of precapitalist society into a rational order. However, stories of entrepreneurial origins fail to raise vital questions such as about types of land use and forms of communities that existed prior to the arrival of capital and its protagonists (Graeber 2012). Bourgeois and colonial narratives leave out the violence perpetrated, while also ignoring the histories of

indigenous populations and any alternative forms of economy, commons and life (Da Silva 2022). There has been much written about the violence of the process of capitalist transition, about the relations that pertain between colonialism, racism and capitalism (Robinson 1983), about the shock therapies that have followed many a neoliberal assault (Klein 2007), and about extractivism and disaster capitalism – all these issues and more testify to capitalism's major level of objective violence. One question for today's so-called end times is the following: *does capital really need to forget the violence it perpetrates?* Today's violence, and the increasing militarisation, is so ubiquitous and continuous, so formative of capitalist reproduction, that one needs to rethink the once famous need for the system to acquire "legitimacy". Meditating on this question, Rosa Luxemburg was famously brought to locate the nexus of capital accumulation and violence at the very core of the system of international debt:

The other aspect of the accumulation of capital concerns the relations between capitalism and the non-capitalist modes of production which start making their appearance on the international stage. Its predominant methods are colonial policy, an international loan system—a policy of spheres of interest—and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting are openly displayed without any attempt at concealment, and it requires an effort to discover within this tangle of political violence and contests of power the stern laws of the economic process (2003: 432, emphasis mine).

The twentieth century saw various battles play out around the ideological legitimacy of such "tangles of political violence", which have ranged socialist revolutions and workers struggles to anticolonial struggles, including the Third World project and feminist struggles. A constant of liberal-conservative revisionism has been its defence of the necessity of bringing progress to the "underdeveloped" world, while, in its more recent apologetic, it even articulates an imperial nostalgia toward lost colonies and some so-called glorious past. For Luxemburg, liberal theory has legitimised economic rationale as a "realm of 'peaceful competition', the marvels of technology and pure commodity exchange; it separates it strictly from the other aspect: the realm of capital's blustering violence" (2003: 432).

Complementary to free market ideology is individualist ideology, according to which we are all equal and free subject-citizens with given individual freedoms, individuals with the sole responsibility over our own success or failure in conditions that are both objectively and subjectively unequal and asymmetric. Thus, Luxemburg slightly contradicts her own claim that violence in capitalism is "openly displayed without any attempt at concealment" (ibid.). For a system to

be ideologically reproduced, it needs to win over hearts and minds. That is, it needs to engage, persuade and indebted individuals, to perfect the ways that make the capital's laws become mute. This omnipresence of violence has reached a self-evident ideological status, summed up in the metahistorical slogan "there is no alternative". No matter the (un)intentionality of capital's amnesia, its structure of forgetting remains intact, and receives further iterations with every further capitalist crisis, reform or reinvention.

This is why it is not surprising that many investigations share this blind spot: Memory Studies do not directly investigate capitalist violence, but only some of its secondary dimensions. When the aftermath of colonialist, fascist or communist violence is examined, the analysis will, more often than not, separate these phenomena from some general analysis of capitalism and class, and relate to the question of violence, state and the targeting of a specific victim-population. However, Memory Studies has produced a range of concepts, such as "multidirectional memory" (Rothberg 2009), that already offer a more nuanced approach to violence and memory and that could be used along within Marxist analysis.

If the analysis of capital's violence can be seen as playing a prominent role in future Memory Studies, then the second operation of capital accumulation – mentioned by Luxemburg – has received even less attention: *the remembrance of debt*. Marx's concept of the primitive accumulation of capital offered an important insight into the creation of public debt that cements the inherent link between state, international bank(ing) and expanding industrial capital. These latter become central to an "apparatus of capture" and of utmost importance to understanding capitalist expansion (Walker 2014). In chapter 31 of Marx postulates the role of public debt for capital:

The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury. The state creditors actually give nothing away, for the sum lent is transformed into public bonds, easily negotiable ... But further, apart from the class of lazy annuitants thus created, and from the improvised wealth of the financiers, middlemen between the government and the nation – as also apart from the tax-farmers, merchants, private manufacturers, to whom a good part of every national loan renders the service of a capital fallen from heaven – the national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in

negotiable effects of all kinds ... in a word to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy (Walker 2014).

Marx emphasises the creation (and expansion) of the credit and debt system through "the modern bankocracy". As Gavin Walker observes, this passage has the structure of an "original debt", a historical appearance of "something given, a gift" (ibid.). It is here that the asymmetry emerges between those who receive credits which do not need to be repaid and those who are criminalised if unable to pay.

The originary myth of the invisible hand of the market and its diligent entrepreneurs performs a double ideological bind: on the one side, the capitalist story obscures the wars that have been and are being waged against the poor and the colonies – social wars that capital has been waging against society as such (Neocleous 2025) – while Walker (2014) speaks of the capitalist mechanism that erases the traces of violence. At the same time, systemic violence results in erasing the memory of the oppressed, in robbing them of their own means of making history, thus rendering them as people without history. Originary forms of violence, such as genocide, torture and conquest were often followed up with tactics to maintain levels of underdevelopment among precapitalist economies. These processes were either repressed or displaced and carefully disguised in the narratives about the glorious discoveries of the "New World" made by courageous explorers. The latter were eternalized in stone as the military avantgarde of European civilisation, exemplified in statues of leaders on horses. The other side of colonial conquests and profits from slavery, forced labour and long-distance trade proved crucial for the advent of the banking system, the stock exchange, the fancy buildings of the propertied classes, and later on also for museums housing looted art and cultural works from the colonies. A massive amount of violence has been sublimated in the entrenched feeling of superiority of Western civilisation and can be seen as a part of the oppressors' primitive accumulation of memory.

Another pivotal moment of capital accumulation is entailed in what is perhaps the key gesture of public authority under capitalism: gifting capital through loans. This structural feature ties society's hands by lading it with public debt. We cannot understand the production of debt and finances without the development of long-distance trade, and the building and sustaining of the military apparatus, which leads to wars and brings us the lasting nexus of power between capital and state. Here debt becomes an instrument of power and part of all future stories deemed "too big to fail". The capitalising of big companies, the bailing out of kings, banks, states and big corporations, the socialising of their losses on the backs of whole societies – all this is part of the financialisation process that, in

recent decades, has reached dizzying new heights and is of utmost importance for understanding our conjuncture.

For my purposes, I take Maurizio Lazzarato's figure of "indebted man" (Lazzarato 2012) as a central figure of analysis, which, due to its grasping the individual (moral-memory) and collective axis of debt, can be useful for MS. Lazzarato rereads some fascinating passages from Nietzsche that deal with the "origins" of Christian morality and in which guilt plays an important role. Drawing also on the double meaning of the German word *Schuld*, which means both guilt and debt, we are able to connect to the originary story of capitalism, according to which "primitive accumulation" is about debt and guilt. The key biblical story here, which can be located in the stories used to justify early capitalism, is that of "original sin". Figures like vagabonds and beggars were deemed guilty simply of wandering around. Indigenous peoples were considered guilty of not cultivating the land properly. All such groups had to be inculcated with a sense of guilt for not contributing to the new system of production and exchange. In addition, the idle had to be made to feel unceasingly guilty for not being part of the decent and deserving working class, to whom they had to feel indebted thanks to the charity and other contributions this class makes to the social system. Feelings of guilt, shame and debt took root, spreading even to those who worked but were made to feel that they never did enough of it; they had to have the living fear of losing their jobs instilled in them, and/or be continually on alert for possibly having to find a new one. Some workers came to feel indebted for even being able to hold onto a job, unable to imagine life outside it. Capitalist ideology has invested extensively in the "moralisation" of the unemployed, whom it seeks to infuse with feelings of shame and guilt, of owing something to a society that supposedly looks after them, while the real power of debt hangs over them like Damocles' sword. It is here that Marx and Nietzsche speak to each other, and it is where Lazzarato posits the existence of a vital intersection between the spheres of economy, religion and moral ideology. We see how Lazzarato builds this bridge between debt and guilt in the following passage:

Making a person capable of keeping a promise means constructing a memory for him, endowing him with interiority, conscience, which provide bulwark against forgetting ... no less for the creditor than the debtor "a memory straining towards the future" must be made for man "so that he (...) is answerable for his own future" (Lazzarato 2013: 45, my emphasis).

This statement thus effects a complete reversal of what we saw Traverso defining above as a "memory of future" linked to emancipation. In the case of the "indebted man", this memory and remembrance of debt structure the world

around him and his future. This is where capital's mnemonic techniques come to their fullest expression. Promises need to be honoured, and there are many more or less civil ways to ensure they are so honoured. The failure to keep a promise is linked to a series of anxieties and material consequences that have been the subject of numerous literary works. The famous figure of Shylock in Shakespeare, and the more contemporary proliferation of insolvencies, inherited and accumulated debts resulting in default at the level of both individuals and national economies – all these things haunt the living/workers, keeping them in constant fear. Failure to repay a debt might mean the loss of a home and a decent life, and thus also lead to suicide, depression or a prison sentence. The memory of the event of not being able to repay a debt needs to hurt. It does not matter whether this memory is real, financial or bodily, or if it functions only symbolically as a threat of loss and potentially becomes part of the surplus population. This memory is an indispensable "moral supplement" of juridical ideology (Althusser 2014). Behind the formal nature of the contract lurks a threat that can turn into a repressive measure. Debt thus weaves intimate links of power, (moral) ideology and memory, a weave that comes to form the core instrument of "governing through debt".⁷

What is missing from Lazzarato's perspective is the more seductive side of this process, something that Pérez explains by arguing that we can locate a logic of desire at work in the relation between capital and memory:

Capital, in essence, anesthetizes memory through a rationale of consumption, predicated on a myopic focus on the present and an incessant drive for instant gratification. Therefore, debt functions through a logic of addiction—inciting desire, maximizing pleasure, imparting recognition—in order to reduce the subject to a cycle of commodified dependency that overdetermines the present. In this sense, debt evacuates the subject by fixing his or her energies on an immediacy that disables the

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7. "Financial capitalism has globalized imperialism, its *modus operandi* that operates through the form of 'debt traps', both national and private indebtedness, in order to realize and sell the surplus value extracted from living labour. In the imperial schema, debt is the monetary face of surplus value, the universal exploitation of labour power, and constitutes a trap precisely because it prevents living labour from freeing itself from exploitation, from autonomizing the relations of dependency and slavery that are proper to debt" (Marazzi quoted by Walker 2014). Things get even worse with colonial debt: a major example of this is Haiti's anticolonial struggle. After being soaked in the blood of its own people for its liberation, Haiti's government had to pay France tax for their liberation, referred to as "odious debt", for the next two centuries. See Oosterlinck et al. 2022.

subject's sense of temporal depth and compromises his or her capacity to engage larger issues of history and ethics (Pérez 2014: 192).

The compulsion to work more, to consume more and to seek constantly for new and discounted products, produces further alienation between needs and desires. Herbert Marcuse pointedly criticised the repressive side of alienated memory in class society which, he argues, is linked 'with bad conscience, guilt and sin, in which images of freedom are "tabooed"' (Marcuse 1970: 163). Also, from the standpoint of financial capital and those who Marx said form part of the financial aristocracy, should we say that they dream only of debt? Does not the inherent logic of debt accomplish the old dream of making money out of 'nothing'? In its temporal and speculative nature, debt aims to get rid of all obstacles on the way to its promise of constant growth. I have summarised and abstracted the most important relations between the political and memory/moral economy of debt in Table 1 (see Appendix).

Despite the grim picture afforded by today's global asymmetries, there have always been those who have countered the dominant constellations of accumulation of capital, violence and debt, all of which are ongoing. Resistances, revolts and revolutions have often put a stop to this endless accumulation and have remained important traces of the memory of the oppressed. As Graeber argues in his seminal work *Debt: The First Five Thousand Years*, the link between debt, memory and social order is a transhistorical feature of all human societies. However, Graeber makes the argument that debt in capitalism undergoes a qualitative shift, concluding his analysis as follows: "debt is just the perversion of a promise. It is a promise corrupted by both maths and violence" (Graeber 2012: 391).⁸

Given the centrality of debt in the current age of neoliberal austerity and structural adjustment programmes, it comes as no surprise that a substantial part of social movements and critical analysis have united around a call for debt cancellation. Debt is a very material factor in all of our lives. It affects us at different stages of them and in accordance with different positionalities: as students, consumers, subjects of civil society, or society as a whole in terms sovereign state debt (Touissant 2019). Besides the political call for debt cancellation, it is noteworthy that various social movements and sections of the international community, especially those from the Global South, have been demanding a reversal of the debt logic. For the Global South, though, it is not enough to call for debt cancellation: the Global North, it claims, needs to pay for the ecological debt it has incurred in order to reverse or repair the glaring asymmetries between the North and the South. Translated into a MS perspective, it could be said that

8. For more details, see the passages in Graeber (2012: 332–342).

the time has come when the perpetrators of ecocides and global injustices should start giving back resources and paying back victims of past and present injustices. From this point of view, the main questions that the victims-oppressed ask time and again are: what should be forgotten/cancelled and what is to be remembered/paid for? An interesting perspective within MS, one best illustrated in the work of Stef Craps (2023), discusses our collective responsibility for environmental destruction and the way in which this loss is inscribed in the recent literature around mourning. This research can be beneficial to Marxist investigations, while oppositely it would also be beneficial to link the relation of loss and mourning to the analysis of destructive forces of capital, on the one hand, and to the implacable logic of debt, on the other. What kind of oppressive logic and cure should be remembered, or forgotten? Can the mechanism of oppression that is capitalist debt also be untangled and become a tool and resource of hope and emancipatory memory and movement today? Undoubtedly, debt cancellation occupies a paradoxical site: on the one hand, as an act it would seek to have us all *remember* the various environmental, social, political and economic debts that have been part of the colonial past and continue to be part of the present under ongoing racial capitalism. Perhaps having obligations to honour new ecological debts as part of reparations to the Global South would serve as a forceful reminder and provide a future-oriented memory. On the other hand, the idea of cancelling debt also has the liberating force of being able to start anew, of being able to forget some violent dimensions of the past and the competing 'corrupted promise' of violence and math.

A Marxist reflection on the links between capital, debt, memory and emancipation provides fertile ground for the field of MS. These links await further elaborations that would greatly enrich already established postcolonial trajectories in MS. The latter has above all contributed to our ways of acknowledging and analysing multidirectional violence, as well as of participating in calls for the restitution of stolen cultural artifacts and artworks (Sarr and Savoy 2018). Yet larger issues concerning the transformative reparation of global relationships remains the preserve of other disciplines and fields of society.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, this article began by reconstructing the under-explored relationship between Memory Studies and Marx/ism. It offered a panoramic overview of three possible trajectories between Marx and memory: (1) the iconoclasm of capital as the forgetting of tradition; (2) the exploration of complex transitional temporalities as regards memory and capital; and (3) the formative role of memory for working-

class consciousness. The main part of the article contributed to the field of Marxist memory studies by elaborating on the concept of the primitive accumulation of capital. The text then proceeded to detail the structural relationships between capital, violence and debt that help to reproduce the capitalist system: on the one hand, there is a structural *remembering* that burdens 'indebted man' with a potential threat in case the debt goes unpaid; on the other, there is a structural *forgetting* of capitalism's own violent functioning, visible mostly as pauperisation and dispossession but also in the various genocides, wars and conflicts that have been part and parcel of racialised capitalism for centuries now. Central to this is Lazzarato's reformulation of the moral relationship between debt, violence and memory, which lies at the core of capitalist reproduction. I have argued that this elaboration merits that MS pay it far more attention, since it could be beneficial for existing discussions on issues of reparation and restitution, which are often laden with culturalist limitations. Finally, the text touched on the ideas of debt cancellation and of ecological debt as potentially emancipatory instruments and practices in the struggle for a more just world and for the liberation of indebted subjects.

The article contributes to the strand that envisions hope and solidarity as a future-oriented memory formation, rather than as reproducing the fixed relationality of victim and perpetrator. The field of MS has largely ignored economic violence and the way in which class exploitation enters into power dynamics with other forms of oppression. If Marxist theory has long remained embedded in the sphere of the economy and the structural violence of capital, then Memory Studies – and a dominant part of Western memory culture – has been shaped by a vague analytic of totalitarian violence. Therefore, the text does propose a sort of disjunctive synthesis that help MS to address its topic and blind spots – the issues of class and debt, and the logic of economic transformations – while Marxism can also benefit from tools and concepts from multidirectional memory to mnemonic labour and capital, from political affects and dispositions of mourning and implication. This can shed additional light on the mechanism of power and violence, but it can also help with memory activism, to recover and reactivate tradition of the oppressed and to build new coalitions against capitalist violence.

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Appendix

Table 1: Relation between the political and the memory/moral economy of debt.

	Political economy of debt	Morality and memory of debt
Primitive accumulation	Original sin (idleness of vagabonds, colonised peoples, slaves) Original myth of the capitalist hero (Robinson Crusoe as entrepreneur) Public debt > wars, market expansion (bank-state nexus) From internalised debt as transcendental > debt as immanent, as infinite process of growing, going beyond limits	Primitive/primordial debt: theories that speak of sacrifice and of more cosmological relations concerning our indebtedness to predecessors, to the world Nietzsche: central to Christianity – the state of sin, feelings of guilt, from Eden to the never-finished repayment; Conflicts around selling time – anti-debtor tendency, against those that assign themselves position of God

Circulation	Investment in long-distance trade, and also the capitalist cycle: <i>centrality of credit</i> Promise of payment, rather of future value Debt in terms of money, M-M'; speculation; money that generates money; interests Confidence-subjugation, trust	Complex of guilt and moral duty (bond): promise (Nietzsche) Promise to give back, feelings of guilt and of the need to honour duties After morality comes repression / privatisation / dispossession
Relationship (and domination)	Who gives debt, who gets loan Political logic: sovereign Economic: discipline, moral hazard Debt- as instrument of financial aristocracy (Marx/Lazzarato) Dependency theory (sovereign debt)	Bond debtor-creditor – alleged reciprocity Racialisation/demonisation of those not keeping promises (Global South) Reproductive labour (nuclear family, double oppression of women, debt to family/society/capital)
Political mechanism: solving of debt management	Socialisation of losses Cancellation of debt, signing off (as a matter of Western charity, sovereign use to cancel all debts (due to endemic slavery, hunger, too many debts, nobody to work)	Discipline and punishment (sorts of subjugation, even humiliation attached to the incapacity to pay back debt) Striking against debt? Emancipating - forgetting Climate debt-reparations to Global North

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MEMORY AS REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR: FROM TRAUMATIC REMEMBRANCE TO INSTITUTIONALISED VICTIMHOOD

ABSTRACT

The aim of the text is to connect the idea of remembrance to that of social reproduction labour, referencing as a case study the mass graves as an outcome of the coup, the civil war, and the dictatorship in Spain since 1936. These mass graves have been the central axis for articulating memorialist discourse in contemporary Spain. The memory of the mass graves is therefore a relevant object of study. The frameworks of analysis developed by Lise Vogel, Alva Gotby, Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Silvia Federici, and Hannah Proctor are applied to the results of historical and ethnographic research, which have reclaimed a way of relating to the mass graves, from mourning to monumental practices or institutional political action. The article addresses the importance of emotional labour as part of memory, and how this is a contested field in which the possibility of consciousness-raising is confronted by the state and its apparatuses, whose imperative is to reproduce the mode of production.

KEY WORDS: *social reproduction theory, materialism, women, mass graves, Spanish civil war*

Spomin kot reproduktivno delo: od travmatičnega spominjanja do institucionalizacije žrtve

IZVLEČEK

Cilj članka je povezati idejo spominjanja z idejo družbeno reproduktivnega dela, pri čemer kot študijo primera navaja množična grobišča, ki so posledica državnega udara, državljanske vojne in diktature v Španiji od leta 1936 dalje. Množična grobišča so postala osrednja os, okoli katere se v sodobni Španiji

artikulira memorialni diskurz. Spomin na množična grobišča je zato relevanten kot predmet raziskovanja. Članek aplicira analitične okvire, ki so jih razvile Lise Vogel, Alba Gotby, Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Silvia Federici in Hannah Proctor, na rezultate zgodovinskih in etnografskih raziskav, ki so vzpostavile način odnosa do množičnih grobišč – od žalovanja do monumentalnih praks ali institucionalnega političnega delovanja. Članek obravnava pomen emocionalnega dela kot del spomina in kako je to sporno področje, kjer se možnost ozaveščanja sooča z državo in njenimi aparati, katerih imperativ je reproducirati obstoječi produkcijski način.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: teorija družbene reprodukcije, materializem, ženske, množična grobišča, španska državljanska vojna

1 Introduction

For the first time in his career, in 2021, Pedro Almodovar directed a film that referenced the consequences of the 1936 coup d'état, the war, and the dictatorship established following the victory of the fascist forces. In *Parallel Mothers*, he presents the story of Janis, a photographer, and Ana, a teenager at odds with her family. They give birth on the same day, and their babies are accidentally switched at the hospital. However, the event that gives the film its title is the setting for another drama which haunts Janis. The baby had been conceived after an affair with an archaeologist involved in the exhumation of a mass grave where the remains of Janis's grandfather, killed during the war, are expected to be found. In constructing the story around the murdered grandfather, Almodovar reproduces the ways in which the hegemonic media have, in recent years, narrated the memory of the 1936 coup against the Spanish Republic, the war, and the dictatorship. It is the clichéd story of grandchildren searching for a grandfather; narrations without references to the political affiliation of the people who were murdered, their revolutionary actions or agency against fascism, or the political and historical background to the launching of the coup. In this regard, such narratives also conceal the powerful accumulation of capital due to that violence. Accordingly, the mode of production reaffirmed by the coup and post-war ultimately determined how and why the memory of the Spanish war is often based on oral history and inconsistency. However, these material conditions also predetermined that the policies derived from narratives of victimhood, which progressive organisations and governments campaigned for, would give rise to hierarchies of victims and the establishment of a cosmopolitan memory on a transnational scale. This would, thereby, exclude political narratives condemned as leftist folklore and melancholy from the field of memory. Owing to the internal liberal logic of this field and the

capitalist mode of production in which these narratives are produced, memory is elevated to the category of ideology, creating a distorted vision of the past that would maintain the reproduction of the post fascist relations of production in the structure in which it is embedded (Palacios 2023).

Nonetheless, a more complex analysis of these ideas demands the insight of the Marxist tradition of social reproduction theory. Despite Almodovar's film being a simplistic fetishisation of the hegemonic narrative, it does, paradoxically, link both concepts: memory and social reproduction labour. Whilst Janis is engaged in the search for her grandfather and becomes pregnant, she finds herself in several situations which illustrate the extent of unpaid labour essential to reproduce life (her own and the baby's life). This is evident in her decision, which demonstrates her high social class as an artist, to employ and exploit a foreign student to look after the baby so that she can continue her professional career as a photographer. Janis wrongfully dismisses this student by framing her. She subsequently treats Ana in the same way, abusing her friendship to employ her informally. Ana accepts the au pair position, and, as the employer, Janis not only takes advantage of her domestic labour and childcare work but also makes her the object of her sexual desire and uses her for her emotional stability, abusing Ana's teenage vulnerabilities. Thus, the archetype of the successful, liberal, independent woman, to maintain her status as a photographer, resorts to exploiting vulnerable women to perform the tasks of social reproduction that ensure the production of the next life. However, it also becomes evident that it is critical for Janis to find her grandfather to presumably heal a trauma and achieve closure with the past and the transmission of a healed legacy to the next generation, represented by the baby. This illustrates that domestic and affective memory labour is needed to produce Janis's generational replacement. In this context, the intrinsic relationship between both concepts is revealed. Therefore, to understand how memory operates ideologically to ensure the reproduction of the mode of production, it is necessary to recognise the requirement of an enormous amount of unpaid social reproduction labour.

The following text begins by examining Lise Vogel's (2013) and Tithi Bhattacharya's (2017) definitions of social reproduction, labour, and their connections with memory. Bhattacharya argues that human labour is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole and, despite capitalism acknowledging productive labour for the market as the sole form of legitimate "work", the daily and generational reproductive labour sustains the drive for accumulation. This is the labour dispensed to produce people as part of the systemic totality of capitalism, often in (but not restricted to) a "kin-based" configuration called "family." Moreover, Vogel links social reproduction to the

class struggle for production conditions, representing the central dynamic of social development in societies characterised by exploitation. Vogel adopts a materialist perspective and determines, as fundamental to Marx, how surplus labour is appropriated by a ruling class, and an essential condition for production is the existence and constant renewal of a subordinate class. However, she recognises the limitations of this analysis because it ignores the social process of production, which is at the same time a process of reproduction: Social reproduction requires that there is always a supply of labour-power to set the labour process in motion, so labour-power must be maintained and replaced. Vogel, therefore, defines social reproduction work as work that satisfies the continuing needs of the bearers of labour power. This introduces the question of gender since generational replacement of labour force bearers implies biological reproduction. Whilst Vogel acknowledges that generational replacement is central to the labour force reproduction that society requires, a severe labour force shortage caused by war would tend to exaggerate the contradictory pressures on women workers by emphasising the role of the family as the locus of generational reproduction.

To examine how this work of social reproduction and generational replacement is intrinsically linked to the work of memory, Alva Gotby (2023) provides analyses which expand on the above theories. She explains how the family remains the “proper” place of intense feelings and the most important source of emotional well-being, where we primarily create our sense of authentic subjectivity. She relates this to the fact that capitalism depends on emotional reproduction and thereby defines emotional labour as interactive labour that produces emotional effects on another person and includes the establishment and reproduction of emotional bonds. Thus, in the acts of expressing, suppressing, and shaping feelings that must be constantly repeated and managed, there are forms of subjectivity under capitalism that are fundamentally linked to hierarchy. Gotby demonstrates how affective individualism is linked to capitalist-colonial systems of power and gendered forms of labour and how emotional reproduction function as an organising principle of care. In this context, she explains that, through ongoing care practices, care often involves many different tasks. Thus, part of the work of emotional reproduction consists of producing an ideological inversion and recreating an attachment to the world as we know it. This is why Gotby recognises that emotions in general, and the work of care and developing affection, are fundamental to shaping ideology. Therefore, ideology would not endure without feelings, and emotional reproduction diminishes discontent with the dominant order, creating the belief that we can and should have satisfying emotional lives under capitalism.

This function of emotional reproduction in mitigating discontent, is pertinent to the object of this text. The memory of the mass graves has been one of the

fundamental axes of the articulation of memorial discourse in contemporary Spain (Ferrándiz 2014); moreover, in addressing the subject of mass graves, we recognise several factors that elucidate the perfunctory allusions of Almodovar's film. Challenging the hegemonic image reproduced by agents such as Almodovar, this article is based on ethnographic research conducted in Spain from 2018 to 2023, including samples obtained throughout the country, by interviewing more than one hundred activists and relatives of people murdered during the war, and other relevant actors in the field of memory policies from historians to policymakers. This ethnographic work has been subjected to a literature review, connecting the concept of trauma transmission as part of family memory and the function of this individualist family-oriented analysis as the foundation of the last decades' memory culture to the idea of social reproduction. It aims to apply these critiques of the materialist tradition regarding the work of social reproduction to the practices and politics of memory, taking as a case study the memory of the coup, the war and the dictatorship in contemporary Spain, with a particular focus on the memory of mass graves.

The article combines theory and ethnography, imbricated in each section, connecting aspects of social reproduction theory with experiences documented during the fieldwork and referencing them to the literature review. Consequently, the subject of the first section is how the memory of the mass graves essentially began to be passed on by women, who thereby imparted a story of domination to the generations to come, epitomised by a political conflict marked by class antagonism that led to violence in the 1930s. This coup resulted in the extermination of thousands of militants and people who were represented a threat to the new National Catholic and fascist regime. The reproduction of life involved domestic labour, but also emotional work marked by trauma and fear. The second section will address how that same work of social reproduction enabled the women who had suffered the loss and following generations, to begin to subvert the narrative of trauma and the structure that sustains it. These challenges were materially reflected in tributes and monuments around the mass graves and primarily socially translated into anti-fascist politics, and later into institutional politics following Franco's death. In a third and final section, we observe, however, especially in the last two decades, that when NGOs began to demand that the state take charge of exhumations, there was an outsourcing of elements of the work of exhumation. This, thereby, externalised some of the work of social reproduction, and generated a dependence on the state and an introduction into the field of a series of discourses, which have attempted to annul the emancipatory potential of memory by returning it to its dimension of emotional labour. The latter guarantees the subjectivity which subjugates workers

to continue their labour compliantly and to produce the next worker within the framework of the liberal democratic consensus. Finally, the text will identify the limits of this method of understanding traumatic memory by considering that the mourning which results from losses due to violence deriving from political, economic and social conflict, cannot be healed at the individual level without resolving the oppression that persist to the present day. Therefore, to understand the ideological character of the politics of memory in contemporary Spain, which focus on the individual recovery of the skeletal remains of a grandfather as a formula for "healing" memory, it is evident that this way of conceptualising the past does not resolve the problem from which the violence emanated but, on the contrary, ensures the reproduction of the mode of production as the site of continued violent expropriation, extraction and exploitation. The work of social reproduction, of which memory is a part, thus becomes a site of struggle where the rebellion can also happen (Ferguson 2020).

2 Reproducing life in the aftermath of war

According to Gerald Brenan, the situation of the Kingdom of Spain before the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, was that of an underdeveloped and traditional economy with a clearly defined class division. Certain elites controlled the economy and the government, whilst the peasants and workers were excluded from economic and political decisions (Brenan 2014). However, the deeply ingrained system of exploitation, oppression and injustice under the military and corporate government, protected by the monarchy, provoked a growing organisation of the working classes at the political and trade union level, generating an antagonism that was difficult for the regime to sustain. Finally, in 1931, multi-party elections were held to curb the discontent. Confronted with the massive victory of republican parties in the municipalities, King Alfonso XIII fled the country. The government collapsed, and the Spanish Republic was proclaimed. This opened up new political possibilities and led to strained debates between reformist and revolutionary perspectives. A new constitution enshrined the state and established it as a liberal democracy, proclaiming its secularism, universal suffrage and the division of state powers. Integral to a reformist agenda, land reform was planned, minimum wage and holiday pay, the possibility of self-government within the republic for autonomous regions, schools were built, and literacy and cultural democratisation campaigns were launched. Nevertheless, social conflicts persisted, and injustice and inequality were conjoined with the prospect of generating and articulating political and trade union demands. The reversal of specific reforms during the centre-right government led to a workers'

revolution in 1934, which was harshly repressed by the Republic. In 1936, the Popular Front government reopened the reformist agenda. This time, the response to the workers' demands was a coup d'état, which failed and led to war in 1936, repression and the creation of a new national catholic State of Spain (Casanova 2010; Sesma 2024).

The triumph of the fascist forces instigated a regression in the economy and in the rights of the population, not only restoring the situation which existed prior to the republican reforms, but also aggravating further the conditions of precariousness, exploitation and the accumulation of capital in the hands of the bourgeois, landowning, Catholic and military elites. Simultaneously, memory policies were orchestrated to generate memory practices based on a mythologised image of Spain and to construct the regime's legitimising narrative around the figure of the Fallen for God and Spain, so that all repression and authoritarianism were justified in the face of the "red barbarism" prior to the coup: from exhumations to parades, from monuments to celebrations (Box 2010; Saqqa 2024). This indicated, not only an accumulation of economic capital but also, according to Gal Kirn's theories, an accumulation of memory capital (Kirn 2022). The dictatorship instituted a system of coercion, violence and exclusion against the defeated population (Aróstegui 2012); in effect, the terror imposed by the dictatorship was part of a conscious strategy that had scientific backing. The psychiatrist and commander Antonio Vallejo Nágera, head of the Military Psychiatric Services from August 1938, and director of the Psychological Research Office, promoted "research into the biopsychic roots of Marxism". His influence was decisive in creating hostile attitudes towards the losers due to the promulgation amongst militants and civilian institutions of the "degenerative and inferior psychosocial nature of the adversary" (Ruiz-Vargas 2006: 24).

These policies affected not only those who were directly murdered but also the survivors who were again exposed to the policies of exploitation, with even less protection by the state, which guaranteed the power of the elites. The people who had been politically active during the years before the dictatorship suffered institutionalised and systematic repression, which also demonised the alternative models of femininity which had emerged during the Republic (González 2017). At the same time, the surviving women were left in charge of maintaining the families, and in a context of an absence of male labour, as Vogel argued, the paid and unpaid work of social reproduction, raising and maintaining existing workers and the next generation was further reinforced. This can be inferred by the regime's concern with encouraging the birth rate, controlling women's pregnancy and childbirth (García 2014) and women's role as "housewives" in domestic work, to comply with an ideal of passivity, service, and hard labour

(Roca 2005). These activities are fundamental to the development of the economy in that women not only work as salaried workers, but also reproduce the life of the male worker in the home and of the workers of the next generation they have given birth to. This situation is exemplified in the story of Enesida García Suárez, whose parents were murdered in Tiraña, in the Nalón mining basin, in the context of the repression of the workers' movement in what was known as "Little Russia". In her memoirs, she stated, "When they were crowing 'the war is over, the war is over', I thought so too, because we were fed up with calamities and privations; in a word, starving; it turns out that the war, or something worse than the war, was about to begin" (García 2018: 12). Her life was impacted by this deepening accumulation of capital and class exploitation after the war. She and her family suffered periodic fines from October 1937 onwards and deprivation of liberty on several occasions. She experienced the theft and confiscation of her property and the harassment, arrest and torture of her elder sister until her suicide in September 1942. Enesida was unable to organise funeral rites for any of the deceased relatives. In the following years, her siblings dispersed, and two of her uncles fled to the mountains until one of them was killed and the other imprisoned. In these conditions of dispossession and social death, she could barely reproduce her own life and had to work as a maid, selling her labour to reproduce others' lives. Yerba Segura Suárez considers her life to be "one more" of the many who lived after the war (Segura 2018: 79).

According to Gotby's thesis, it is critical to observe how the family and the environment of the work of social reproduction which it represents are fundamental to creating subjectivities in this context: a subjectivity that, if, on the one hand, was constructed through the image of the ideal woman for the dictatorship (Osborne 2017). In studies of the construction of the narrative and the psychological conditions derived from violence, exploitation and dictatorship, the idea emerged recurrently amongst the repressed population that to achieve prosperity, silence about the past was vital: this involved forgetting everything related to the republic, and the social struggles of the time. In these terms, the silence of the defeated entailed a series of conditions, such as the desire to protect their children and the danger to their survival, as represented by the policies implemented by the victors. It was a time of silence, fear and mourning. Black was the most worn colour because almost everyone had a family member who had died in the war or the post-war period (Ruiz 2005). Also, the silence maintained by the defeated after the war is significant, and it is recorded that the descendants were the "bearers of these silences" (Marín and Jiménez 2011: 408).

Anna Miñarro and Teresa Morandi have studied extensively in the field of psychoanalysis and mental health on the effects of the war of 1936, the

post-war period and the dictatorship, demonstrating how violence has been transmitted through different generations, determining their lives and shaping their subjectivity with the "trauma" (Miñarro and Morandi 2014). However, these theories cannot be separated from the material reality. Thus, if the family remains the "proper" place of intense feelings, where we create our sense of authentic subjectivity, and if capitalism depends on emotional reproduction, the latter being associated with the generational transmission of trauma, then this reinforces, constitutes and reproduces emotional bonds that guarantee the reproduction of capital. It is, therefore, no coincidence that women who survived the war and dictatorship often instructed their children "not to talk about the past" and "not to get involved in politics." At the same time, in acts of expressing the violence suffered or of suppressing it from the narrative in a traumatic way, it is a phenomenon which is constantly repeated and managed, reinforcing the hierarchy and domination that guarantees exploitation by the holders of the means of production. Consequently, emotional reproduction is the organising principle of care in this memory transmission. In the interest of capital and the dictatorship, care and memory would have been a fundamental component of the articulation of a perception of the past that would guarantee the condition of the docile worker in the present and, with it, the reproduction of the imposed mode of production to the working classes.

In this regard, traumatic memory had a clear function for the regime, the landlords and the bourgeoisie: "Amid all this atmosphere of torture and misfortune, they were the bearers of a fear and silence that enveloped their families in all the situations they experienced, and that gave rise to the formation of ideological guidelines, which were the ones that Franco wanted to spread among the families" (Ruiz 2008: 490). Therefore, it is essential to recall Gotby's explanation that part of the work of emotional reproduction is to produce ideological investment. She asserts that ideology depends on emotional investment, as it is not merely a mental belief but a way of relating to the world. For her, it is crucial that ideology does not function without feelings, and it is through emotional reproduction that we come to invest emotionally in the legitimate objects and the proper futures for capital. "Through the privatisation of emotional reproduction, negative feelings become individualised. Emotional reproduction serves to smooth over malcontent with the dominant order, creating a belief that we can and should have satisfying emotional lives under capitalism" (Gotby 2023: 9). We should, therefore, perceive that "trauma" is the correct sentiment for the reproduction of the future of capitalism in post-war Spain. As, in the meantime, is the creation of subjectivity amongst the families: "For the bosses and bourgeoisie, it was a time of prosperity in all respects; all their possessions and interests were restored to them,

they occupied many posts that had been left vacant after the purge to which the republican civil servants had been subjected, and they regained the social and economic power they had always wielded" (Ruiz 2008: 609). Therefore, whilst psychologists have argued that these traumas and psychosocial consequences have been passed down from generation to generation, this also applies to the fortunes and capital amassed during the dictatorship, which have been passed down from generation to generation (Maestre 2019). It could, therefore, be argued that emotional labour connected with trauma and the reproduction of capital cannot be dissociated.

3 From the transmission of trauma to political resistance

In the post-war period, in a society subjugated by the fascist Spanish State, the economic elites, and the church, there was thus an economic base composed of a mode of production based on corporatism and the super-structure that stabilised it: a combination of family trauma and National-Catholic ideology. Terror may have played a determining role in learning the "rules" of good behaviour, as attributed to the violent state apparatuses by Louis Althusser (2008). This would have generated attitudes which determined the subject groups' specific position to which they are "destined" within the division of labour, assuming rules of morality, and civic and professional conscience. According to Althusser's theory, this construction of a synthesis of subjectivity based on trauma concurrent with the exercise of violent repression, would function to inculcate the rules of respect for the division of labour and, ultimately, for the rules of order established by class domination.

In this regard, it is crucial to recognise the role of memory in this kind of social reproduction work, and to acknowledge that capitalism requires unpaid reproductive labour to contain the cost of the labour force. In this context, it is divided, on the one hand, into emotional labour based on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and, on the other, into the production labour of the next docile worker. All of this is organised around the family, where the trauma is transmitted to the next generation and simultaneously, the upbringing and care are provided to prepare them to enter the productive system. However, Silvia Federici observes that the emphasis on the dictatorship and the management of traumatic memory in the family derives from this kind of unpaid work. A materialist theory of memory requires the subordination of the memory beyond the emotional to the relations of production. Federici also recognises that this is a terrain of struggle, which precisely relates to women's experiences of the Chilean and Argentinean dictatorships (Federici 2019: 89). As Althusser posited, within this stabilisation there is a dialectical relationship, and whilst the ideological

apparatuses (which include the family) complement the repressive apparatuses to generate the subjectivities necessary to guarantee the reproduction of the mode of production, these are sites where a challenge to the established order can occur (Althusser 2014).

In this regard, there are several instances in which there is a break with the intergenerational transmission of trauma, which converts emotional labour from an activity of reproduction into a resistance or subversion of the hegemonic ideology. Focusing attention on the mass graves where those killed in the systematic elimination of both reformist and revolutionary agents opposed to the Catholic national order had been buried, different types of initiatives demonstrate the break with this subjectivity. There are accounts of shepherds or agricultural workers, who witnessed the assassinations and who informally communicated the location to relatives and other members of the local community. Consequently, these places were marked and signposted during the post-war period and in the years that followed, mainly by relatives of the murdered people. Stones were placed or cross marks were made in places such as Villamayor de los Montes in Burgos, Guillena in Seville, Morata de Jalón in Zaragoza, Tiedra in Valladolid, Cobertelada in Soria, the ravine of Víznar in Granada, Castillejo de Martín Viejo in Salamanca, Bercial de Zapardiel in Ávila, and Alcaraz in Albacete (Palacios 2024: 23–29). Manuel Ramírez Gimeno stated in an interview: “The stone was an agreement between the families at the beginning when they had to keep silent and could not show themselves much, to mark the site so that it would not be lost. [...]. So, the families decided that a carved stone should be placed there”.¹ Other actions would include clandestine exhumations of buried remains, such as those that transpired in Urzante in Navarra (Ferrándiz 2014: 158–162) or Puerto Serrano in Cadiz (Pérez Guirao 2024: 3–6), where relatives were clandestinely caring for the remains of the murdered people.

In other cases, the actions in defiance of this subjectivity and the spatial construction of an alternative account of the dead were accomplished in sites such as La Barranca, on the outskirts of Logroño in La Rioja, where hundreds of bodies had been buried during the repression of the coup (Aguirre 2008: 25). Women dressed in black began to gather there from 1937 onwards, wives, daughters and mothers of the murdered, carrying flowers and food to spend the day there on All Saints’ Day. Despite the repression and harassment by the forces of the state and the local population, they returned the following year (Asociación para la Preservación de la Memoria Histórica de La Rioja 2011). In Monte de Estépar where the murdered from the Burgos prison were buried, the

1. Manuel Ramírez Gimeno. Interview on 5 October 2019 in Albacete.

military police installed the nearest train stop to prevent women from accessing the burial area, given the challenge they presented to the imposed traumatic subjectivity. This would lead them to find other routes, as was testified by local shepherds (Albo 2015: 86). A similar situation occurred in Ocaña, in Toledo, where, threatened with similar harassment, families like theirs had to go to the graves of Roma families, which were the closest to the mass graves. These families took them in, and camouflaged them to disguise the fact that they were mourning for those murdered and buried in the mass graves (Palacios 2024: 42).

On other occasions, and despite the harassment, publicly recognisable marks were installed, which, to some extent, posed a challenge to the imposed order. However, during the dictatorship, the most outstanding initiatives to convert the graves into a kind of burial ground took place in the Paterna Cemetery, where several thousand people murdered in the post-war period had been buried. It was here, from 1941, that the wives, daughters and sisters of the murdered from all over the province of Valencia would come, especially on All Saints' Day, when their presence was consented to under the surveillance of the Guardia Civil and the Police. Gradually, the graves were covered with crosses, plaques and memorials to the murdered people, as well as ceramics with their names on them, following local traditional practices (Gabarda 2020). These acts also took place on the mass graves of the Castellón Cemetery (Ródenas 2016). The interventions on the mass grave in the Cemetery of San Salvador in Oviedo also followed this pattern. At the end of the 1960s, a large stone wall was built to demarcate the grave. This initiative was achieved openly, not covertly, through a collection and by popular subscription to defray the costs of the work, only a few years after the great workers' strikes in the coalfields (Asociación de Viudas de Guerra de la República 1984).

These acts changed the character of mourning, rejecting the terror function of mass graves, which continued to maintain social reproduction, subverted that function to create an honourable place in which to care for the dead and generate a new subjectivity. This was initially ephemeral, stones, flowers, marks, which gradually became permanent, as in Paterna or Oviedo. Following the death of the dictator, Francisco Franco, and with the legalisation of certain parties and trade unions in the 1970s, hundreds of new actions, much more political, took place. Sculptures, gardens, monuments of all kinds: menhirs, plaques, pantheons with the exhumed bodies or over the mass graves themselves, were now built, in a singular alliance. This brought together the surviving families of those who were murdered four decades earlier and the new militants of socialist, communist, anarchist as well as Basque, Galician and Catalan nationalist parties and trade unions. Whilst these alliances were not free of tensions, they did reveal situations in which the

militants themselves were descendants of the murdered people and therefore this action of creating a cultural memory of the territory, united generational transmission of memory and historical conscience. The terror landscape was transformed into a place where relatives mourn, but also for political speeches and the singing of workers' anthems in yearly remembrance services (Palacios 2024: 47–82). Actions of memory around the graves and with the bodies of the murdered are precisely implicated in the work of care associated with femininity (de Kerangat 2023), but, in this context, are converted to political acts.

The foregoing cases, demonstrate that not only the mass graves, but also the emotional work of the generational transmission of memory and other spheres of the work of social reproduction are the sites of resistance and memory, even if they are not necessarily linked to graves. In effect, these “subtle resistances” linked to the care of the dead (de Kerangat and Chiappe 2019) are part of a broader spectrum of opposition (Arced 2013). Other acts of open defiance were also grounded in the family environment; a perfect example was the Democratic Women's Movement, linked to the Communist Party, which became one of the largest anti-fascist and feminist organisations during the Dictatorship. Although it initially emerged as an association to support political prisoners, a fundamental task of social reproduction with regard to the penitentiary system, its members played a decisive role in creating awareness amongst working women (Arriero 2018). Similarly, women provided crucial support, by subverting their reproductive labour to sustain the antifascist guerrillas after the end of the war (Marco 2016). It is essential to recognise that, in these cases, social reproduction labour is no longer in the emotional and subjective realm, but is producing, not the next docile worker, but the next militant. Therefore, many family members became affiliated to political parties and trade unions that were reorganised during the 1960s and legalised in the 1970s, thereby redefining the transmission of the memory of the previous generations.

4 The elite capture of memory

In contrast to this way of understanding memory, which was sustained in an eminently politicised way by the monuments around the mass graves and the different political actions that linked the struggles of the present to those of the past, “trauma” and “silence” maintained their presence in the lives of most of society up to the end of the 20th century. However, the situation would change once again in the year 2000, when a mass grave was exhumed in Priaranza del Bierzo, precipitating a new cycle of memory practices with particular characteristics. The reappearance of a “traumatic past” (Yusta 2014) and of the “ghosts of the civil

war" (Ferrándiz 2006) was symptomatic of the central focus on the exhumation of remains in these new actions on mass graves (Renshaw 2016). The exhumations were underpinned by the rhetoric of human rights: the search for "victims," understood as subjects of "forced disappearances" referring to frameworks of transitional and humanitarian justice, actions marked by the "forensic turn," which, (even though on occasions they allowed for the politicisation of the processes), were characterised by a profound depoliticisation of the conflict. Thereby, the memory of the revolutionary or reformist past, of the anti-fascist struggle and the workers resistance to the dictatorship, was reduced to the "traumatic" memory of the "victims". These actions, in dozens of places such as Paterna, Talavera de la Reina, Guadalajara, Sevilla, Dos Hermanas, Castelló, effectively led to the destruction of the monuments which had politically re-signified the graves, to focus on the recovery of skeletal remains, to individualise them, and hand them over individually to the families (Palacios 2022a). The ethnographic records of those first exhumation processes describe the fear and terror experienced by the surviving relatives who were present (Ferrándiz 2014), so that the generational transmission of the trauma re-emerged at the same time as the skeletal remains of the people murdered decades earlier. However, in this whole process, it is critical to reiterate the emphasis on the recovery of the remains in an individualised manner, enabled by forensic techniques. The recovery of remains demanded by relatives with direct biological links to the murdered persons (generations of children and grandchildren), in the absence of judicial prosecution of the crimes of the dictatorship, must be understood within the framework of the "recovery of dignity" and the "right to a fair burial" in an incongruous amalgamation of Christian Canon Law and Human Rights. Exhumations have often been referred to in the media and literature as a means of "closing wounds" in a familial and individualised way. Individual stories are presented in academia (Fouce 2008), journalism (Junquera 2013), mass media (RTVE 2019) and institutional politics (Junta de Andalucía 2021). Therefore, although memory was, for decades, connected with the republican and antifascist narrative, the leaders of the new field of memory imposed a new agenda based on victimhood—an elite capture as defined by Olúfemi O. Táíwò (2022).

The foregoing compels us to reconnect the memory of the coup, the war and the dictatorship to social reproduction labour at the emotional level. In this context, the analysis of this type of work by Tithi Bhattacharya is critical. She illustrates how the public (production) and private (reproduction) divisions articulate the "historical forms of appearance in which capitalism as a process posits itself" so that "the spatial separation between production (public) and reproduction (private) is a historical form of appearance, then the labour that is dispensed

in both spheres must also be theorised integratively” (2017: 8). This elucidates the criticism that the memory of mass graves should not be politicised, that it should remain familial, as propounded in public speeches by heterogeneous, but mainstream politicians, such as Santiago Carrillo, Carmen Calvo, or Albert Ribera (Palacios 2022b: 237). In fact, during my ethnographic research work, it was common to encounter boycotts from institutions when actions over the graves began to transcend the realm of the family and become politicised. Even though the mass grave can be seen as a public space, for the institutions, it should remain private (Palacios 2024).

The situation, therefore, has specific structural implications. On the one hand, the policy of memory since 2000 has been focused on ensuring that memory is not politicised, but that it continues to be circumscribed by social reproduction labour, marked by trauma, and that it must remain in the private sphere, separate from the public and productive sphere. This encompasses the powerful imperative to ensure the emotional reproduction of the subjective conditions within the family through which the relationship with the world continues to guarantee submission, non-participation in politics and fear. At the same time, this also implicates the public and state policies that have reinforced this situation, as this has been a conscious policy emanating from the state and its ideological agents. Through subsidy programmes for exhumations and memory laws that sustain memory as something private which corresponds to the families, it is the State that has promoted the creation of an appropriate framework for memory policies in Spain to be directed towards the recovery of skeletal remains as a means of restitution at the individual and family level, that is, that of social reproduction. In this sense, the State has encouraged and ideologically exploited the sentiments derived from this process. Thus, a discriminatory system of hierarchies has been created, which distinguishes who can be remembered and yearn for dignity and who retains honour (such as the Fallen for God and Spain, fascists and Catholics), perfectly reflecting different economic positions in the system. For this reason, private agents independent of the state (families, memory associations, museums, artists, journalists) often functioned to reproduce and discipline in line with hegemonic interests, subconsciously exemplifying Althusser’s framework of interpretation of ideological state apparatuses (2008). Accordingly, whilst the state organises official memory using a wide range of methods of remembrance, which includes the function of emotional labour of social reproduction in the reproduction and transmission of trauma as fundamental, the subordinate classes are thus relegated to aspire to dignity, desirous of the status of “victim”, and to participate in a structure of dispossession, extraction and exploitation that survives owing to the repression exercised exactly at the time of these traumatic conditions.

In this context, whilst the liberal memory politics of the last two decades emerge in the guise of “politics of resentment”, of collectives aspiring for “dignity” in Francis Fukuyama’s terms (2018), Wendy Brown offers an analysis of the politics of the feminist struggle which could be applied in the field of memory. The configuration of confluences that constrain emancipatory desire and reinforce the liberal state so that in memory, as in feminism, the concept of wounding and victimhood have become central elements of political identity, generating rights-based discourses and legitimising the role of the state in the protection of individuals, promoting the dependence and powerlessness of subjects who have inherited a past of revolutionary struggle (Brown 1995). However, it becomes evident that, not only is the work of social reproduction, that is, the management of trauma, conceived as a need that the state is asked to take care of, but also that, by taking charge of its mediation and promotion, the state has imposed its own agenda. Silvia Federici expressed this fear of seeing her demands for wages for domestic work being manipulated by a capitalist state, as the aim of the campaign was not for states to take charge and become dependent on it, but to denounce the fact that this was real work, which was not being paid, and to advance the prospect of the socialisation of reproductive labour (2019).

Acknowledging that these forms of post-traumatic memory described as part of the work of social reproduction should not lead necessarily to demanding that the state perform this function. This point has been demonstrated in Spain during the last two decades, when the state assumed responsibility for the management of trauma. It promoted a politics of victimhood, reinforcing trauma within the structure of the family, and deactivating and rendering invisible revolutionary and anti-fascist memories. The critical issue is the ideological character and structural functions of this work, understanding it as a contested place. Hannah Proctor provides a pertinent analysis with regard to the emotional experiences of political defeat. She recognises that invoking past violence does not resolve present conditions, since the violence of the past is sustained in the oppression of the present. Proctor, therefore, contrasts the politics of victimhood with militant mourning since “The dead will be safe from the enemy only when it is defeated. And justice cannot be achieved through existing laws, systems or institutions but only through their abolition, through the demonstration of their foundational injustice” (Proctor 2024: 202).

5 Conclusion

In terms of relating the idea of remembrance to social reproduction labour, the history of the mass graves of the Spanish war and dictatorship presents a tangible case for the recognition that memory is an integral element of care and emotional labour, and that it functioned, in part, as a disciplinary tool for reproducing life, the workforce, and the docile worker. However, this also made it a contested field, where the possibility of consciousness-raising is confronted by the state and its apparatuses, whose interests lay in reproducing the post fascist capitalist mode of production. This includes recurring attempts by the state to monopolise the meaning of this kind of work, reinforcing the transmission of trauma and nostalgia as a function of the reproduction of the mode of production.

The foregoing has established that we are addressing a political conflict marked by class antagonism, which led to violence in the 1930s, and caused the extermination of thousands of militants and people who represented a threat to the new National Catholic and fascist regime. The memory of the mass graves was essentially transmitted by women, who, in turn, passed on a story of domination, marked by trauma and fear, to the generations to come emotional reproduction created ideological investment in the appropriate objects and futures that were compatible and legitimate for capital. This maintenance of emotional reproduction within the family sphere functions to assuage the discontent with the dominant order. In this context, trauma was the appropriate emotion for the reproduction of the future of capitalism in post-war Spain. Concomitantly, the creation of subjectivity within the families was a time of overall prosperity for landlords and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the intergenerational transmission of trauma relates to the intergenerational transmission of the fortunes and capital accumulated during the dictatorship. In conclusion, emotional labour connected with trauma, and the reproduction of capital cannot be dissociated.

However, this led us to examine the implication that this same work of social reproduction created the potential for the women to realise subversive actions counter to the narrative of trauma and the structure that upholds it. These challenges were materially manifested in tributes and monuments around the graves. Acts of memory focused on the graves and the bodies of the murdered are inevitably connected with the work of care associated with femininity; in this context, they became political acts. Moreover, there was resistance to social reproduction labour, not only in emotional terms, but which, instead of producing the next docile worker, produced the next militant. As related above, this is exemplified by the fact that many family members were members of political parties and trade unions, which were reorganised during the 1960s and legalised in the 1970s.

Finally, it was established that, when NGOs began to demand that the state take charge of exhumations, there was an outsourcing of part of the work of exhumation, an externalisation of part of the work of social reproduction, which generated a dependence on the state and an introduction into the field of a series of discourses. These discourses have functioned to annul the emancipatory potential of memory by returning it to its dimension of emotional labour, which guarantees the individualism that compels subjects to continue to work docilely and to produce the next worker within the framework of the liberal democratic consensus. Memory, again, is confined to the family, the individual, and the generational transmission of trauma through memory policies based on the idea of “dignity”, “victimhood”, and dependence on state aid.

In conclusion, it is crucial to recognise that memory forms part of the social reproduction labour, but that this should not lead to necessarily demanding that the state carry out this work. This text purports to elucidate the ideological character and structural functions of this social reproduction of memory, conceptualising it as a contested space. In this regard, an analysis of the emotional experiences of political defeat reveals that the rhetoric of closing wounds through individualised trauma therapy, conceals the structural implications of that trauma. Nostalgia and mourning result from losses due to violence derived from political, economic and social conflict which implied dispossession, extraction, exploitation, and repression, if not murder. They cannot be healed individually without resolving the oppressions that continue in the present. Therefore, a profound understanding of the ideological character of the politics of memory in contemporary Spain, which is focused on the individual recovery of the skeletal remains of a grandfather as a formula for “healing” memory, demands a coherent approach. This would involve recognising that an individualist analysis does not resolve the problem from which the violence emanated. On the contrary, it ensures the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, the work of social reproduction, of which memory is an integral part, becomes a site of struggle between the hegemony of state domination of memory politics and those who strive to expose the ideological nature of memory, which presents mass graves as neutral or apolitical tragedies, rather than the result of fascist crimes and a deliberate strategy of class and political repression. The resistance of victims’ families, aligned with militants, consists in reclaiming the memory of their anti-fascist agency and its intergenerational transmission.

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THE NARRATIVE OF A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER: NEOLIBERAL MEMORY POLITICS AND THE REFRAMING OF AUGUSTO PINOCHET IN CHILE

ABSTRACT

*The paper explores how General Augusto Pinochet's death in 2006 catalysed a shift in the collective memory of Chile, reframing him as a transformative leader who modernised the nation with neoliberal reforms. Rather than pursuing systematic empirical analysis, the paper adopts a conceptual approach that draws on Basil Bernstein's theory of recontextualisation and Mark Fisher's concept of capitalist realism to examine the contribution made by media narratives to this reframing. Through thematic analysis of cross-platform cultural texts, including news coverage and the films *The Death of Pinochet* and *El Conde*, it is argued that these narratives strategically separate economic success from political repression, marginalising working-class memory and reinforcing neoliberal hegemony. The Chilean case is situated within broader global memory politics, with a comparative reference made to Margaret Thatcher's legacy in the United Kingdom. By highlighting the ideological work performed by historical narratives, the paper contributes to debates on memory, neoliberalism, and the erasure of resistance in post-authoritarian societies.*

KEYWORDS: Augusto Pinochet, transformative leader, memory, cross platform discourse, capitalist realism

Neoliberalna politika spomina in preoblikovanje podobe Augusta Pinocheta v Čilu

IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje, kako je smrt generala Augusta Pinocheta leta 2006 oznanila spremembe v kolektivnem spominu Čila. Pinochet je v uradnem spominu postal lik transformativnega voditelja, ki je moderniziral državo z neoliberalnimi reformami. Namesto empirične analize članek uporablja konceptualni pristop, ki črpa iz Bernsteinove teorije rekontekstualizacije in Fisherjevega koncepta kapitalističnega realizma, zato da precizneje preuči, kako so medijski narativi prispevali k tovrstnemu preoblikovanju spomina. Skozi tematsko analizo medplatformnih kulturnih besedil – vključno z novicami in filmi *Smrt Pinocheta* in *El Conde* – avtorica ugotavlja, da ti narativi strateško ločijo gospodarski uspeh od političnega zatiranja, marginalizirajo spomin delavskega razreda in krepijo neoliberalno hegemonijo. Čilski primer je umeščen v širšo globalno politiko spomina, s primerjalno analizo na zapuščino Margaret Thatcher v Združenem kraljestvu. S poudarjanjem ideološkega dela zgodovinskih narativov članek prispeva k razpravam o spominu, neoliberalizmu in izbrisu upora v postavtoritarnih družbah.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Augusto Pinochet, transformativni voditelj, spomin, medplatformski diskurz, kapitalistični realizem

1 Introduction

The military coup of 11 September 1973, led by General Augusto Pinochet, marked a significant turning point in Chilean history. Beyond the immediate political upheaval and human rights violations that characterised the subsequent dictatorship (1973–1990), the coup signified a radical economic shift towards the implementation of neoliberal policies under conditions of extreme coercion. The systematic dismantling of social solidarity structures, coupled with the violent suppression of workers' movements and leftist political organisations, laid the groundwork for what would later be celebrated by neoliberal advocates as Chile's "economic miracle". Nearly five decades later, narratives surrounding this period remain deeply contested, with much scholarship divided between the human rights abuses and transitional justice processes that followed Chile's return to democracy (Collins 2010; Lira and Cornejo 2023; Rojas and Shaftoe 2022) and its neoliberal transformation (Valdés 1995; Huneus 2007; Taylor 2006). Less attention has been paid to how the economic transformation itself has been remembered, commemorated, and narrativised through media discourse.

General Pinochet's figure holds a central role in Chile's debates about memory, as his persona has been shaped both as a symbol of national salvation and as a source of deep trauma. Stern (2004; 2006) identifies three main narratives that influence public discourse about Pinochet: the salvation narrative, portraying him as the leader who rescued Chile from Marxist chaos; the wound narrative, highlighting state terror and human rights abuses; and the closure narrative, which aims to silence debate to maintain political stability. He suggests that these narratives persisted into the democratic period, creating what he calls a "memory impasse" during the 1990s, when elite pacts limited accountability (Stern 2010). This balance was broken by Pinochet's arrest in London and subsequent corruption scandals, which reignited calls for truth and justice and altered his image from an untouchable patriarch to a contested historical figure. Despite Pinochet's declining popularity among his supporters – due to his detention in the UK in 1998 and the corruption cases filed against him after his return to Chile (Weeks 2000; Roht-Arriaza 2005; Angell 2007; Stern 2010; Huneus and Ibarra 2013) – the persistence of neoliberal economic structures and the 1980 Constitution, which enshrined authoritarian enclaves and market-friendly reforms, has ensured that the legacy of the military regime continues to influence Chile's political and economic landscape (González and Prem 2023). This continuity has coincided with a new wave of political polarisation, culminating in the emergence of the *Partido Republicano* (Republican Party) and other actors of the Chilean New Right (Urbina 2020), who openly defend elements of Pinochet's institutional framework as protectors of stability and national identity (Mardones Marshall 2023). These dynamics have fostered a revisionist discourse that seeks to reshape Pinochet's figure from that of a dictator to that of a moderniser, emphasising economic successes while minimising human rights abuses (Joignant 2013; Aguilera & Badilla 2025). As a result, Chilean memory politics has shifted from a near-consensus of condemnation to a contested terrain where selective rehabilitation of Pinochet's image becomes increasingly visible in public debate (Collins et al. 2013).

This paper examines how the death of General Pinochet in December 2006 acted as a key moment in shaping the collective memory of Chile's neoliberal transformation, with a focus on how working-class struggles have been marginalised or erased from mainstream narratives. Since Pinochet's death, conflicted memories of the recent past have reshaped his legacy and slowly reinterpreted him as a leader who modernised Chile's economy and institutions. This view has been echoed in national and international media, especially during the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the coup. It appears in various media texts, including news stories and the two films discussed here: *The Death of Pinochet* (Osnovikoff

and Perut 2011) and Pablo Larraín's *El Conde* (2023), which present complex, often contradictory portrayals of the dictator and his legacy, engaging with the disputed narrative of Pinochet's economic miracle.

From a conceptual perspective, the paper aligns with Mark Fisher's concept of capitalist realism, which posits that it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. General Pinochet's neoliberal reforms transformed Chile's political culture; what Moulián (2002: 103) described as credit card citizenship was defined by reorganising political identities around a neoliberal understanding of individual freedoms and their relationship with the State (Harvey 2010: 7). This narrative developed alongside the "glorious defeat" of the Unidad Popular government, which highlighted Salvador Allende as a fallen hero, following the tradition of socialist martyrdom (Traverso 2017: 103). Both narratives coexist, as neoliberal reforms and the related political and cultural shifts have fostered the belief that there is no alternative to neoliberalism, thereby limiting the imagination of systemic change and maintaining the status quo in Chile.

This paper focuses on how the two films symbolise two distinct moments in the narratives surrounding neoliberal Chile and Pinochet. It engages with Basil Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation (1996), which explores how meaning shifts when it is transferred from one discursive context to another. This framework provides analytical tools to understand how Pinochet's image has been reshaped across different discursive spaces, from journalistic accounts surrounding his death to his portrayal in films and documentaries. Factual, documentary, and fictional representations of Pinochet since his death have contributed to a gradual redefinition of his historical significance, emphasising economic and institutional transformation over human rights abuses. This recontextualisation advances the interests of neoliberal continuity by portraying economic "success" as justification for authoritarian rule, while also marginalising or erasing the experiences of working-class people who endured repression and resistance. Through this analysis, the paper aims to understand how the recontextualisation of Pinochet's legacy has increasingly emphasised economic "modernisation" while neglecting the experiences of those most impacted by these changes- the Chilean working class. Consequently, it has reinforced top-down narratives surrounding Pinochet's dictatorship, which are framed around Allende's fallen hero and transitional justice concerning human rights violations. These narratives sustain the discourse of economic success, aligning with the national narrative of modernity and Chilean exceptionalism. Previous work has examined these frames, analysing similar processes in the United Kingdom and Chile, drawing parallels between these two paradigmatic cases of neoliberal transformation –

one enacted through coercion (Chile) and the other through democratic consent (UK) – to illustrate how comparable narrative strategies have contributed to naturalising neoliberal policies as inevitable, necessary, and ultimately beneficial, despite their damaging impacts on working-class communities and collective solidarity (Mansell et al. 2022). As Chile witnesses a resurgence of right-wing political movements nostalgic for aspects of the Pinochet era, even during the presidency of left-wing Gabriel Boric, understanding these politics of memory becomes increasingly urgent. By revealing how media discourse has contributed to what Mark Fisher (2009) termed “capitalist realism”, the belief that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism, this paper aids efforts to recover forgotten or suppressed memories of working-class resistance and solidarity.

While this paper engages with media texts and cultural representations, its primary aim is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not provide a systematic discourse analysis or formal film study but instead uses these texts thematically to illustrate broader patterns in Chilean memory politics. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Fisher, Bernstein, and Traverso, the paper examines how neoliberal narratives have recontextualised Pinochet’s legacy in ways that marginalise working-class memory and resistance. The focus is therefore on the ideological and discursive implications of these representations, rather than on detailed content analysis or methodological rigour in source selection.

2 Theoretical framework: Capital realism and melancholia in the construction of memories

The 1973 coup in Chile represents one of the most traumatic defeats for the global left in the 20th century. Allende’s democratic socialist project proposed a “third way” between Soviet communism and Western capitalism, as he described it as a Chilean revolution with “the taste of red wine and empanadas” (Allende 1972). This path was violently foreclosed by Pinochet’s coup, which targeted not only a democratically elected socialist government but also initiated a coercive transformation of Chile into a neoliberal state. Traverso (2017) has explored this event by conceptualising left-wing melancholia as an example of the end of a cycle of glorious defeats and tragic moments in history, where socialist martyrdom adds a mythical dimension to political leadership. He describes it as what remains after the shipwreck; its spirit shapes the writings of many of its “survivors”, drafted from their lifeboats after the storm, shaping leftist political culture (Traverso 2017:83), from a dialectical perspective as living memories of past struggles while recognising their defeats as “nightmares on the brains of the living”, which hinder historical materialist thinking (Marx 1852).

From a critical perspective, the rise of memory and memorialisation can be seen as a “cultural fetish” that emphasises victimhood rather than political agency, stripping the working class of the potential to drive historical change (Steven 2017: 185). In the case of Chile, it is human rights abuses instead of working class struggles it venerates the victim while ignoring the defeated; it starkly contrasts left-wing commitment, serving as a pre-emptive strike against political change. As Benjamin stated, left-wing melancholia can become fixated on collective experiences of the past, which can trap progressive movements in a paradoxical state, caught between an inescapable past and an unimagined future (Kuhar 2019: 184). Discussing Kastern’s social purposes, Steven (2017: 182) states that left-wing melancholia renders the political reality of the working classes and committed activities for bourgeois consumption in what he calls an early manifestation of “virtue signalling”, the opportunistic performance of political subjectivity, turning left-wing melancholia into the debilitating ideology of capitalist realism. Traverso explains this willingness to accept capitalism as a sign of resistance, as a disenchanted acceptance of market capitalism and now, neoliberalism, where melancholy can be seen as a refusal to compromise, untangling the concept from nostalgia to offer insights into how the left can struggle to counter capitalist narratives aligning with the TINA discourses (2017: 153).

Enzo Traverso’s concept of left-wing melancholia offers insight into how the left has struggled to counter these capitalist realist narratives that have paralysed and prohibited utopian imagination. Instead of viewing capitalism as the unchangeable horizon of human society, as Fisher points out (2009), they have failed to challenge this notion. Thus, capitalist realism is defined as “the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it” (Fisher 2009: 2). He describes capitalist realism as an “invisible barrier” that conditions our thoughts and actions, making it seem like there is no alternative to capitalism as it subsumes and consumes all previous history (2009: 4). This ideological condition permeates contemporary culture, creating what Fisher terms a “business ontology”, where everything is evaluated according to business criteria, and education, healthcare, and other public services are increasingly subjected to market logic (2009: 17). It affects all cultural production, economic activity and general thought, reinforcing the status quo. Like Benjamin (1940), who posits that the victors write history, Fisher critiques the dominant narratives that shape cultural and material understandings. Capitalist realism, he argued, presents liberalism, like historicism, as a totalising system that leaves no room for alternatives because it tends to suppress alternative narratives (Fisher 2009: 16). This tendency to become all-encompassing is evident in how liberalism and

capitalism are often depicted as the ultimate endpoint of history, leaving no room for viable alternatives, as this perspective constrains the ability to envision different futures (Fukuyama 1992). Here, memories can be a moment of danger that needs to be controlled because, in Benjamin's words, articulating what the past is does not mean recognising how it really was (Benjamin 1940: VI). This is to use this totalising narrative to shape collective memories, limiting their challenges. When addressing the collective memories surrounding the 1973 coup in Chile and those who viewed Salvador Allende as a fallen hero and Augusto Pinochet as a transformative leader, Traverso and Fisher help us understand how these diverse narratives can be sustained and shape collective memories. The Chilean socialist experiment represents a "might-have-been" historical moment that sustains the memory of an interrupted political project, which still holds the potential for alternative political futures, even though the coup becomes a site of unresolved historical trauma. The remembrance of Allende and the Chilean experience prevents them from being completely erased from history, but confines them to institutionalised, top-down memories reinforced during the political transition that began in 1990, while Pinochet's figure has been linked to the economic transformation of Chile despite its political and human cost. Thus, the critical reflection of this political possibility is that memories and narratives have been framed within the realms of "what is possible", paraphrasing Patricio Aylwin's definition of democracy at the beginning of his term (Aylwin 1991). The dominant narrative of Allende's overthrow reinforces capitalist realism by presenting neoliberal capitalism as the inevitable and only viable system in Chile, which has helped frame Pinochet's persona as a transformative leader in economic modernisation. These narratives shape collective memory, making it challenging to envision alternative efforts to remember Allende's legacy and the socialist project he represented, which could challenge the prevailing notion of capitalist realism and the idea that there is no alternative to Pinochet's economic project. As a result, any memory and class struggle in contemporary Chile represents a subversion that warrants attention due to its potential to challenge neoliberal capitalism as Chile's inevitable and only viable system. Thus, Traverso's framework also helps explain how this historical trauma created a vacuum that allowed Pinochet to rehabilitate 50 years after the Chilean coup.

Pinochet's Chile represents a foundational moment in the global installation of this capitalist realist paradigm. As the first major experiment in neoliberal economics guided by the "Chicago Boys", Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman, the Pinochet regime implemented radical free-market reforms, including the privatisation of state enterprises, market deregulation, reduction of trade barriers, and significant cuts to public

spending. These reforms were carried out through violence and repression, without democratic consent, yet are often retrospectively portrayed as necessary for Chile's economic modernisation (Klein 2008). Fisher's analysis clarifies how the violence of this transition has been systematically minimised in favour of narratives emphasising economic success. He states, "Capital's dominance is maintained not merely through direct repression, but also through its ability to subsume and consume all of previous history" (Fisher 2009: 4). Portraying Pinochet as a transformative leader exemplifies this process, as the dictator's economic achievements are increasingly separated from the repressive apparatus that made them possible. The stories of Salvador Allende as the fallen hero of utopian socialist memory versus Augusto Pinochet as the transformative leader of capitalist reality highlight a dialectical relationship between the past, seen as a struggle, and the neoliberal present in Chile, as well as its modern project led by Pinochet. The tension between these two figures demonstrates how the struggles of the working class and the transformation of Chilean political culture – framed by neoliberal ideas of freedom and markets – have been overlooked in the debate. Here, the media has played a vital role in recontextualising both narratives from the public discourse, from Pinochet's death to fifty years after the coup, emphasising Chile's conflicted memories of its past.

3 Historical memory and cross platform discourses

The media plays a vital role in shaping collective memory and mediating between private and public spheres (Mihelj 2017), especially through its agenda-setting function (Sorensen 2009: 6). Since the mid-19th century, Chilean media has largely adhered to a liberal model based on factual reporting and objectivity (Santa Cruz 1996: 14). From a political economy perspective, this model reflects the idea of a "free market of ideas", but it has been characterised by a high concentration of ownership among a few powerful national and international actors since the return to democracy (Mayorga Rogel et al., 2010; Del Valle et al. 2011; Monckeberg 2011; Sunkel and Geoffroy 2001; Godoy 2016). After the 1973 coup, the cultural revolution led by the military junta redefined socio-cultural rights around market freedoms and individual liberties (Moulián 2002; Solimano 2012), establishing a neoliberal state. This shift also increased the concentration of media ownership led by conservative and liberal capitals, marginalising alternative voices (Faure 2013), especially those representing working-class interests. As a result, the media landscape supported the dissemination of top-down narratives aligned with the transition process initiated in 1990. By the end of the decade, the uniformity of voices across broadcast, print, and digital

platforms reinforced an institutionalised approach to collective memory, within the limited scope of transitional justice and rooted in the discourse of Chilean exceptionalism. This narrative, based on the *Ruptura Pactada* (Agreed Rupture), aimed to position Chile as an international model of negotiated democratisation. Consequently, since the return to democracy, dominant media discourses on the 1973 coup, human rights violations, Salvador Allende, and General Pinochet have been reproduced across media outlets, courts, the National Congress, and other public spaces, including schools (Sorensen 2009: 6).

The construction of collective memory differs across various contexts shaped by distinctive political and economic histories, as well as diverse class structures and identities; therefore, context plays a vital role in this process. Collective memories are sustained by competing narratives that often coexist in tension (Lechner 2023). Understanding how these narratives are recontextualised is crucial for analysing how memory discourses are organised. Bernstein (1996) describes recontextualisation as the process through which discourses are selectively appropriated, relocated, refocused, and linked to other discourses to establish a new order. As discourses shift from their original sites of production to secondary contexts, they undergo transformation; consequently, “every time a discourse moves, there is space for ideology to play” (Bernstein 1996: 24). This framework highlights three interconnected processes: the selective appropriation of narratives, the articulation of ideological positions, and the transformation of discourse. Recontextualisation is therefore not a neutral process but one embedded in power relations, as narratives are strategically appropriated and reorganised to support particular social orders (Bernstein 1996: 47). This perspective demonstrates how top-down memory construction in post-authoritarian Chile has marginalised working-class experiences, reinforcing a form of capitalist realism that presents neoliberalism as the only sustainable economic system. This cross-platform discourse has dominated Chilean public life since the democratic transition of 1990.

This paper employs Bernstein’s concept of recontextualisation to analyse the discourses surrounding Augusto Pinochet’s persona as portrayed by various news media outlets on his death in 2006 and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Chilean coup. It focuses particularly on the documentaries *The Death of Pinochet* (Osnovikoff and Perut 2011) and Pablo Larraín’s *El Conde* (Larraín 2023). Documentaries serve as powerful cultural tools for transmitting knowledge and information, aligning with Bernstein’s idea of pedagogic discourse, where knowledge is structured and communicated to shape understanding. The way a documentary is constructed and the perspective it adopts can significantly influence how viewers interpret and engage with narratives about these media

texts, some of which have already appeared in other institutional spaces, such as news media. Therefore, the paper examines how media narratives have recontextualised General Augusto Pinochet's legacy. Using Bernstein's framework, it explores how meanings shift as they move from journalistic coverage to cultural productions, highlighting processes of selective appropriation, ideological positioning, and discursive transformation. In doing so, the paper interrogates how neoliberal narratives have framed Pinochet as a transformative leader, despite his association with authoritarianism and human rights abuses. The analysis considers representations in *The Death of Pinochet* and *El Conde* alongside news articles and long-form opinion pieces published in English and Spanish during three key moments: Pinochet's death in 2006, the 40th anniversary of the 1973 coup, and the 50th anniversary in 2023. This approach enables a critical understanding of how cultural and media texts participate in the ongoing contest over memory and historical interpretation in post-authoritarian Chile.

Focusing on how General Augusto Pinochet has been portrayed, it becomes clear that the neoliberal transformation of civil society in Chile carefully excluded any working-class experience from the narratives surrounding the traumatic past of Chile between 1973 and 1990, thereby omitting it from the cultural representations that Chileans have encountered when addressing these historical events. While Allende has been described as a fallen hero, Pinochet's dictatorship has been depicted as a transformative moment in Chilean history that introduced a neoliberal project capable of modernising the country. Due to the persistence of the narrative of Chile as an exception within Latin America, especially in its political and economic context, this discourse has endured. The cost of this transformation was seen in changes within the class culture in Chile, resulting from policies that dismantled most of the gains the Chilean working class achieved during the 20th century (Stallings 1978; Martínez and Diaz 1996). Despite the ongoing resistance of the working class throughout the dictatorship – ranging from continued organisation of copper miners to the *poblaciones* (poor urban neighbourhoods) – which demonstrated remarkable resilience and agency (Schneider 2010; Paley 2001), stories and memories of working-class struggle and solidarity have been increasingly marginalised in dominant narratives about Chile's transformation, particularly after Pinochet's death, as they do not fit within the frames of Chile as a modern nation. Collective memories are not neutral records of past events but are fundamentally social and political, shaped by power relations and serving present interests (Halbwachs 1992). The accepted narratives about both Allende and Pinochet are therefore those that address the past in a way that aligns with the national story of modernity and Chilean exceptionalism, promoting Chile as a country that has been able to reconcile its

past with its present. The reframing of Pinochet as a transformative leader reflects the power of neoliberal discourse to appropriate and neutralise alternative narratives. Pinochet's representation has increasingly shifted from restricted codes (specific to the experiences of his victims and opponents) to elaborated codes (abstract discussions of economic transformation and modernisation), allowing for a more sanitised version of history to emerge. As discourses about Pinochet's economic policies move from their original context – economic policy debates, implementation, and immediate impacts – to media representations, cultural productions, and commemorative practices, they undergo significant transformations that reflect power relations and ideological positions. Primarily, this paper aims to examine how media narratives and cultural representations have influenced the portrayal of Pinochet's persona in these spaces, as reflected in the films discussed in this paper.

4 Pinochet, from a dictator to a transformative leader

Describing the role of the media in constructing collective memories in Chile, Sorensen (2005: 1) identifies three main periods linked to most media production when recounting the country's recent history: the democratically elected socialist government of 1970–1973, General Pinochet's dictatorship from 1973 to 1990, and the transition to democracy, which began in 1990. These periods have been significant for organising media output, as various voices have accessed different platforms, including traditional broadcasters and alternative media, with Chileans engaging with them differently – mainly influenced by institutional and socioeconomic factors. This is significant because the role of diverse media in shaping collective memories is interconnected with the identities promoted by media and the reproduction of media narratives (Richards 2004, quoted by Bucciferro 2012: 16). Among these narratives is the framing of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorial and economic legacy, which has been highlighted in both national and international accounts of the neoliberal transformations that have influenced Chile since 1975. While examining how Neoliberalism has shaped national memory as part of a broader global trend, Poblete (2015: 94–95) considers how collective memory is moulded under Neoliberalism – this involves deep, recurrent violence beyond mere military force or human rights violations, as violence becomes a means of articulating social memory. Here, neoliberal violence and the management of social memory are interconnected because Neoliberalism impacts how social memory is created and preserved. Poblete (2015: 100) concludes that authoritarian regimes, such as the Chilean military dictatorship, utilise a narrative of a “breakdown” of the political system

and a “clean slate” to forge a national memory that supports their authoritarian projects. This narrative aids in establishing a foundational basis for their rule, allowing them to transcend it, as exemplified by the case of Chile.

On the day Augusto Pinochet died, 10 December 2006, media coverage diverged from the dominant pattern by rhetorically separating his economic policies from the transitional justice and human rights violations experienced during his regime. This separation aimed to enable a more positive evaluation of the economic transformation while acknowledging political repression – effectively compartmentalising these aspects of the dictatorship that, in reality, were deeply intertwined. Coverage by national media outlets such as *El Mercurio* and international news sources like *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, and *The New York Times* emphasised this narrative of technical achievement and modernisation, portraying neoliberal transformation as separate from, rather than dependent on, authoritarian coercion in a sanitised frame (*The Washington Post* 2006; *The Economist* 2006; Rohter 2006; *El Mercurio* 2006). Chile had been presented in the media as an example of political transition and economic stability prior to Pinochet’s death¹, especially during the governments of the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* (Coalition of Parties for Democracy), the centre-left coalition that ruled from 1990 to 2010. These governments did not radically depart from the economic policies of the regime but instead maintained the same socioeconomic framework as at the outset (Garretón 2012). The narrative of economic success attributed to the transformations initiated by Pinochet’s dictatorship was reinforced by the prevailing political consensus. It stemmed from democratic administrations, erasing resistance and political struggles – particularly those of the working class – during the regime. This erasure facilitated the presentation of neoliberal policies as inevitable rather than political, aligning with the TINA discourse; in democratic Chile, there was seemingly no alternative to neoliberal policies.

Media coverage often invoked the “Chilean miracle” narrative, emphasising macroeconomic indicators while downplaying or omitting discussions of rising inequality, labour precarity, and the dismantling of social protections that disproportionately affected working-class Chileans (Winn 2004). Substantive discussions on how economic policies directly impacted working-class communities were largely absent from mainstream coverage. When workers appeared,

1. International media outlets portrayed the Chilean neoliberal project as a success story before General Pinochet died. Some early examples can be found in American liberal news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *the Wall Street Journal*. See Kamm (1993); Rohter (2004); Kozak (2017).

they were usually portrayed as passive recipients of economic growth rather than as agents who both suffered from and resisted neoliberal policies. This was one of the frames explored in documentaries while documenting the days following that particular day. The documentary *The Death of Pinochet* (Osnovikoff and Perut 2011) offers a more nuanced depiction of how Chileans processed the dictator's death, capturing spontaneous reactions across class lines. The film documents public demonstrations of grief and celebration, giving rare mainstream visibility to working-class perspectives on Pinochet's economic legacy. It follows four main characters, three from a working-class background, who reflect on their experiences of that day from the viewpoint of supporters and detractors of Pinochet's persona. In a particularly striking sequence, the filmmakers contrast the celebrations in *Villa Francia*, a working-class neighbourhood known for its resistance to the dictatorship, with the mourning at the Military Hospital where Pinochet's body lay (MacWilliam 2012). The film begins with the spatial division, highlighting how memory is geographically fragmented in post-dictatorship Santiago, with *Plaza Italia* remaining a focal point for political protests. This division helps us understand why and where the upper-class mourners emphasise Pinochet's economic achievements, while residents of working-class neighbourhoods and other middle-class Chileans who gathered to celebrate his death discuss ongoing economic hardships, directly linking their current struggles to policies from the dictatorship era. Nonetheless, class background is not a clear-cut indicator of supporters and detractors. One of Pinochet's supporters, a working-class woman, thanked General Pinochet for helping her start her small business – a kiosk in central Santiago – that enabled her to educate her children, all three of whom hold engineering degrees, as she stated. This shift in working-class political allegiances is not uncommon in housing policies; infrastructure projects have moved some working-class communities into what has been called "thankful memory" (Infante Batiste 2024: 1459). These memories are highlighted when Pinochet loyalists expressed their support for the regime outside the Military Hospital in Santiago (Joignant 2013:175). Political repression and economic hardship affected working-class organisations and their political identities during the dictatorship (Winn 2004). Therefore, favourable opinions of the regime reflected how the Chilean working-class identity was reframed within the neoliberal understanding of individual entitlements and freedoms. The documentary challenges the typical recontextualisation process in mainstream media by refusing to separate economics from politics and by not prioritising elite perspectives, a narrative found among academics' op-eds in the national press (Joignant 2013: 181–185). Instead, it portrays collective memory as fundamentally contested and class-based, as explained by one of the main characters, a

working-class man who was a conscript in the army during the coup. For him, Pinochet was a tyrant who had the Chilean people, *el pueblo chileno*, “under his yoke for 17 years with the PEM and the POJH”, policies implemented by the regime to tackle working-class unemployment.² These are described in the film as an example of Pinochet’s hatred for them.

Previous work by the author examined the discourses surrounding the 40th anniversary of the Chilean coup, focusing on three main narratives: transitional justice, Allende as a fallen hero, and the economic and political success of the transition. These narratives aligned with how national and international media portrayed those events (Watkins and Urbina Montana 2022). The perspectives of Salvador Allende and his political project as a doomed utopia highlight the failure of collective capacity to produce, care for, and enjoy the fruits of commonwealth, relegating any potential alternative to the realm of fiction because they are deemed impossible to realise in practice. This ensures that all possibilities of political reaction are unable to articulate an alternative, as Traverso outlined in his conceptualisation of melancholia (2017: 15–17). Due to the dominant discourses of Chile’s political and economic success following its transition and neoliberal revolution, this narrative also serves an ideological purpose, helping to avoid contradictions in the national story of modernity and Chilean exceptionalism. It promotes Chile as a country that has successfully reconciled its past with its present. The accepted narrative, therefore, addresses human rights abuses, justice, and reconciliation within the context of a tragic historical past. This narrative does not challenge the foundations of the economic exceptionalism that Chile has built around its political identity since the 1980s. Consequently, the collective memory of the 1973 coup has been shaped by the need to accept the terms of the Agreed Rupture, initially defined by the Democratic Alliance as a political strategy between 1983 and 1988 and later consolidated by the *Concertación* after the 1988 referendum. This agreement was committed to a political settlement to restore democracy, including the acceptance of the Chilean neoliberal State as a political reality. This perspective contrasts with the bottom-

2. The *Programa de Empleo Mínimo* (Minimum Employment Programme -PEM) was established in 1974 and implemented in March 1975. It aimed to provide employment to the unemployed through various municipal projects. The *Programa de Ocupación para Jefes de Hogar* (Employment Programme for Heads of Households -POJH) was created in October 1982 to address the severe unemployment crisis. It targeted heads of households, particularly in response to the economic downturn that saw unemployment rates soar to around 20%. Both programmes were criticised for their substandard working conditions and inadequate compensation, and as forms of institutionalised subemployment (Urmeneta and Ruiz-Tagle 1984).

-up “dissident memories” of the coup as a Year Zero rupture – an initial point of Chilean struggles with its traumatic past and resistance to some of the radical societal changes introduced by the regime. The memory of Allende within public discourse, which includes narratives of economic instability and polarisation during his administration as well as his persona as a fallen hero, has allowed the transformative memory of Pinochet, as depicted in the documentary, to persist. As one supporter stated in the film, “he was one of the first to defeat communism internationally”, echoing the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. This narrative, employed by supporters of Pinochet to justify and glorify his regime, portrays Pinochet as a heroic figure who saved Chile from chaos and Marxist tyranny, emphasising his role in bringing stability and economic growth. Larrain (2001) suggests that heroic figures are familiar among Chileans due to a militaristic identity rooted in the army’s role in shaping the Chilean State. The significance of the armed forces in the institutional development of Chile was codified in the 1980s constitution, citing their “cohesive element” of Chilean identity (Larrain 2001: 147). The authoritarian nature of Pinochet’s regime reinforced this militaristic identity – one that stressed order, discipline, and national security – allowing a heroic version of history to be celebrated in public discourse, commemorations, and through selective recounting of past events, including the anniversaries of the 40th and 50th years of the coup.

The ongoing debate over Pinochet’s legacy as a transformative leader has gained renewed importance with the recent rise of right-wing politics in Chile. Since 2017, José Antonio Kast’s right-wing Republican Party has ridden a conservative wave, emphasising the economic changes Chile experienced during the dictatorship and his portrayal as a leader who reshaped the economy, stabilising the country amid perceived chaos. Kast has often highlighted the economic reforms carried out during Pinochet’s regime, which he believes laid the foundation for Chile’s modern economic success. Despite Gabriel Boric winning the 2021 presidential election, Kast advanced to the second round, demonstrating how narratives about economic reforms and success under Pinochet influence Chilean politics and, notably, public opinion. Two years later, right-wing media and political figures increasingly depicted Chile’s current economic challenges as consequences of deviating from Pinochet’s model, rather than as the result of its internal contradictions, a view echoed by the international news media.³

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3. International media outlets highlighted in 2023 that Chile’s economic slowdown reflects a dangerous abandonment of the principles that made the country a Latin American success story, explicitly linking current difficulties to insufficient fidelity to neoliberal orthodoxy. They also emphasised the shift among Chileans who do not hold unfavourable views of the Coup and justify it. See Izquierdo and Ugarte (2023) and Funk (2023).

As Chilean political scientist Patricio Navia (2023) noted, Pinochet is now seen as an abusive father and murderer who built the house that the whole family still inhabits, emphasising his role as the most transformative president Chile has had in the last 80 years. As previously suggested, despite the atrocities of the dictatorship, Pinochet could be regarded as the father of contemporary Chile (Navia 2008). Pablo Larraín's *El Conde* (2023) exemplifies this perspective by depicting Pinochet and the politics of memory surrounding his figure. As Borzutzky (2023) stated, by reimagining Pinochet as a 250-year-old vampire who has witnessed centuries of Chilean history, the film employs fantasy to challenge the idea that his economic policies were an inevitable step towards modernisation. The vampire metaphor vividly illustrates the exploitative nature of neoliberal economics. Pinochet survived by draining the life force of others, especially the working class – an image drawn from Fisher's *Exiting the Vampire Castle* (2013), which effectively highlights the need to return to a class-based politics to combat the exploitative aspects of neoliberal policies. Pinochet's portrayal in these films aims to illustrate how the absence of class struggle underpins economic inequalities. Ignoring these struggles helps sanitise the narrative about his economic policies, as it overlooks their political cost to the working class.

Additionally, by extending Pinochet's presence throughout Chilean history, the film incorporates the narrative of the "Chilean miracle", which depicts the dictatorship as a clean break from the past and the beginning of modern prosperity within the ambitions of Chile's elite since independence, as the culmination of Western-style modernisation. However, portraying Pinochet mainly as a symbol – exemplified by his depiction as a vampire figure – reinforces the idea that Neoliberalism is a consequence of his political leadership, aligning with the discourse of a transformative leader shaping his legacy. This is clear at the end of the film, when a young Pinochet, transformed into a schoolboy, is led to his new school by Margaret Thatcher, who assumes the role of a new maternal figure. As a metaphor for his political legacy, his return to life could be seen as the fluidity of his figure, which can be reinterpreted or "rediscovered" in a new context that overlooks his past or political regime. Nonetheless, the media's metanarratives about his persona were a top-down exercise in shaping collective memory of recent history, resonating with the idea of a new Chile born because his neoliberal reforms paved the way to modernity and economic success.

5 Conclusion

The contested memories surrounding Augusto Pinochet reveal the complex interaction between neoliberal transformation and collective memory in Chile's recent history. As this paper has demonstrated, media discourse has gradually reinterpreted Pinochet from a brutal dictator to a transformative leader who modernised Chile's economy through necessary, if painful, reforms. This narrative shift exemplifies what Mark Fisher called "capitalist realism" – the belief that neoliberalism is not a political choice but the only viable economic reality. In this framework, working-class experiences and resistance are systematically erased, and economic transformation is celebrated as a historical inevitability. This Chilean case finds a compelling parallel in the United Kingdom, where Margaret Thatcher's legacy has undergone a similar revaluation (Stepney 2014; Bale 2015). Both Pinochet and Thatcher are increasingly portrayed as architects of modernisation and national renewal, whose economic achievements are used to justify or obscure the social costs of their respective regimes, despite being driven by coercion in Chile and by consent in the UK. Nevertheless, both cases demonstrate how memory politics can strategically compartmentalise violence and repression, preserve the economic model while distancing it from its authoritarian origins.

The binary opposition between Salvador Allende as the "fallen hero" and Pinochet as the transformative leader further illustrates how ideological narratives shape collective memory. Allende's legacy is often confined to tragic idealism, while Pinochet's is reframed as pragmatic modernisation. This dichotomy not only simplifies Chile's complex political history but also reinforces neoliberal hegemony by marginalising alternative visions of democracy and social justice. As Chile confronts a renewed wave of right-wing politics, exemplified by figures like José Antonio Kast, the stakes of memory become increasingly urgent. The rehabilitation of Pinochet's image is not merely a historical revision; it is a political strategy that legitimises contemporary neoliberal agendas. Recovering bottom-up memories of working-class resistance and suffering is essential to challenging the narrative that "there is no alternative". These memories remind us that neoliberalism was not inevitable, and that its foundations, whether built by Thatcher or Pinochet, remain contested. Ultimately, the fight over memory is a fight over political possibility. By examining how media and cultural texts have contributed to the recontextualisation of Pinochet's legacy, this paper highlights the ideological work carried out by historical narratives. In both Chile and the UK, the past is not just remembered – it is actively shaped to influence the future.

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Author's data

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MODERNE, POSTMODERNE IN METAMODERNE STRUKTURE OBČUTENJA: VELIKOPODATKOVNA ANALIZA SPOMINOV NA JOSIPA BROZA - TITA V 21. STOLETJU

IZVLEČEK

V članku raziskujemo pojasnjevalni potencial metamodernega spomina, ki strukturno pomirja protislovja in odraža sodobna prizadevanja za oblikovanje in časovno umestitev kolektivne identitete. Proučujemo oblikovanje in posredovanje spominov na socialistično Jugoslavijo – zlasti na Josipa Broza - Tita – skozi generacijske, politične in medijske dinamike. Na podlagi velikopodatkovne analize 179 spominskih intervjujev, ki so jih študenti dodiplomskega študija opravili z osebami, rojenimi med 1940 in 1955, izpostaviva tri strukture občutenja: moderno, osredinjeno na enotnost in napredek; postmoderno, zaznamovano z razdrobljenostjo in skepticizmom; ter metamoderno, ki niha med iskrenostjo in ironijo. Tito se v tej konstelaciji pojavi kot simbolna figura, katere pomen se skozi življenjska obdobja in medijske reprezentacije spreminja. Z uporabo kombiniranih metod prikaževa, kako se spomini odražajo v spreminjajočih se političnih kontekstih in medijskih ekologijah.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: metamoderni spomin, struktura občutenja, komunikativni spomin, socialistična Jugoslavija, Josip Broz – Tito

Modern, postmodern and metamodern structures of feeling: Big data analysis of memories of Josip Broz – Tito in the 21st century

ABSTRACT

The article investigates the explanatory potential of metamodern memory that accommodates contradictions and reflects contemporary struggles over collective identity and its temporal dimensions. The authors examine the way memories of socialist Yugoslavia – particularly of Josip Broz – Tito – are articulated and mediated by generational, political and media dynamics. Based on big data analysis of 179 memory interviews conducted by undergraduate students with individuals born between 1940 and 1955, three structures of feeling are identified: a modern one centred on unity and progress, a postmodern turn marked by fragmentation and scepticism, and a metamodern sensibility that oscillates between sincerity and irony. Tito emerges as a symbolic figure whose meaning shifts across life stages and media representations. Relying on mixed methods, the authors trace how memories reflect evolving political contexts and media ecologies.

KEY WORDS: *metamodern memory, structure of feeling, communicative memory, socialist Yugoslavia, Josip Broz – Tito*

1 Uvod¹

Označevalec »Tito« že več kot dve desetletji predstavlja eno osrednjih vozlišč kolektivnega spomina na obdobje Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije (SFRJ). »Osebni in organizirani spomini na Tita, kot ključni simbol jugoslovanskega socializma, so pisani in se spreminjajo glede na potrebe sedanjosti. V tem nemiru se ustvarjajo posebne skupnosti spomina /.../ [za katere] /.../ je ključno vprašanje, česa se ne sme pozabiti«, ugotavlja Todor Kuljić (2012/2024: 271). Opozarja, da se »profil spominjanja posamezne družbe vidno spreminja« vsakih 40 let, in sicer skladno z menjavo profila ključnih skupnosti spomina (ibid.: 272),

1. Članek je nastal v okviru projekta MEMPOP (»Estetika in strategije spominjanja v popularni kulturi«, ki ga financirata ARIS in HRZZ (skupni projekt sheme WEAVE, št. J7-50215 (oba avtorja) in v okviru ARIS-financiranih raziskovalnih programov »Množični mediji, javna sfera in družbene spremembe, P5-0051« (Jernej Kaluža) ter »Produkcija smisla in znanja v času krize: kulturološki, religiološki in znanstveno-razvojni vidiki družb v Sloveniji, na Balkanu, v Evropi, P5-0203« (Natalija Majsova).

ki jih lahko poleg diahronega grupiranja v generacije členimo tudi sinhrono, to je glede na interpretacije preteklosti, ki jih pomagajo vzdrževati.

Profil spominjanja posamezne družbe poleg osebnih spominov in delovanja skupnosti spomina in spominskih institucij, kot so muzeji in arhivi, sooblikujejo tudi dejavniki, kot je medijska ekologija določenega časa. Slednja konstruira in kurira kolektivni spomin, s tem ko strukturira in vsebinsko sooblikuje sedanost ter hkrati vzpostavlja mediatizirano spominsko krajino – nabor orodij, vmesnikov, oblik in praks, prek katerih dostopamo do vsebin, ki napotujejo na ravno tako mediatizirane podobe preteklosti ter delujejo kot arhivi kolektivnega spomina in kot eksterni sprožilci osebnih spominskih procesov. Čeprav je vloga medijev pri sooblikovanju in strukturiranju kolektivnega spomina in spominskih procesov že več desetletij pomembna raziskovalna tema (prim. Huyssen 2000: 29; Neiger in dr. (ur.) 2011), so odnosi med delovanjem čedalje fluidnejše medijske ekologije, kolektivnim spominom in individualnimi spomini še vedno razmeroma podraziskano področje (Klinger-Vilenchik in dr. 2014; Kansteiner 2010; Kuzmanić 2008: 154). Temu botrujejo tudi metodološki izzivi, ki jih predstavlja raziskovanje preteklih – vseskozi fluidnih in heterogenih – medijskih ekologij. Podraziskana, četudi v zadnjih letih vse bolj analizirana tema je tudi spominjanje na socialistične medije (Imre 2016; Mihelj in Huxtable 2018; Pušnik 2019; Vobič, Milić in Milojević 2022; Žnidaršič 2022; Kaluža in Amon Prodnik 2022).

V tem članku želiva s študijo spominov posameznic in posameznikov na prvega jugoslovanskega predsednika Josipa Broza - Tita (1892–1980), ki temelji na mešanem (kvantitativnem in kvalitativnem) metodološkem pristopu, prispevati k razvoju pristopov za proučevanje oblikovanja osebnih spominov kot komunikativne razsežnosti kolektivnega spomina v kontekstu hitre in dinamične mediatizacije od druge polovice 20. stoletja naprej. Prispevati želiva tudi k rastočemu polju raziskovanja spominjanja na socialistično Jugoslavijo, posebej k razumevanju kompleksnega procesa formiranja spomina, ki ni zgolj golo podoživljanje ali rekonstruiranje preteklosti, temveč tudi odziv na sedanost in podlaga za oblikovanje pričakovanj glede prihodnosti.

45 let po Titovi smrti in skoraj 35 let po razpadu SFRJ ter začetku konsolidiranja nacionalno specifičnih kolektivnih spominov na eni strani in postjugoslovanskega spomina na drugi je kolektivni spomin na Jugoslavijo bolj kompleksen in heterogen kot kadarkoli. Lahko ga razgrnemo kot sosledje različnih valov v kontekstu vzpostavljanja nacionalnih »redov spominjanja« v državah, ki so nastale na območju nekdanje socialistične Jugoslavije ter v raznolikih diasporah. Lahko ga analiziramo glede na afektivni naboj, politično (ne)sporočilnost, estetiko, medijsko prisotnost, ospoljenost ali povezanost z aktualnimi družbenopolitičnimi in planetarnimi izzivi.

Ne glede na orisano razpršenost in vseprisotnost Jugoslavije pa je mediatizirani spomin na Jugoslavijo v tretjem desetletju 21. stoletja tudi čedalje bolj »sploščen«; cena dostopnosti tega spomina je dobra mera shematičnosti in enostranskosti, davek na obstanek pa so jasne, razmeroma enostavne pripovedi, ki uokvirjajo množstvo zapletenih, čustveno nabitih in ambivalentnih osebnih in kolektivnih zgodb. Tak vtis dajejo na primer ambivalentni sklici na Jugoslavijo in na Tita kot njen simbolni barometer v političnih govorih, informacijskih medijih in tudi v kulturni produkciji: Jugoslavija (in z njo Tito) pogosto deluje bodisi kot preteklo idealno stanje bodisi kot označevalec distanciranja in zavračanja. Tovrstna ambivalentnost ključno zaznamuje lokalizirano »strukturo občutenja«, ki jo po Williamsu (1977: 128–135) lahko opredelimo kot »izkustvo življenja v določenem času in prostoru« (ibid.).

Na pojav strukturno specifičnih spominskih narativov, značilnih za 21. stoletje, opozarjajo številne študije, ki zajemajo analizo oblik kulturne produkcije, kot sta film in popularna glasba. Za razliko od relativističnih, igrivih in humornih postmodernističnih sklicev na preteklost, pogostih v poznem 20. in zgodnjem 21. stoletju, je v zadnjih 15 letih v kulturni produkciji zaznaven porast zanimanja za kompleksnejše preplete med estetskimi in pripovednimi prijemi, značilnimi za modernizem in postmodernizem. To tendenco, ki jo je moč opaziti tudi pri strukturah občutenja, značilnih za spominjanje na Jugoslavijo, to je kombiniranje resnosti in lahkotnosti oziroma narativov iskanja smisla, izvora in identitete z relativiziranjem in ironijo, lahko označimo kot »novo iskrenost«, »novo avtentičnost« ali kot metamodernizem (Vermeulen in van der Akker 2015) – držo, ki ni obremenjena z iskanjem izvora in torej ni estetski ali formalni povratek k ideologiji avtentičnosti (cf. Trilling 1972), obenem pa tudi ni popolnoma zavezana postmodernističnemu neskončnemu spokopavanju stabilnih pomenov in ideje smisla.² Metamoderna senzibilnost je torej podobna sodobnim znanstvenim teorijam: namesto »konca velikih zgodb« izhaja iz množstva nasprotujočih si zgodb, med katerimi si na različne načine, tudi preko humorja, ironije in s pomočjo pastiša, prizadeva iskati smisel in se tako upira deficitu prihodnosti, dolgo značilnem za sodobno levico (cf. Traverso 2017). Obenem gre za držo, ki lahko ob pomanjkanju kritične medijske pismenosti vodi v zaupanje sodobnim populističnim agendam (cf. Davis 2020).

2. Termina, ki ga je Williams uporabljal na različne načine, v avtorja članku ne opredelita drugače kot »senzibilnost« (angl. *sensibility*), zato ga bova v tem članku operacionalizirala v skladu z lastno interpretacijo, temelječo na pregledu obstoječih rab na področjih kulturnih in spominskih študij. Vermeulen in van der Akker (2015) sta sicer v pojasnilu k manifestu »Notes on Metamodernism« zapisala, da metamodernizem vsekakor razumeta kot senzibilnost in strukturo občutenja oziroma »občutenje, ki strukturira«, in ne kot poziv k delovanju oziroma manifest, vendar teze še nista sistematično razvila.

Čeprav je argumentacija, da k metamoderni senzibilnosti sodijo tudi specifični spominski narativi, prepričljiva na ravni analize kulturnih vsebin in oblik, ni jasno, kakšen pojasnjevalni potencial ima v kontekstu širše družbeno-kulturne diagnostike. Namen tega članka je raziskati tezo o strukturi specifičnosti »metamodernega spomina« (Landsberg in Vermeulen 2025) v kontekstu študije specifičnosti – starejše – populacije. Odgovarjajo torej na vprašanje, kako strukturno različni spominski narativi o Titu sooblikujejo kolektivne in osebne spomine te generacije, ki je izkusila tako »konec velikih zgodb« modernosti kot postmodernistično množenje novih velikih zgodb v zadnjih dveh desetletjih 20. stoletja in ambivalentno metamodernistično sodobnost.

V prvem delu članka tako na podlagi analize obstoječe literature razgrneva povezavo med konceptom strukture občutenja in komunikativnim spominom ter prek primera spomina na Tita oriševa evolucijo specifičnosti spominskih struktur v (post)jugoslovanskem kontekstu. Ugotovitve iz prvega dela članka nato integrirava v metodološko zasnovo empirične študije, ki vsebuje analizo velike podatkovne baze – 179 osebnih, avtobiografskih intervjujev, ki se osredotočajo na rabo medijev v socialistični Jugoslaviji. V analizi ugotavlja, da spomin na Tita igra ključno vlogo pri načinu upovedovanja individualnih življenjskih zgodb, prepletanju individualnega in kolektivnega spomina ter pri širšem vrednotenju Jugoslavije. Pri tem detektiramo tri različne strukture občutenja, ki se vežejo na mediatizirano figuro Tita: 1.) Tito nastopa kot reprezentacija modernističnega napredka in enotnosti, 2.) njegova smrt predstavlja začetek razpada enotnega narativa in nastanek postmodernističnega mnoštva narativov, 3.) v spominih pogosto nastopa tudi kot metamoderni označevalec, kot protetično utrjen kolektivni spomin, ki niha med obema opisanimi nasprotjema in je vse bolj ločen od zgodovinskega lika Tita.

2 Strukture občutenja in postjugoslovanska spominska krajina

2.1 Struktura občutenja in komunikativni spomin

Tako kulturne kot spominske študije v veliki meri zaznamuje zanimanje za dinamiko družbenih sprememb oziroma vprašanje, kako se družbenokulturne formacije – ne le kot institucionalni okviri, dogovori in formalizirane prakse, pač pa tudi kot vsakdanje teksture, podobe, zvoki, vonji idr. – razvijajo, pri tem zavračajo določene vzorce, oblike in načine življenja, prevzemajo druge in dojemajo posledice teh prehodov. V skladu s tem je že Raymond Williams (1954: 21; 2015: 20–24) trdil, da če življenje izkušamo kompleksno – to je, multimodalno (z različnimi čuti), multimedijsko in na ravneh, kot so afektivna in

racionalna, individualna in kolektivna, sinhrona in diahrona –, bi bilo družbo, kulturo in družbenokulturne spremembe smiselno tudi analizirati izhajajoč ravno iz te kompleksnosti. Opozarjal je, da ustaljene analitične kategorije, nasprotno, praviloma temeljijo na podatkih, zbranih z metodami, ki lahko zajamejo zgolj določeno perspektivo, in na teorijah, ki ločujejo umetnost od politike, ekonomije in znanosti, osebno življenjsko izkustvo pa od kolektivne in družbene razsežnosti.

Med pojmi, ki omogočajo vpogled v specifike različnih kontekstov oziroma v to, kako življenje občutijo ljudje v določenem času in kraju ter so tako uporabni za razumevanje kompleksnosti, je še danes posebej produktiven Williamsov termin struktura občutenja. Termin je od leta 1949/1993, ko ga je, tako Matthews (2010), Williams prvič uporabil, ne glede na svojo polemičnost³ prešel v splošno družboslovnohumanistično rabo kot oznaka za »senzibilnost« oziroma stanje duha in obzorje možnosti, ki izvira iz časovno specifične kolektivne življenjske izkušnje (prim. Vermeulen in van der Akker 2010; 2015); obenem pa je še vedno v rabi tudi kot analitična kategorija.

Izvorno je Williams strukturo občutenja definiral normativno, to je kot ciljno usmerjen koncept, ki je nastal iz želje razumeti življenjsko izkustvo kot rezultat kompleksnosti. V praksi je koncept operacionaliziral nekoliko jasneje; strukture občutenja je namreč Williams analiziral strogo v povezavi z vprašanjem družbenih sprememb in pogosto z razumevanjem izkustva neuspeha, slepe ulice, frustracij (Matthews 2010). Vztrajal je tudi pri generacijski komponenti struktur občutenja in pri upoštevanju njihove radikalne kontekstualnosti oziroma umeščenosti v specifične časovnoprostorske okvire (Sharma in Tygstrup 2015: 1–6).

Strukture občutenja lahko v besedišče spominskih študij prevedemo kot strnjen izraz komunikativnega spomina – spomina, ki povezuje generacije, ki so istočasno doživljale iste dogodke, se spopadale z istimi izzivi in o njih govorile s specifičnim jezikom, to je s sintagmami in označevalci, katerih konotacije se ne prenašajo nujno iz roda v rod. Za razliko od kulturnega spomina – materialnih izrazov preteklosti, ki jih varujejo posebej za to zadolžene institucije – je komunikativni spomin kot jezikovni, afektivni in čustveni izraz slabše ulovljiv in tudi bolj fluiden in prekeren (Assmann 2013: 37). Še bolj kot kulturni spomin temelji na interpretacijskih zmožnostih občinstev, ki določajo, kaj bo določena podoba, stavek ali zvok izražal: resnico, šalo, travmo ali kaj drugega.

Raznoliki dejavniki oziroma pogoji možnosti spominjanja ne sooblikujejo zgolj vsebin komunikativnega spomina, pač pa tudi njegovo strukturo – preplet med obliko spomina in njegovo identifikacijsko močjo, to je močjo povezovati

3. Gl. tudi Jontes in dr. (2023: 14).

posameznice v kolektive, prispevati k političnim procesom in na drugačne načine usmerjati delovanje. Če je spomin v imaginarijih zahodnih družb vsaj od 19. stoletja in do »konca velikih zgodb« modernosti sredi 20. stoletja predstavljal potencialno, a v veliki meri nezanesljivo izhodišče za vpogled v »pristno« preteklost, dostop do »korenin« in obenem kalno vodo, polno čustev in pristranskosti, je v drugi polovici 20. stoletja v kontekstu postmodernih struktur občutenja (Jameson 1991) postal obravnavan kot pomemben zgodovinski vir in orodje demokratizacije zgodovinopisja (Hirsch 1997) ter kot vpogled v večsmernost (Rothberg 2009) in dinamičnost (Erll in Rigney 2009) našega razumevanja preteklosti.

Landsberg (2004) je tako prehod iz modernosti v postmodernost – kot dominantno senzibilnost oziroma strukturo občutenja druge polovice 20. stoletja, povezano z razmahom množičnih medijev in potrošne kulture – analizirala tudi kot obdobje pojava »protetičnih spominov« – spominov iz druge roke, to je zgodb o preteklosti, dostopnih prek popularne kulture. O protetičnem spominu je pisala kot o utopičnem orodju za oblikovanje novih kolektivnih identitet, povezanih prek iste izkušnje popularnokulturno posredovanih spominov. (Pop)kulturno posredovane spomine na ideologije, režime in vsakdanje prakse preteklosti, med njimi jugoslovanski socializem in neuvrščenost, je tako nujno razumeti tudi kot opozorilo na aktualne probleme, izhajajoče iz sprege ekonomskega neoliberalizma in etnonacionalizma (cf. Velikonja 2008) in kot sredstvo upora, usmerjenega v prihodnost.

V kontekstu platformnega kapitalizma, filtrirnih mehurčkov in izrazito intimnega odnosa, ki ga imajo sodobne posameznice do ekranskih medijskih tehnologij, pa sta Landsberg in Vermeulen nedavno značilnosti spominjanja v zadnjih dveh desetletjih povezala z metamodernizmom kot specifično senzibilnostjo in strukturo subjektivnosti, značilno za sodobno družbenokulturno in medijsko izkušnjo. Na podlagi analize izbrane kulturne produkcije ugotavljata, da je metamoderni spomin, to je izkušnja dostopa, interpretiranja in artikuliranja kolektivnega in tudi osebnega spomina v 21. stoletju izkušnja množstva fragmentiranih pripovedi. Te sicer predstavljajo pomemben gradnik posamezničine identitete; v tem oziru so metamoderni spomini pomembnejši od postmodernih protetičnih spominov, dostopnih množicam v standardizirani obliki in medijskih formatih. Po drugi strani naj pa za razliko od postmodernih protetičnih spominov, kjer množstvo referenc in perspektiv sovpadе z medijsko standardizacijo, ne bi več imeli moči povezovati posameznice v kolektive. Sodobni mediatizirani spomini namreč na strukturni ravni niso dostopni »vsem naenkrat«, temveč samo tistim, ki jih namensko iščejo; nadalje, zaradi vse hujše konkurence v kontekstu digitalne ekonomije pozornosti tudi niso vedno posredovani kot koherentne pripovedi,

temveč vse bolj fragmentirano. V tem članku bova razlagalni domet teze o specifični metamodernega spomina, ki jo Landsberg in Vermeulen orišeta prek analize dveh izbranih filmov, ki tematizirata spomin, preverjala v kontekstu avtobiografskega spomina oziroma večjega korpusa osebnih spominov na Tita – »semiotični kondenzator« (Lotman 1987) spominov na nekdanjo skupno državo SFRJ v postjugoslovanskem in, še natančneje, slovenskem kontekstu.

2.2 Tito kot spomin na SFRJ

Postmodernisti trdijo, da so velike zgodbe in junaki izgubili veljavo. Niso na Balkanu. Prostor je še vedno obremenjen s preteklostjo, kolektivni spomin pa ohranja zmožnost organiziranja izkušenj in ustvarjanja vrednot (Kuljić 2012/2024: 287).

Kuljić v sklepu analize kolektivnega spomina na socialistično Jugoslavijo v nacionalnih državah, ki so nastale po njenem razpadu, ugotavlja, da kot kolektivni spomin, okoli katerega se organizirajo izkušnje in ustvarjajo vrednote, lahko razumemo ravno lik Tita v vsej njegovi biografski razsežnosti. Enačiti jugoslovanski socializem s Titom tako – če parafraziramo Kuljića in številne druge raziskovalke postjugoslovanskega stanja (prim. Pavasović Trošt 2021; Velikonja 2008) – pomeni razumeti Tita kot kulturni simbol oziroma vsebnik vsega, kar naj bi predstavljala socialistična Jugoslavija v širšem, družbenokulturnem in vrednotnem smislu.

Upoštevati pa moramo tudi časovno razsežnost simbolizma Titovega lika. Ko je Tito simboliziral multikulturno državnost, politično »tretjo pot« v času hladne vojne, mirovništvo in enakost v času svojega življenja, so te vrednote sovpadale z njegovo visoko državniško funkcijo in politično močjo (Kuljić 2012/2024: 287). Po njegovi smrti se je konstelacija pomenov spremenila; postal je čezmejno fluiden (pop)kulturni simbol določene preteklosti in določenih vrednot ter njihovih različnih, tudi diametralno nasprotnih interpretacij in z njimi povezanih političnih preferenc, neke vrste barometer aktualnih družbenopolitičnih sporov in izzivov ter odnosa do zgodovine večjega dela 20. stoletja v postjugoslovanskem prostoru. Vzporedno s tem razvojem se je Titova podoba vpisala v umetnost in potrošno kulturo – kot kulturna referenca v številnih filmih, knjigah, videospotih in glasbenih delih; kot obraz značk, majic, razglednic in kot razvedrilni element v sodobnih dediščinskih projektih (Velikonja 2008; Petrović 2016).

Obstoječe študije ponujajo nekaj produktivnih izhodišč za razumevanje spominske dimenzije referenc na maršala kot »ljudskega junaka« (Lazarević Radak 2020: 200), izhodiščno upovedovanega v okviru narative o jugoslovanski modernizaciji. Prvo izhodišče zadeva mediatiziranost Titove podobe. Spomini na Tita so v veliki meri spomini na njegovo medijsko kurirano podobo ter na

določeno medijsko krajino in njene spremembe. Za generacije jugoslovanskih »zadnjih pionirjev« (Popović 2018; Vučković Juroš 2018), ki so doživele jugoslovanski šolski sistem, podoba Tita tako oblikujejo zgodbe iz šolskih učbenikov, v katerih je figuriral kot pravljični junak z »napredkom« obsedene modernosti – »revolucionar, heroj in inspiracija« (Lazarević Radak 2020: 204). Titovo podobo sooblikujejo postmodernistični valovi raznolikih zgodb o Titu kot o pretkanem političnem zmuzljivcu, diplomatu in hedonistu s skrivnostno preteklostjo (ibid.: 205–213), zgodovinsko-revizionistične politične naracije od devetdesetih let naprej ter vse bolj diverzificirana ponudba spominsko obarvane umetnosti in popularne kulture v 21. stoletju.

Spomin na Tita sicer operira v različnih kontekstih nacionalnih držav, ne gre pa zanemariti dejstva, da jih prav ta spomin tudi postjugoslovansko povezuje. Kot ugotavljajo avtorice in avtorji številnih analiz problematike kolektivnega spomina in spominskih procesov v postjugoslovanskem kontekstu, povezovalna moč spomina na Tita ni enoznačna. Spomin na Tita je komunikativen na izrazito poliloški način: povezuje prek meja, obenem pa je vpleten tudi v fragmentacijo spominov na SFRJ po načelu etnonacionalizma.

Velikonja (2008) v tem kontekstu ugotavlja, da je do pojava titostalgije, nostalgije po Titu, v postsocialistični »jugosferi« začetka 21. stoletja prišlo ravno v kontekstu večletne odsotnosti njegove podobe v dominantnih javnih diskurzih. Kuljić (2012/2024), Pavasović Trošt (2014) in Petrov (2018) prav tako pojasnjujejo, da umik nekoč družbeno formativne reference iz dominantne kulture praviloma korelira s pojavom njene prisotnosti v raznolikih popularnokulturnih, komercializiranih oblikah in nostalgичnih ritualih, ki so lahko tudi pomembno orodje družbene diagnostike in družbene kritike (gl. tudi Petrović 2012; 2016; Velikonja 2008).

Titovo podobo Lazarević Radak (2020: 217) označi kot *trickster* – liminalen lik, ki v 21. stoletju hudomušno, ironično in obenem resno nastavlja ogledalo različnim izzivom sedanjosti.

Nadalje, Titov lik ostaja pomembna zgodovinska referenca že več generacij (prim. Pavasović Trošt 2021: 148; Kuljić 2012/2024: 273; Velikonja 2008: 14), in sicer ravno na *tricksterski* način; Tito v spominu naključnih anketirancev figurira kot izrazito negativna ali izrazito pozitivna referenca. Raznolikosti spominov na Tita po eni strani nedvomno botruje zgoraj orisana kompleksnost in inherentna ambivalentnost njegove dinamično kurirane medijske podobe, po drugi strani pa k njej prispevajo specifične nacionalne in lokalne (institucionalne in samonikle, aktivistične) politike spominjanja (cf. Pavasović Trošt 2021: 149–154) in postjugoslovanska (popularno)kulturna krajina (cf. Brezavšček 2025; Majsova 2024; Kirn 2020; Gilić 2017; Pogačar 2016). Titov lik v kolektivnem spominu ni samo zgodovinsko, pač pa tudi estetsko, politično in intimno pomenljiva

referenca. Na eni strani lahko napotuje na vrednote, kot so narodnoosvobodilni boj in partizanstvo, multikulturnost in jugoslovanska enotnost, gibanje neuvrščenih, jugoslovanski socialistični projekt in nenazadnje dostojanstvo delavcev oz. »malega človeka«. Po drugi strani pa je lahko tudi izhodišče za opozorilo na slepe pege teh vidikov jugoslovanske modernosti: poveljne zločine, ekonomsko nevzdržnost SFRJ ter razkorak med ideološkimi postulati in življenjsko izkušnjo posameznic in posameznikov (Pavasović Trošt 2021: 143; Palmberger 2016).

O povezavah med spomini na Tita in SFRJ ter multimodalnimi strukturami občutenja – senzibilnostmi, ki posameznice strukturirajo generacijsko in imajo medgeneracijski odmev – težko neposredno sklepamo na podlagi javnomnenjskih anket. Do neke mere lahko o njej presojava na podlagi obstoječih kvalitativnih analiz popularnokulturne produkcije, kjer so za ta namen posebej priročne neodvisne produkcije na margini nacionalnih kulturnih agend. Te pričajo o aktualnem razcvetu aktivističnega zanimanja za dediščino jugoslovanskega projekta predvsem med generacijo »zadnjih pionirjev« in tranzicijsko generacijo ter o preokupaciji z vprašanjem pomena jugoslovanskega projekta za nacionalno, postjugoslovansko ter širšo sedanost in prihodnost. Razstave, performansi, filmi in glasbena produkcija te generacije pričajo o pomenu medgeneracijske in medijske plati sodobnega spominjanja. Temeljijo na raznolikih referencah iz zasebnih in javnih arhivov, na mešanju osebnih ter (ustno in medijsko) posredovanih spominov in na skorajda arheološkem zanimanju za jugoslovansko zgodovino.⁴

Strukturno in tudi z vidika (na specifične mehurčke omejenega) dometa te spominske produkcije bi jo lahko vzporejali z idejo metamoderne strukture občutenja in spomina. V tem članku želiva preveriti domet te teze z obsežnejšo študijo občinstva.

3 Metodološki okvir: kombinacija kvalitativne in velikopodatkovne analize korpusa intervjujev

V prispevku analizirava intervjuje, ki so jih s starejšimi osebami (rojenimi med letoma 1940 in 1955) opravili študentje in študentke 1. letnika novinarstva pri predmetu *Zgodovina novinarstva* na FDV, UL, pod mentorstvom prof. dr. Jerneja Amona Prodnika. Intervjuje so izvajali šest študijskih let zapored (2019/2018–2023/2024). Skupno je bilo izvedenih 179 intervjujev, ki so v povprečju trajali

4. Zaradi prostorskih omejitev v tem tekstu ne moremo naštevati vseh primerov; dober vpogled v orisano produkcijo ponujajo Brezavšček (2025) v članku o jugofuturizmu, Krajnc (ur. 2017) v zborniku o postjugoslovanskem filmu, Majsova (2024) v članku o postjugoslovanskih filmskih kulturah ter Kozorog in Muršič (ur. 2018) v zborniku o postjugoslovanski popularni glasbi.

približno eno uro. Arhiv transkriptov intervjujev obsega 1.247.767 besed oziroma 3075 strani v Wordovem dokumentu (Times New Roman, 12, razmak 1,15). Vsi transkripti intervjujev so (delno ali povsem) anonimizirani in hranjeni v Arhivu družboslovnih podatkov (glej podatkovne baze, navedene v seznamu literature), izvedeni pa so bili s pridobljenim pisnim soglasjem intervjuvanke ali intervjuvanca. Podrobneje so lastnosti vzorca (za prva tri leta izvajanja intervjujev) in način izvedbe intervjujev opisani v predhodni študiji (Kaluža in Amon Prodnik 2022), v grobem pa lahko rečemo, da vzorec intervjuvank ustreza reprezentativnemu vzorcu slovenske populacije.

Intervjuji so tematsko homogeni; osredotočajo se na rabo medijev v času socialistične Jugoslavije. Večinoma so jih študentje izvedli s svojimi starimi starši, zaradi česar nekatere od njih zaznamujeta nekoliko bolj oseben in pripovedni način odgovarjanja ter specifična medgeneracijska dinamika. V njih so obdelani trije tematski sklopi: 1. uporaba medijev, 2. zaupanje v medije in novinarstvo ter 3. dojemanje jugoslovanske družbe. Vsaka izmed treh vsebinskih tem je obravnavana v štirih različnih časovnih obdobjih: otroštvo, mladost, srednja in zrela leta.

Intervjuje analizirava z uporabo mešanega metodološkega pristopa, ki združuje kvalitativne in kvantitativne raziskovalne tehnike. Medtem ko se je predhodna študija istih intervjujev (Kaluža in Amon Prodnik 2022) osredotočila predvsem na interpretativno analizo skozi ročno kodiranje vnaprej definiranih tematskih sklopov, tokrat poleg novega analitičnega fokusa v ospredje postavlja dodatno plast analize, ki temelji na korpusni obravnavi besedil in metodah tekstovnega rudarjenja. Razlog za to metodološko nadgradnjo tiči v sami naravi podatkov: z obsežno količino transkribiranih intervjujev razpolagamo z bogatim kvalitativnim gradivom, ki pa se – ob primerni digitalni obdelavi – lahko analizira tudi z orodji, značilnimi za področje digitalne humanistike in podatkovne analitike. Tako pristopamo k intervjujem ne le kot k posamičnim nosilcem pripovedi in pomenov, temveč tudi kot k strukturiranemu korpusu, v katerem lahko iščemo jezikovne vzorce, tematske dominante ter semantične razpone kolektivnega in individualnega spomina.

Mešani metodološki pristop, ki obsega tako analizo rezultatov ročnega kodiranja in branja intervjujev kot tudi analizo usmerjenih analiz velikega podatkovja, nam obenem omogoča, da upoštevamo tako makro raven (najpogostejše besede, fraze, ponavljajoče se strukture) kot mikro raven (specifične argumentacije, uporaba specifičnih besed in besednih zvez, izstopajoči argumenti, partikularne življenjske zgodbe). Rezultati ročnega kodiranja pa obenem delujejo tudi kot človeška verifikacija avtomatiziranih analiz velikega podatkovja (in obratno).

Teza o soobstoju modernih, postmodernih in metamodernih struktur občutenja v spominih na Tita usmerja empirični del najine raziskave, obenem pa ta povratno preoblikuje tudi teoretsko zasnovo in raziskovalna vprašanja besedila. Tovrstna povratna zanka med induktivnim in deduktivnim pristopom je značilna za velikopodatkovni obrat v raziskovanju, ki prepozna, da se »veliko [o teoriji] naučimo tudi med analiziranjem podatkov« (Grimer in dr. 2022: 14). V nasprotju s pristopi, ki skušajo vzpostaviti strogo delitev med teoretičnim in empiričnim raziskovanjem, tu zagovarjava metodološki okvir, ki poudarja skupno osnovo obeh. Konkretno metodološke postopke in analitične prijeme bova v duhu tega pristopa podrobneje opisala v kontekstu same analize. Poglavja, ki sledijo, tako vsebujejo empirično analizo (z obrazložitvijo metodologije) kot tudi že njene rezultate, ki – sledeč načelu povratne zanke – določajo naslednje korake v analizi.

4 Generični intervju: od moderne prek postmoderne do metamoderne strukture občutenja

Metamodernizem se samoreprezentira kot nova struktura občutenja, skladna s spremembami na ravni družbe, politike in medijske ekologije. To strukturo lahko kronološko opišemo kot novejšo od moderne in postmoderne senzibilnosti, četudi lahko z njimi tudi soobstaja, zaznamuje pa jo vmesnost med »tipično moderno zavezanostjo [*commitment*] in postmoderno distanco [*detachment*]« (Vermeulen in Akker 2010: 2) Izraža se kot »nihanje« pripovedi med vrednotami modernosti (napredek, jasno določene identitete in z njimi povezane vrednote) ter postmodernim mnoštvom in razpršenostjo malih zgodb brez ene velike resnice; kot »želja po spremembi« (ibid.), ki spremlja konec postmodernističnega konca zgodovine, ki pa se obenem zaveda, da enostaven povratek v modernizem ni več mogoč. To nihanje se formalno izraža tudi kot specifična prepletenost osebnega in kolektivnega spomina v avtobiografski pripovedi ter kot vrednotna ambivalentnost. Orisani kronologiji dominantnih struktur občutenja ustreza tudi generična zgodba intervjuvanke, ki smo jo rekonstruirali z ročnim kodiranjem, osredotočenim na diferenciacijo glede na časovna obdobja:

1. Obdobje otroštva in mladosti zaznamuje **moderna, progresivistična struktura občutenja**, ki se kaže v postopnem dvigu življenjskih standardov od petdesetih let naprej, v zaupanju v takrat prevladujoč socialistični narativ, občutku pripadnosti skupnemu projektu konstruiranja socialistične družbe in v modernizaciji družinskega življenja (motiv velike kmečke družine, ki se ob večerih zbira ob radiu, v petdesetih letih nadomesti motiv atomizirane družine sedemdesetih let, kjer osrednjo vlogo igra televizija).

2. V srednjih letih, ki zgodovinsko sovpadajo s postopno dezintegracijo jugoslovanske družbe v osemdesetih letih, se navadno pojavijo tipično **postmoderna struktura občutenja in z njo povezane pripovedi**: ni več enotnega narativa, pojavijo se dvomi in vprašanja, pojavi se mnoštvo mnenj, resnic in pogledov. To pride še bolj do izraza v času samostojne Slovenije. Mnogi intervjuvanci poudarjajo vlogo tega na videz samoumevnega obrata in njegovih posledic tako na ravni medijskih reprezentacij (»kar naenkrat so se začeli po televiziji prepirati!«) kot na ravni polarizacije in družbene fragmentacije v vsakodnevem življenju (npr. tenzije med pripadniki različnih narodnosti na delovnih mestih) ter na ravni zmede in dvoma v njihovih individualnih razmišljanjih.
3. Zadnji del intervjujev, ki obravnava zrela leta in končno refleksijo, pogosto zaznamuje **metamoderna struktura občutenja in narativa**, ki niha med obema prejšnjima in katero zaznamuje serija ambivaletnosti med afirmacijo in negacijo socialistične Jugoslavije, med enotnostno in mnoštvom narativov, med zanosom mladosti in refleksivno (ter manj vpleteno) »končno« (a vseeno kompleksno) resnico starosti. Podoba Tita se odcepi od njegove realne zgodovinske persone in postane protetični zgodovinski spomin, obenem ločen od aktualnih družbenopolitičnih bojev, a z njimi vseeno v stalni interakciji.

Zgornje ugotovitve, ki temeljijo na branju intervjujev, potrjuje tudi analiza sentimentov, ki sva jo (v prvem koraku) izvedla s programom Orange Data Mining. Analizirala sva ročno kodirane izseke iz intervjujev, ki se nanašajo na štiri različna časovna obdobja (mladost, starost, srednja leta, zrela leta), obdelala sva jih z lematizatorjem UDPipe za slovenščino, ki besede pretvori v njihove osnovne oblike, kar omogoča poenoteno analizo sicer pregibno zelo raznolikih slovenskih besed. Uporabila sva tri metode analize sentimentov, prilagojene za slovenski jezik, in opazovala razlike glede na časovna obdobja. Vse tri metode – Liu Hu, Multilingual Sentiment in Lilah Sentiment – temeljijo na leksikonu besed, ki jim je pripisana pozitivna oziroma negativna vrednost. Tak pristop nam lahko da le površinski in omejen vpogled v čustveno nastrojenost intervjuvancev, saj je analiza sentimentov bolj prikladna za krajše in bolj standardizirane formate (spletni komentarji, tviti itd.) in ne more povsem zaobjeti kompleksnejših besedil, kot so intervjuji (problem negacije, ironije, upoštevanja konteksta, v analizo so vključeni tako odgovori kot vprašanja itd.).

Rezultati sicer kažejo na postopno večanje negativnosti sentimenta od otroštva in mladosti k srednjim in zrelem letom (Liu Hu: od -0.049 do -0.085 ; Multilingual Sentiment: od -0.012 do -0.028 , Lilah Sentiment: od 0.066 do 0.087). Lilah Sentiment omogoča tudi bolj podrobno analizo čustvenih dimenzij, pri čemer se

skozi življenjska obdobja najbolj večajo jeza [*anger*] (od 0.020 do 0.032), gnus [*disgust*] (od 0.012 do 0.020) in strah [*fear*] (od 0.021 do 0.036). Čeprav so razlike v sentimentu med obdobji majhne in omejene na drugo decimalno mesto, jasno nakazujejo rahel premik proti bolj negativni oceni v srednjih in predvsem v zrelih letih. Sovpadajo pa tudi z nadaljnjo analizo.

Analizo sentimentov sva izvedla tudi s Chat GPT 4.0 v maju 2025. Na njegov strežnik sva naložila iste izseke iz intervjujev, ki se nanašajo na štiri različna časovna obdobja, ter zaprosila za analizo prevladujočega sentimenta, tipičnih občutij in odnosa do družbenega sistema v različnih časovnih obdobjih. Chat GPT 4.0 je z interpretativno analizo besedil, ki je »temeljila na tematskem kodiranju, kontekstualni interpretaciji in primerjalni analizi po obdobjih«, prišel do naslednjih rezultatov (Tabela 1):

Tabela 1: Chat GPT 4.0, analiza sentimentov po različnih časovnih obdobjih.

Življenjsko obdobje	Prevladujoči sentiment	Tipična občutja	Odnos do družbenega sistema
Otroštvo	Pozitiven	Nostalgija, ⁵ toplina	Stabilnost, sprejeta kot samoumevna, ni refleksije
Mladost	Mešan	Napetosti, nostalgija, pogum, hrepenenje	Pozitiven: koristi sistema (stanovanja, zaposlitev)
Srednja leta	Negativen/nevtralen	Stres, obremenitve, rutina	Tiha primerjava z izgubljenimi ugodnostmi
Zrela leta	Blago pozitiven/distanca	Sprijaznenost, refleksija	Refleksivna distanca, individualizacija, zmanjšana vpletenost

Za preverbo stabilnosti rezultatov sva isto analizo (znotraj druge korespondence) ponovila še v septembru 2025 z orodjem Chat GPT-5 Pro. Rezultati so bili podobni kot v prvem poskusu, vendar bolj podrobni in niansirani. Kažejo na značilen vzorec spreminjanja prevladujočega sentimenta v intervjujih glede na življenjska obdobja: od gotovosti k ambivalentnosti, od zaupanja k dvomu, od entuziastičnega upanja k pragmatičnemu sprejemanju. Iz vrednotenja je jasno razvidno prepletanje osebnih in družbenih okoliščin, ki v veliki meri tudi določajo prevladujoči sentiment. Spomini na otroštvo so pozitivni, nostalgичni, apolitični, poenostavljeni in megleni (»lepo je bilo«, »imeli smo lepo otroštvo« ipd.). Za-

5. Na tem mestu nostalgijo navajava kot občutek oziroma čustvo in kot fenomenološki vidik komunikativnega spomina.

znamujejo jih začudenje in ponos ob modernističnem napredku ter sprejemanje sistema. Spomini na mladost so še vedno pretežno pozitivni, spremljajo jih hrepenenje in odločnost ter optimistično-zabavni ton, a tudi napetost, ki se pojavlja ob prvih življenjskih prelomih (selitve, menjave šol, prve zaposlitve, ljubezenske peripetije itd.). Spomin na srednja leta je bolj nevtralen: pogostokrat pridejo v ospredje obremenjenost in omejitve, ki spremljajo rojstvo otrok, stanovanjsko problematiko, skrb za družino, delo in karierno življenje. Prevladuje pragmatičen, družinskorutinski sentiment, pojavljata se kritičnost in distanciranje od sistema. V zrelih letih je ton refleksiven, umirjen in rahlo melanholičen. Po eni strani ga zaznamuje občutek dovršenosti, ki se v nekaterih primerih zlije s ponosom ob osamosvojitvi Slovenije, a tudi ambivalenten dvom, ki poganja nostalgичno preizpraševanje o tem, kaj bi bilo, če Jugoslavija ne bi razpadla.

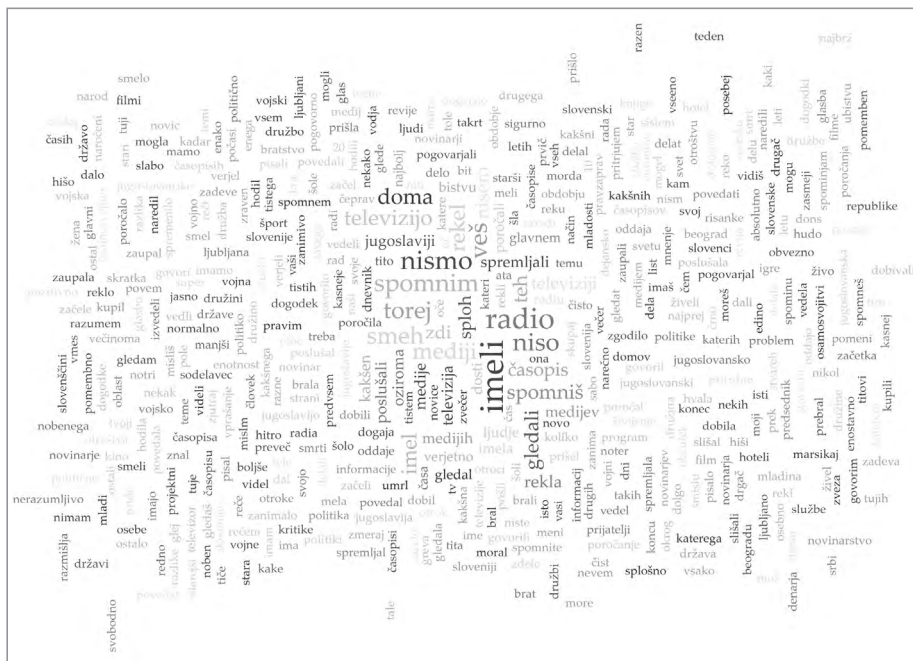
V spominskih študijah poseben izziv predstavlja razločevanje med osebnim in kolektivnim spominom, zaradi česar je na podlagi osebnih spominov tudi težko vrednotiti časovna obdobja, politične sisteme in družbene ureditve: nostalgija se namreč nasploh pogosto veže na obdobje otroštva in mladosti, refleksija in dvom pa na zrela leta. Ta prepletenost pride še bolj do izraza v naših intervjujih, kjer otroštvo in mladost intervjuvancev deloma sovpadeta z obdobjem ekonomske in družbenopolitične stabilnosti socialistične Jugoslavije (1960–1980), medtem ko poznejša leta zaznamuje družbena nestabilnost, ki jo spremljajo osebni dvomi in pojav množstva mnenj na ravni družbenega diskurza, kar se odraža v pluralnosti perspektiv in vrednotenju ter hrepenjenju za izgubljeno preteklostjo.

Prepletenost individualnega in kolektivnega spomina pride do izraza tudi v oblaku najpogostejše uporabljenih besed v intervjujih (Oblak besed 1).

Oblak besed 1 prikazuje najpogostejše besede v korpusu brez lematizacije (besede niso reducirane na njihovo osnovno slovarsko obliko). To omogoča boljši vpogled v pozicioniranje govorcev ter njihovo prehajanje med individualnim in kolektivnim registrom – zlasti prek rabe osebnih glagolskih oblik, negacij in pavšalnih formulacij, kot so »smo rekli«, »ni se govorilo«, »pravili so«. Tovrstne množinske oblike, ki kažejo na poenoteno in kolektivno razumevanje družbe, so – glede na to, da gre za intervjuje s posamezniki – v korpusu precej pogoste.

Najpogostejše rabljene besede sicer ustrezajo osredotočanju na rabo medijev, to so denimo »radio«, »televizija«, »mediji«, »časopis«, »program«. Raba medijev je postavljena v konkreten, pogosto intimen kontekst (»doma«, »smeh«, »imeli«, »gledali«, »poslušali«). Nekatere besede nakazujejo na časovne rutine ali umestitev (»zdaj«, »takrat«, »potem«, »vsak dan«, »vedno« in »obvezno«), nekatere na spominsko naravo intervjuja (»spomnim«, »spomniš« in »zdi«), druge na politične občutljive teme (»nismo«, »smeli« in »kritike«). Najpogostejše besede deloma tudi odražajo teme, ki so bile določene v vodiču intervjuja.

Oblak besed 1.



Z namenom, da bi se globlje potopili v strukturo občutenja v intervjujih, sva se odločila za bolj usmerjeno in fokusirano analizo, ki se osredotoča na figuro Tita, ki v strukturi spominjanja odigra ključno vlogo pri razmejevanju med fazami modernizma, postmodernizma in metamodernizma.

5 Tito v korpusu

Beseda Tito se v vseh sklonih in oblikah v intervjujih pojavi na 1902 mestih, kar pomeni v povprečju skoraj enajstkrat na intervju. Tito skoraj povsem enako v povprečju omenja o moški in ženske. Ne omenja se ga samo v petih intervjujih, največkrat pa je omenjen 46-krat v enem intervjuju. Omenjanje ali neomenjanje Tita ne korespondira povsem s pozitivno ali negativno naravnostjo do njega: v intervjujih, kjer se ga ne omenja, sogovorniki pretežno ostajajo v intimnem kontekstu, se osredotočajo na osebne anekdote in lastno rabo medijev. V osmih intervjujih, v katerih je Tito omenjen več kot tridesetkrat, gre v večini primerov za sogovornike, ki v ospredje ne postavljajo izključno lastnih izkušenj, temveč te mešajo s širšim zgodovinsko-političnim narativom ter anekdotami iz družbenega in političnega življenja.

Za analizo osnovnih kontekstov, v katerih se Tito pojavlja, sva uporabila funkcijo avtomatskega kodiranja v programu MaxQDA, ki je zajela vse kontekste,

Oblak besed 2.



Da bi bolje razumeli specifičnost kontekstov, v katerih se pojavlja Tito, smo na podoben način izolirali še nekatere druge ključne in za vrednotenje socialistične Jugoslavije povedne termine: »socializem«/»socialist«, »komunizem«/»komunist« in »partija«. Vse tri termine spremlja veliko bolj politiziran in ožje politični diskurz. Socializem sicer še vedno deluje pretežno nevtralnno, nanj se vežejo termini »samoupravljanje«, »trajanje«, »družba«, »živeti« in »sindikati«. Posebej negativno pa izstopata termina »komunizem« in »partija«, ki se pogosto vežeta

na besede, kot so »vrgli«, »enopartijski«, »cerkev«, »bog«, »vpisal«, »direktor« in »vojaška«. Nekateri najpogostejši bigrami in trigrami (zaporedja dveh oziroma treh besed) so denimo: »nisi smel«, »oni so bili«, »hud komunist«, »če nisi bil [komunist]«. Oba termina torej nakazujeta na namigovanje na obstoj ožje elitne skupine vladajočih, ki izvaja nadzor in izključevanje.

Na drugi strani Tito v spominu deluje kot na specifičen način odvojen od političnega režima, četudi tega obenem tudi pooseblja. Tudi podoba Tita pa se – kot analizirano v nadaljevanju na podlagi kvalitativne analize in ročnega kodiranja izjav intervjuvancev – spreminja glede na distinkcije med modernizmom, postmodernizmom in metamodernizmom.

5.1 Moderni Tito: medIALIZIRANA in IDEALIZIRANA PODOBA TITA med politiko in zabavo

Literatura o socialističnih medijih pogosto poudarja protislovje med zabavnimi »zahodnimi« medijskimi vsebinami na eni strani in izobraževalnimi, političnimi ali propagandnimi vsebinami, značilnimi za socialistične režime, na drugi strani. Mihelj in Huxtable opozarjata, da je ta razmejitev lahko problematična in da je za razumevanje širše medijske kulture treba »iti onkraj novic in zajeti bistveno širši spekter žanrov in komunikacijskih načinov, vključno s fikcijo in zabavo« (6 :2018). V tem kontekstu se tudi domneva, da so bili socialistični mediji zgolj propagandni, izkaže za napačno.

Jugoslavija je zaradi svoje specifične, neuvrščene pozicije med Vzhodom in Zahodom v procesu prevzemanja zahodnih popkulturnih oblik šla še korak dlje kot drugi socialistični režimi (Imre 2016). Ta proces se ni odražal le v priljubljenosti vesternov, ameriških televizijskih serij (kot je denimo »Mestece Peyton« (razvil Paul Monash, 1964–1969), stripov in odprtosti do zahodnih vplivov v popularni glasbi, ampak tudi v konstrukciji motiva Tita kot politične figure in obenem popkulturne ikone (Velikonja 2008).

Napačno bi bilo domnevati, da sta množično zaupanje v sistem in identifikacija s sistemom v socialistični Jugoslaviji izhajala iz močno razvite politične zavesti prebivalcev. Nasprotno, večina intervjuvancev je poudarjala, da jih politične vsebine v medijih niso posebej zanimale: »/Ž/iveli smo kar udobno življenje, in veste, če imaš službo in je vse v ekonomskem in materialnem smislu v redu, potem si rečeš: ,pustimo politiko« (Novakov Janez). »Ljudje nekoč niso bili tako živčni in obremenjeni s politiko, živeli so lepo in brezskrbno, danes pa so vsi obsedeni s politiko« (Jožica Anon). Prav mediatizirana figura Tita je bila tista, ki je nadomestila »trde« novičarske in politične vsebine: »Tito je bil res osnova, središče vsega tega našega političnega mišljenja in jaz še vedno zelo nerada berem o politiki« (Nana).

Pomembno pa je razumeti, da je bila struktura političnega poročanja v Jugoslaviji neprimerljiva z današnjo, ko mediji politiko obravnavajo kot tekmovalni spektakel. Takšen format je bil pred osemdesetimi leti 20. stoletja do določene mere prisoten zgolj pri poročanju o svetovni politiki, medtem ko je bila pri domačih političnih dogodkih – razen dejstvenega poročanja o delovanju različnih socialističnih organov odločanja (ki med splošnim občinstvom ni bilo najbolj priljubljeno) – glavni objekt medijske in javne pozornosti visoko medializirana figura Tita. »Ves čas so poročali, kaj dela« (Cvetoča Orhideja). »Bil je idol, skoraj kot bog za nas. Moja generacija še danes verjame v Tita« (A. Žener).

Mediatizacija podobe Tita je večplastni proces, ki sovpada z modernizacijo socialistične družbe, vzponom televizije ter večanjem popularnosti in dostopnosti tiska v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih. Iz odgovorov intervjuvancev je mogoče razbrati različne razloge, ki niso prispevali le k popularnosti Titove figure, ampak tudi k identifikaciji z režimom kot takim. Tito je bil predvsem razumljen kot poosebljenje sistema in kot varuh načela bratstva in enotnosti, ki naj bi ga, po znanem reku, »čuvali kot zenico svojega očesa« (Pavel). Mnogi so ga omenjali kot »garanta« oziroma »lepilo, ki je držalo Jugoslavijo skupaj« (M. Martinšek).

Tipično modernistična Titova življenjska zgodba, ki ga je peljala iz velike kmečke družine in fizičnega delavca do herojske vloge v drugi svetovni vojni ter do voditelja države, je simbolizirala širšo tranzicijo in modernizacijo družbe ter korespondirala z osebnimi zgodbami mnogih. »Začel je kot pastir, bil je ključavničar, znal je čisto vsa kmečka dela kot vsak kmečki otrok [...] On je vse vedel, ker je tako odrasel« (M. Stegenšek). Njegov glamurozni življenjski slog v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih je bil razumljen kot metafora za naraščajoče materialno blagostanje prebivalstva: »Ne vem, kako naj to povem, gospodarstvo je cvetelo, in nekako nas je [Tito] prepričal v dobro življenje« (J. Draškovič). Poročanje o njegovih potovanjih in sprejemih tujih voditeljev (zlasti iz gibanja neuvrščenih) je predstavljalo mednarodni položaj in ugled Jugoslavije ter njeno vodilno vlogo v gibanju: »Bil je številka ena, ves svet ga je poznal, bil je ravnotežje med Vzhodom in Zahodom« (Dušan anon).

Podoba Tita je bila povezana tudi z glavnimi mediatiziranimi socialističnimi rituali, kot je bila proslava dneva mladosti, Titovega simbolnega rojstnega dne 25. maja. K uspešnosti teh prireditev je ključno pripomogel tudi njihov participativni značaj, ki je ustvarjal občutek vključenosti pri skupnem grajenju družbe: »vsi otroci in šolarji smo to [dan mladosti] spremljali in doživljali« (M. Gustinčič). »Mi smo se vsi – cele šole, vsi učenci – pripravljali na to, da bomo del poti spremljali Titovo štafeto [...] Tako da veš, bilo je majčken enoumja, to kar morava reči, ampak ta Titova štafeta je v vseh nas en tak zanos predstavljala« (A. Černe).

Med sogovorniki je seveda tudi nekaj takšnih, ki na to obdobje gledajo izrazito kritično: za njih je enotnost mnenja glede Tita pomenila ključni vidik »enoumja«, sami pa so ob tem občutili odtujenost, izoliranost, strah in razkol med prevladujočim narativom v družbi ter njihovimi individualnimi stališči (ali stališči njihovih bližnjih).

5.2 Postmoderni Tito: smrt, streznitev in razpustitev enotnega narativa

Vrhunec mediatiziranih dogodkov, povezanih s Titom, je gotovo pomenila njegova smrt. Skoraj vsaka intervjuvanka se natančno spomni besed napovedovalca na televiziji, družbenega konteksta in občutkov, ki jih je doživljala ob tem. »Bilo je točno deset minut čez tretjo uro popoldan leta 1980, jaz sem sedela v dnevni sobi s kolegico, novinar Trček je imel črno kravato in obleko in sporočil je žalostno novico, da je tovariš Tito umrl« (Babi 46). Nekdo poroča o tem, da so ob najavi smrti prekinili nogometno tekmo, nekdo, da je bil prekinjen film, nekdo poroča o tem, da je bil v času Titove smrti v kinu: »/S/redi filma se nenadoma trak ustvari in na platnu se pojavi velik prazen stol [...] in piše – ,Tovariš Tito je umrl'« (P. Zgaga).

Mnogi intervjuvanci poročajo o močnih čustvih, ki so jih prelila ob novici, in o tem, kako so Titovo smrt doživeli kot osebno izgubo: »Verjemite mi, imeli smo ga radi. Zase lahko rečem, da ga nisem le spoštovala, ampak tudi imela rada« (J. Sneg). »99 odstotkov Slovencev, ... no, mogoče 95 odstotkov jih je tisti dan jokalo« (T. Pavlič). »Še naša mama se je jokala, ko je umrl, pa ni nikoli marala komunistov [...] imeli smo ga radi, ker so nam govorili same lepe stvari o njem in smo to sprejeli« (Cvetka Anon). Z nekoliko bolj kritično-racionalne perspektive Joža Nth pravi: »/V/se je cvililo in jokalo, kot da se vse podira [...] ti pač sočustvuješ s človekom, imaš spoštovanje do človeka v njegovih delih, da se bom ob tla metal, mi pa na kraj pameti ne pride.«

Žalost se je pri mnogih mešala z občutkom tesnobe: »Bilo nas je strah, nismo vedeli, kaj bo z režimom, ker je bil za nas kot božanstvo« (I. Markič). Mnogi so celo izrecno vzpostavili vzročno-posledično povezavo med Titovo smrtjo in razpadom Jugoslavije desetletje kasneje. Jasno je, da je takšno razmišljanje poenostavljeno, a so ta pričakovanja vseeno delovala kot samouresničujoča prerokba: »/S/trašili so nas s tem, da če bo Tito umrl, da bo vojna, da se bomo razcepili, da nam bo slabše ...« (Anon Meja). Največja ideološka moč jugoslovanskega socialističnega režima – univerzalno spoštovana in priljubljena figura Tita – se je po njegovi smrti izkazala tudi za njegovo največjo slabost, saj socialistični režim ni uspel najti ustreznega nadomestka za njegovo mediatizirano podobo, ki bi lahko delovala kot osnova skupne jugoslovanske identitete.

Mešanje osebnega in kolektivnega registra se med drugim kaže tudi skozi figuro Titove žene Jovanke, ki je bila v času pred njegovo smrtjo od Tita ločena. Intervjuvanci omenjajo številne razloge in teorije – nekaterim od slednjih bi morda rekli tudi teorije zarote – ki naj bi pojasnili dogodke ob njegovi smrti: »/N/jemu so rekli, da ga ona noče videti, njej pa, da nje on. Jovanka je jokala, ker je hotela, da bi se pomenila o tem, zakaj sta razdvojena« (M. Stegenšek). »Dosti stvari je bilo skritih in se nikoli ni zvedelo, kaj se je dogajalo...« (B. Varga). Intervjuvake se načeloma zavedajo, da je bila podoba Tita konstruirana, spremljanje dogajanja okrog njega pa bi prej kot s spremljanjem političnih novičarskih vsebin lahko primerjali z medijskimi rituali in vsakdanjimi praksami občinstev, ki spremljajo britansko kraljevo družino ali popkulturne ikone.

Titova smrt v spominih mnogih reprezentira konec enotnega modernističnega narativa o napredku in socialističnem blagostanju, ki ju nadomesti zmeda množstva pripovedi. »Naenkrat se je na ekranu pojavil črn trak in potem smo vedeli [...] vse je propadlo, vse se je izgubilo, ves tisti blišč [...] vsem nam je bilo jasno, da je zdaj konec Jugoslavije, ker on je bil tisti, ki je držal te ljudi skupaj« (Radovedna Račka). »Še nekaj časa smo bili skupaj, potem pa je vsak začel vleči po svoje, ni bilo več enega, da bi vse držal nazaj [...]« (A. Bizjak). »Izreden občutek varnosti smo imeli, vedno smo si rekli: 'Tito je z vsemi dober, nas nobeden ne bo napadel, nihče nam ne bo nič naredil [...] Danes tega ni več, v Titovih časih smo bili vsi kolikor toliko enaki, danes so pa že taki veliki prepadi med ljudmi'« (A. Slapnik).

Intervjuvanci obdobje postopne dezintegracije opisujejo z različnimi narativi; nekateri poudarjajo vlogo velikosrbske politike, drugi prebujanje slovenske civilne družbe, tretji ekonomsko inflacijo. Slogani – denimo bratstvo in enotnost – v katere so v prejšnjem obdobju brezpogojno verjeli, so izgubljali pomen (na podoben način, kot je dinar izgubljal vrednost) ter postali gole floskule in pogosto sredstvo ciničnega distanciranja od družbenega sistema.

V slovenskem kolektivnem spominu sicer obdobje osamosvajanja ostaja zaznamovano kot afektivno zelo sorodno času ob Titovi smrti, zaradi česar tudi prehod med socialističnim in postsocialističnim obdobjem ni tako oster kot v nekaterih drugih državah nekdanje Jugoslavije: v času osamosvojitve so bili vsi za skupno stvar, politična polarizacija, ki ključno zaznamuje obdobje samostojne Slovenije, nastopi šele kasneje v devetdesetih letih. Prehoda iz moderne v postmoderno strukturo občutenja torej ne smemo razumeti kot nekakšen enostaven zgodovinski prehod, temveč kot kompleksno spremembo, ki jo je nemogoče enoznačno datirati.

5.3 Metamoderni Tito

Metamoderni register se najpogosteje pojavlja v zrelih letih intervjuvancev. S sabo prinaša novo obliko ambivalentnega spomina: nihanje med nostalgijo in ironijo, med priznanjem vrednot nekdanje skupne države in zavestjo o njenih senčnih plateh. Tito se v tem registru najprej kaže kot protetični, medijsko posredovani simbol, ki presega historično figuro ter omogoča kompleksno artikulacijo individualne in kolektivne identitete v pogojih pluralizirane medijske krajine 21. stoletja. Pri tem je pomembno, da je njegova podoba del individualiziranega in personaliziranega spomina posameznikov, kar se kaže tudi na ravni vsakodnevnih praks. Ena intervjuvanka denimo omenja, da si je ob Titovi smrti sistematično shranjevala izrezke iz časopisov, drugi pravi: »/Č/e greš v Beograd, moraš it pač grobnico Tita pogledat«.

Metamoderni diskurz o Titu se tako poleg strukturnih pogojev individualizacije konzumpcije kolektivnega spomina povezuje s popuščanjem afektivnih tenzij, povezanih z razpadom skupne države, ki so zazamovale – in do neke mere še vedno zaznamujejo – postjugoslovansko obdobje. Figura Tita ostaja osebnega in kolektivnega pomena, obenem pa ne glede na svoj veliki popularnokulturni pomen postopoma postaja vse bolj oddaljena od aktualnih družbenopolitičnih bojov. Obenem je prav specifična ločenost Tita od političnega dogajanja, značilna za vsa obdobja spominjanja nanj, ključni predpogoj identifikacije, ki jo zaznamuje prepletanje individualnega in kolektivnega spomina ter legitimacije Tita med širšo populacijo v vsakodnevem govoru: »/T/isti, ki so bili zraven korita, so kradli, njemu [Titu] pa tega niso po pravici povedali« (A. Slavec).

Tita je mogoče afirmirati (ali zavračati) kot sinonim socialistične egalitarnosti ali kot avtoritarno figuro, ki zna poskrbeti za red in enotnost. Obe interpretaciji pa izhajata iz istega korena, priznanja enotnosti in umanjkanja raznolikosti mnenj o Titu. Mnogi intervjuvanci sicer omenjanjo, kako so se sami težko soočali s kognitivno disonanco, ki jo je povzročilo retroaktivno spoznanje o temačnejših plateh socialistične Jugoslavije.

Toda tudi tovrstna ambivalentna afektivnost vse bolj postaja stvar preteklosti. Refleksija intervjuvancev nakazuje, da diskurz o Titu danes – ne glede na nujno in orisano kompleksnost ter interno heterogenost spomina posameznic – vse bolj zaznamuje metamoderna struktura občutenja, ki dopušča protislovja in šaljive dvoumnosti. Figura Tita je obenem avtentična in ironična, afirmativa in zavračujoča ter na paradoksen način ponovno prinaša enotnost v mnoštvo politiziranih postmodernih narativov, četudi pri tem ne afirmira enega od njih, temveč je zmožna ponotranjiti in preseči njihovo raznolikost. Tito v tem kontekstu postane figura *tricksterja*, ki je sama norčava in ironična in iz katere se je mogoče norčevati ali jo ironizirati.

Intervjuvanke Tita pogosto umeščajo v šale, ki so obenem poenostavljene historične razlage: »Hitler je rekel: hopa hopa moja bo Evropa. Rus je rekel niet niet moj bo svet. Tito je rekel alfa beta gama evo kurac vama« (J. Antončič). Omenjajo se tudi šaljiva rekla, ki obenem nakazujejo na kritično distanco in igrivo afirmacijo, kot denimo »Tito je krao ali je i meni dao« in »nema Tita, nema kredita«. Sogovorniki pogostokrat na šaljive načine interpretirajo tudi uradne slogane, kot sta denimo »Druže Tito, mi ti se kunemo, da sa tvoga puta ne skrenemo!« in pa »Mi smo Titovi, Tito je naš!«.

6 Zaključek

Najina raziskava spominjanja na Josipa Broza, ki temelji na kombinaciji kvalitativnih in kvantitativnih metod analize obsežnega korpusa 179 spominskih intervjujev, izvedenih v obdobju 2018–2024, razkriva, da je sodobni kolektivni spomin na Tita strukturiran kot kombinacija treh tipov spominskih narativov, ki soobstajajo v osebnih spominih: modernega, postmodernega in metamodernega. Medtem ko je moderni spominski narativ zaznamovan z idealizirano podobo Tita kot utelešenja napredka, enotnosti in socialne varnosti, postmoderna naracija ob njegovi smrti razpade v množico fragmentiranih in pogosto nasprotujočih si interpretacij. Tovrstno strukturo spominskih pripovedi lahko razumemo kot Williamsovo generacijsko specifično – in notranje diferencirano – metamoderno strukturo občutenja, v kateri se mešata individualni in kolektivni spomin oziroma spomin na individualno življenje in spomin na življenje družbeno-političnega sistema. Tudi vrednotenje tega sistema je pogosto utemeljeno skozi perspektivo izkušnje iz vsakdanjega življenja, skozi osebne vzpone in padce, uspehe in neuspehe, zadovoljstva s preteklostjo in resentimentom do nje.

Raziskava tako z velikopodatkovno analizo strukturiranih avtobiografskih pričevanj dopolnjuje analizo pomena spominov na Tita v (popularno)kulturni produkciji, s tem ko pokaže na izkustveni soobstoj treh različnih tipov pripovedi o Titu v spominih tiste generacije, ki je doživela razvoj njegove javne podobe skozi več desetletij. Na podlagi raziskave lahko sklenemo, da podoba Tita danes predstavlja (sicer že dodobra izrabljen) potencial, saj je z njeno apropiacijo mogoče doseči konsenz med velikim delom slovenskega prebivalstva, k čemur prispeva tudi specifičnost lokalne zgodovine, posebej postopnega prehoda iz socializma v postsocialistično obdobje, ter občutek kontinuitete med enotnostjo, ki je spremljala oboževanje Tita, in enotnostjo ob osamosvojitvi.

Figura Tita sicer vseskozi deluje kot implicitna kritika sedanjosti, saj se zdi, da bi lahko prav on nemara rešil vse največje politične vzele sedanjosti: izogibanje tretji svetovni vojni, upravljanje s pandemijo, iskanje neuvrščene pozicije, poenotenje

ljudstva, vzbujanje občutka pripadnosti skupnemu projektu itd. Toda Titova figura, ki jo lahko zaradi njene notranje polivalentnosti označimo za metamoderni konstrukt, generiran na preseku sodobne medijske ekologije in delno tipizirane, delno pa izrazito osebne avtobiografske spominske refleksije, paradokсно lahko deluje kot tovrstna podoba rešitve za vse samo zato, ker sama zapušča okvir faktične zgodovine in dnevne politike. Metamoderni spomin na Tita je rezultat Titovega postopnega postajanja; z večanjem časovne distance do obdobja jugoslovanskega socializma in s proliferacijo medijskih podob se Tito vse bolj utrjuje kot lokalno specifičen in univerzalno dostopen popkulturni fenomen, mit, ulična legenda, ki ravno zato lahko presega ideološke delitve sedanjosti. V tem kontekstu je pomembno izpostaviti, da se večini intervjuvancev zdi povsem jasno, da se zgodovina – vsaj na tovrsten način – ne ponavlja, da je nesmiselno iskanje Tita sedanjosti in da je reklo »Tito po Titu« – neuresničljivo. Tudi zato se intervjuji pogosto končujejo s pogledom v prihodnost in nagovorom mladim spraševalkam in spraševalcem, da bodo morali definitivne odgovore na paradokse sedanjosti najti mlajše generacije s sebi lastnimi narativi in vrednostnimi sistemi.

SUMMARY

The article explores how the memory of socialist Yugoslavia, notably the figure of Josip Broz – Tito, is constructed and mediated in contemporary Slovenian society. The authors analyse a large corpus of 179 oral history interviews carried out between 2018 and 2024 by University of Ljubljana journalism students with their grandparents (born between 1940 and 1955). These narratives provide insights into the way memory operates at the intersection of individual experience, collective identity, and mediated representations.

The study scrutinises the premise that the memory of Yugoslavia and Tito is far from monolithic; it is fragmented, contradictory, and emotionally charged. Rather than a single dominant narrative, the authors identify the coexistence of several perspectives ranging from nostalgic idealisation to critical disillusionment. The central research question addresses to what effect these diverging memories interact with changes in media culture and broader sociopolitical shifts, and in which ways they correspond to modern, postmodern and metamodern structures of feeling.

Noting that earlier studies on the topic largely focused on case studies from cultural production and manual interpretive analysis, this article adds a computational layer that allows for semantic mapping across a large dataset. The described dual approach captures both macro-level discursive trends and micro-level narrative nuances, enabling a complex reading of the interviews as

both individual and collective memory texts. The analytical research design is based on a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative analysis (thematic coding, discourse analysis), quantitative techniques (word frequency analysis, bigram analysis, sentiment mining) and digital humanities tools (text mining via Orange Data Mining, MaxQDA).

The authors proceed to identify three dominant “structures of feeling” in the respondents’ memories, corresponding to their stages in life and certain ways of experiencing their contemporary media ecologies. In the interviewees’ childhood and youth, their memories of Tito and socialist Yugoslavia are marked by trust in the system, social cohesion, and an idealised image of Tito. Tito appears as a unifying, benevolent figure who represents progress, security and modernity. The media played a crucial role in shaping this image, often via entertainment formats rather than overt political propaganda.

Tito’s death in 1980 is remembered as a symbolic rupture, signalling the end of a coherent narrative and the beginning of fragmentation, doubt, and ideological pluralism. Interviewees express nostalgia and uncertainty, mirroring both their personal transitions and the disintegration of Yugoslav society. The once-dominant slogans (e.g., “Brotherhood and Unity”) are today seen as hollow, even ironic.

In later adulthood, the interviewees express a hybrid memory narrative, blending irony with sincerity, and nostalgia with critique. Tito becomes a metamodern mediated symbol detached from his historical self, albeit still meaningful. Such ambivalence reflects a broader metamodern structure of feeling whereby memory is simultaneously collective and highly individualised. Jokes and popular phrases (“Tito stole, but he also gave us some”) illustrate this layered engagement.

The study reveals memory of Tito held by senior Slovenian inhabitants today reflects the coexistence of three generational memory narratives: modern, postmodern and metamodern. Tito’s image operates across political, emotional and cultural registers – as myth, critique, and a unifying symbol. The metamodern mode is ever more dominant by acknowledging and integrating the ambivalence of the previous modes and revealing Tito’s figure to be a specific popular-cultural construct that is at once localised and universally accessible. Tito is seen less as a historical figure and more as a cultural myth or “trickster” figure who enables the temporary suspension of ideological divisions. Yet this consensus is fragile and highly contextual. Tellingly, many interviewees acknowledge that history cannot be repeated and that future generations will need to articulate their own narratives.

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BOLD SMUGGLERS AND DIY HEROES: COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AND ERASURES OF SLOVENIAN GAMING HISTORIES

ABSTRACT

*The article explores how gaming cultures in socialist Yugoslavia – particularly in Slovenia – are remembered and commemorated today. Drawing on the technostalgic momentum that has seen renewed interest in peripheral gaming histories, we examine how Yugoslavia's unique geopolitical position and socialist experiment in self-management fostered vibrant do-it-yourself (DIY) computing and gaming cultures. Focusing on key memory sites – primarily the book *Prva Bitnost* and the documentary *Tehnika ljudstvu – we*: 1) outline the contexts of the emergence of Yugoslav games in the 1980s; 2) analyse how they are being narrativised through nostalgic lenses in the present; and 3) critique the exclusions embedded in these narratives. It is argued that these commemorative practices often reinforce mnemonic hegemony privileging male-coded heroism and entrepreneurial myth-making, while marginalising women, queer voices, and class-based experiences.*

KEY WORDS: Yugoslav video games, collective memory, technostalgia, Slovenia, gender and gaming, DIY computing

Drzni švercerji in naredi-si-sam junaki: kolektivni spomini in izbrisi slovenskih igričarskih zgodovin

IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje, kako se danes spominjamo in obujamo igričarske kulture v socialistični Jugoslaviji – s poudarkom na Sloveniji. Tehnonostalgični zagon je v zadnjih letih spodbudil večjo pozornost na periferne zgodovine videoiger, med njimi tudi do jugoslovanske računalniške in igričarske scene, ki je izhajala

iz specifične politično-ekonomske ureditve in naredi-si-sam tradicije. V prispevku analiziramo ključne spominske prakse in kraje spominjanja – predvsem knjigo Prva bitnost in dokumentarec Tehnika ljudstvu –, da 1) orišemo kontekst razvoja prvih videoiger v Sloveniji, 2) preučimo, kako so ti časi danes obujeni skozi nostalgичne pripovedi, in 3) izpostavimo izbrisane dele te zgodovine. Trdimo, da ti spominski konstrukti pogosto utrjujejo »spominsko hegemonijo«, kjer prevladujejo zgodbe o moškem junaštvu in podjetniški drznosti, medtem ko so izkušnje žensk in manjšin ter razredne razlike potisnjene ob rob.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: jugoslovanske videoigre, kolektivni spomin, tehnonostalgija, Slovenija, spol in igre, DIY računalništvo

1 Introduction

In 2024, the legendary Slovenian student radio Radio Študent (Radio Student, RŠ) – a politically progressive broadcaster – celebrated its 55th anniversary. The station, known for its critical stance, has long been a hub of creativity, theoretical innovation and musical experimentation, and thus had much to celebrate. On May 8, at the event co-organized by RŠ and Računalniški muzej (the Slovenian Computer History Museum), it chose to highlight a part of its past that is especially fondly remembered by teenagers of the 1980s. During that decade, Radio Študent had a Software Editorial Team that developed the idea of broadcasting Sinclair ZX Spectrum video games over the radio waves. The games were then recorded onto tapes, played, replayed, and exchanged among gaming enthusiasts. The May event was devoted to revisiting this history and its key figures – smugglers, pirates, and DIY pioneers – who have since taken on legendary status. Later that night, RŠ once again transmitted the 1984 game *Kontrabant* (Contraband) over its radio signal.

The authors of this article are currently involved in the ARIS-funded Slovenian research project “Remembering the Early Digital Age”, which focuses on studying the cultural and collective memories of technological transformations, with a special focus on the overlooked region of former Yugoslavia.¹ What struck

1. The project “Remembering the Early Digital Age: Cultural-Studies and Media-Archaeological Perspectives on Technotopism, Technopessimism, and Technostalgia” (TAP N6-0302; 1.8.2023 – 31.7.2025) is headed by PI Natalija Majsova and funded by the Slovenian Research Agency. The research included in the article was also supported by the ARIS project “Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture: Murals, Film, and Popular Music as Memory Work” (J7-50215) and by the ARIS research and infrastructure programme “The Production of Meaning and Knowledge in a Time of Crisis: Cultural, Religious and Scientific-Developmental Aspects of Societies in Slovenia, the Balkans, and Europe”.

us as particularly compelling about this celebration of old technologies and games and the communities that used and played them is that this forms part of a renewed, post-2010s crest within a three-decade-long post-socialist cycle of technostalgia in Slovenia and the wider post-Yugoslav space. The collective urge to remember is co-produced by overlapping memory publics – former home-computing hobbyists and demosceners, editors and publishers, curators and museum professionals, retro-gaming clubs and online forums and younger enthusiasts encountering these histories second-hand. As such, it engages not only with past technological successes and failures but also with their selective revival and remediation, offering imagined alternative socio-technological trajectories and political possibilities through local storytelling – in form of books on local gaming histories, documentaries on regional technological trajectories and heritagisation processes focusing on these technologies.

In this article, we focus on renderings of early local gaming histories in the Slovenian context, a part of a wider trend that can be linked to memory practices that several scholars have described as technostalgia (van der Heijden 2015; Campopiano 2014; Pinch and Reinecke 2009). We understand this concept to mean the affective investment in outmoded media and practices, expressed through collecting, restoring, remediating and retrospective storytelling that serve biographical, communal-heritage and critical functions. In the post-Yugoslav context, this technostalgic turn focuses both on Yugoslav large-scale technological projects and companies that once offered the potential of an alternative technological development, as well as on 1980s DIY computing and video games, shaped by self-management and semi-peripherality. The latter is relevant as it reveals how media technologies such as video games both construct and mediate memories of a specific historical moment and how video games – important techno-cultural artifacts in their own right – have themselves become objects of memory work (van der Heijden 2015). This dual dynamic – how games remember and how we remember games – forms the central focus of this article.

Memory is not simply about recalling the past but about constructing meaning in the present. As scholars in cultural memory studies have long argued, remembering is a selective, mediated and often contested process. We understand cultural memory as a process and a practice – an ongoing performance in which stories, artefacts and technologies are mobilised to shape shared understandings of the past (e.g. Rigney 2008). Following Ann Rigney's (2018) call to interrogate the cultural politics of memorability and examine how narrative forms shape collective recollection, we focus on how early personal computing and gaming cultures in Yugoslavia, specifically Slovenia, are being remembered today.

Building on the dual focus outlined above, we pursue our argument in two parts. The first part of the article offers a contextual and historical overview of 1980s gaming cultures in Slovenia and wider Yugoslavia – marked by non-alignment, self-management and subcultural openness – and develops close readings of locally developed titles now considered canonical to show how they encode alternative memory scripts that reflect, subvert or reimagine late-socialist realities. The second part of the article turns to the present, analysing how early local gaming cultures are remembered, curated and mythologised across books, documentaries, museums and retrospectives; we show how these commemorations often crystallise around male-coded heroism, nationalist myth-making and techno-optimistic progress narratives. Juxtaposing game-level narratives with contemporary memory work allows us to ask not only what is remembered but how, by whom and with what exclusions.

2 Historical overview: Yugoslav computer cultures and gaming contexts

Yugoslavia's unique geopolitical position after World War II – marked by the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 and its later role as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement – shaped both its ideological and technological landscapes. The socialist self-management system attempted to chart a "third way" between planned and liberal economies, promoting values such as self-reliance, collectivism and egalitarianism (Eby 2020; Ramšak 2018; Založnik 2017). Though state-promoted, these values filtered into everyday life and cultural production, including the emerging scenes around computing and games.

Yugoslav socialism was not monolithic. The public sphere evolved considerably between the 1960s and 1980s. Praxis School, a group of intellectuals promoting a humanist, anti-dogmatic interpretation of Marxism, called for open public discourse in the Marxist sense (Križan 1989), and by the late 1970s, a more autonomous civil society emerged, animated by punk, feminist and artistic movements that experimented with alternative subjectivities (Mastnak in Cvar and Žbontar 2024; Založnik 2017). This shifting ideological terrain enabled the flourishing of vibrant subcultures – including fanzine writers, DJs, amateur programmers and hackers – who increasingly used new media, including video and computing technologies, as tools of self-expression and critique.

For the generation that came of age confronting the Yugoslav socialist state's official system of ideas, particularly after the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the concept of "freedom" became central (Spaskovska 2017). As Ljubica Spaskovska argues, this notion of freedom was primarily associated with freedom of thought,

speech and expression. Importantly, for many activists, especially up until the late 1980s, freedom did not necessarily imply the dissolution of Yugoslavia or the abandonment of socialist self-management. Rather, it reflected a desire to rearticulate and rethink the dogmas of socialism itself (Spaskovska 2017).

Within this specific historical trajectory, the use of technology in Yugoslavia also evolved. The introduction of computers and the emergence of a national computer industry can be traced back to the late 1950s. This development resulted from a combination of targeted training of Yugoslav scientists abroad – particularly in countries like France –, domestic industrial and military development and joint ventures with the Soviet Union during the so-called Thaw, a period marked by the USSR's gradual cooperation with Yugoslavia following Stalin's death in 1953 (Jakić 2014: 111). In this context, a high level of technological expertise developed in industrial and research contexts,² supported by university programs promoting computer science – e.g. electrical engineering, maths and, from the 1980s, newly founded specialized computer science programs (Šepetavc et al., forthcoming).

In his study on the history of the Yugoslav Galaksija computer, Eby (2020) emphasizes the importance of computing technologies in meeting the demands of logistical optimization during Yugoslavia's rapid industrial development. This, in turn, accelerated the growth of the domestic computing industry. With rising living standards in the 1960s and 1970s, computers also slowly found its way into some private homes in the 1980s. Even though local computer production was well under way – in Slovenia spearheaded by the technological state-owned company Iskra Delta –, computer hardware and software were still mostly imported from different parts of Western Europe (e.g. Germany, UK etc.) through neighbouring Italy and Austria (Jakić 2014).

However, access to personal computers remained limited due to their high cost. Standard consumer-grade systems such as the Iskradata 1680, Sinclair ZX81, or Commodore 64 were several times more expensive than the average monthly salary of a Yugoslav worker (ibid.). Foreign currency restrictions vital to Yugoslavia's macroeconomic stability made legal importation difficult, while the domestic computing industry struggled to meet demand (Eby 2020). These conditions birthed a culture of improvisation, piracy and DIY hacking, especially in the politically charged atmosphere of the 1980s.

Thus, the intersection of material scarcity, ideological flexibility and subcultural creativity gave rise to a distinctly Yugoslav gaming culture. This ideological

2. E.g. Jožef Štefan Institute and the technological company Iskra Delta in Slovenia, Ruđer Bošković Institute in Croatia, Institute Mihajlo Pupin in Serbia etc.

flexibility combined the ethos of socialist solidarity and self-reliance with the gradual seepage of gritty entrepreneurial practices that created a space where both collective values and individual initiative could coexist and feed into creative game-making practices. The games that emerged in this period – text adventures like *Kontrabant* or educational simulators like *Eurorun* – encoded these contradictions: they were born from scarcity but saturated with imagination, commenting on the liminal geopolitical position of Yugoslavia and the creativity of its people.

2.1 The landscape of game publishing and development

While Yugoslavia never became a major gaming hub, the region nevertheless witnessed a period of vibrant amateur production. During the 1980s, pioneering local developers created a number of versatile and experimental games, often operating with no budget and driven by enthusiasm rather than industry infrastructure (Handžić and Ribić 2024). Most of these games were produced by hobbyists and some became cult hits, widely played and remembered by a generation of gamers.

In Slovenia, there is a relative scarcity of in-depth analyses on the topic of early digital culture development – most of the available information is dispersed across archival sources, individual hobbyist developers, old computer magazines, and a few rare exhibitions or initiatives. However, in 2022, Sergej Hvala published *Prva bitnost: od rojstva videoiger do konca njihovega otroštva* (*First Bit/Becoming: From the Birth of Video Games to the End of Their Childhood*, Jazbina Publishing), a comprehensive cultural and technological overview of the development of video games. The book traced the evolution from the earliest coin-operated machines to the breakthrough of consoles and PCs, with a particular emphasis on the Slovenian contribution. The book also offers insight into video-game publishing of that time and, most importantly, shows how the use of technology was gradually becoming standardised and thus formalised.

During the 1980s, a small but notable ecosystem of publishers developed, including Xenon, Suzy Soft and Radio and Television Slovenia. And due to a vibrant homebrew scene, a number of games were self-published. In Slovenia specifically, many games took the form of adventure titles, though developers also produced a significant number of educational programs. These ranged from learning tools – such as Esperanto or mathematics tutorials – to applications like Radio Študent's *Moja gospodinjska pomočnica* (*My Housekeeping Assistant*, 1985, Radio Študent), a program that allowed users to input ingredients from their kitchen and receive recipe suggestions. The range of content was broad, from

utilitarian to humorous to problematic. Some games had simple mechanics with questionable goals – for example, *Ljubezen je bolezen* (Love is Sickness, 1987, Dragomer Beni), in which the player's task was to "seduce the girl" (Retrospec – Ljubezen je bolezen n.d.).

Along with gaming publishers, other players such as the computer magazines *Moj mikro* (My Micro), *Delo revije* (Delo magazines), and later, from the 1990s, *Joker* and *Megazin*, as well as ZOTKA, Zveza organizacij za tehnično kulturo (ZOTKA, the Association of Organizations for Technical Culture) played invaluable role in popularization of the gaming culture.³ *Joker*, which also hosted the influential online forum for computer enthusiasts Mn3njalnik, is still active today.⁴

Moj mikro especially served as a central platform for exchanging programs, games and information. It was published monthly between 1984 and 2015. In an interview, Ciril Kraševac, alongside Žiga Turk – the magazine's first editor – elaborated on the context in which the publication was developed: the first accessible eight-bit computer, the further popularization of Spectrum, the formation of the pirate market for different products and games (Hvala 2022: 102). *Moj mikro* brought together experts from different disciplines, e.g. from electronics to robotics, it published source code (e.g. in BASIC) for games submitted by readers and offered lessons in different programming languages, coverage of the domestic tech industry, exploration of DIY hardware and monitoring of broader trends, including fairs (ibid.: 103).

More recently, Jazbina has taken up this legacy, continuing it as a publishing house – for instance, by publishing the magazine *Jazbina*⁵ and books such as the aforementioned *Prva bitnost*, *Odčepnik in triglava opica* (*The Plunger and the Three-Headed Monkey*, 2023) and the upcoming *Druga bitnost* (*Second Bit/Becoming*), all dedicated to the histories and memories of video-game cultures. We will come back to the book *Prva Bitnost* as an important medium of memory in the second part of the article. We now turn to the games that the Yugoslav youth were developing and playing in the 1980s.

3. The Yugoslav computer landscape included several other popular magazines, like *Bit*, *Svet kompjutera*, and *Računari*.

4. The forum also has a section called *Starinarica* (The Antique Shop), described as follows: "Nostalgic memories of retro rigs and games – from the Spectrum and Game Boy to legendary PC classics. 3dfx FTW!"

5. The magazine is also available on floppy disk, a format that deliberately invites nostalgic engagement and activates memory not only through content but through medium-specific materiality. This revival of obsolete technology functions as more than just a retro aesthetic – it becomes a performative gesture that reenacts past modes of access and use, thereby deepening the affective resonance of the memory it meditates.

2.2 Games encapsulating memory of Slovenia

Here, we take a closer look at several key titles that appear frequently in historical accounts of Slovenian gaming, each of which reveals something distinct about the cultural, political and technological contexts in which they were created. The games, recently becoming popular once more – especially *Kontrabant* – are (re)interpreted by the (nostalgic) recollections of the people that made and played them, which offers us an important lens into memory production, framing and negotiations by the gaming communities themselves.

Among other things, the (memories of) the games offer insight into the specificities of socialism in 1980s Slovenia, particularly in relation to the development of personal computer culture. For example, as Matevž Kmet explains in an interview with Sergej Hvala, owning a computer at the time was considered subversive, since it was generally neither importable nor purchasable through official channels – hence the emergence of a pirate market and a smuggling culture (Kmet in Hvala 2022: 95) that is reflected in the games themselves.

Kontrabant

Kontrabant (Contraband) was the first Slovenian video game, created in 1984 by students and Radio Študent colleagues Žiga Turk and Matevž Kmet. The game was written using Quill, which was a popular software package for creating text adventure games for the ZX Spectrum and other 8-bit computers in the 1980s. Turk explains in an interview with Hvala that:

the Quill was essentially a dream engine for creating adventures, and for the first Kontrabant, I took it apart to the extent that I managed to integrate the Slovenian characters č, ž, and š. For the sequel, we even added sound and images (Turk in Hvala 2022: 92).

GitHub user janezd adds that the game:

[...] features everything from the 1980s: the HR 84, the Attache, licensed television sets, and Dr. Rogelj's fortress. The capital of the homeland is a white city east of Zabreg, a passport is required to cross the border, and computers are bought with Deutsche Marks in Munich (<https://github.com/janezd/Kontrabant-web>).⁶

6. The elements from this quote present a collection of objects and references that illustrate the Yugoslav 1980s: a car with a license plate from 1984, a typical smuggler's attaché case, the fictional "fortress of Dr. Rogelj" echoing villains from Yugoslav comics and films, and the "white city east of Zabreg" (a clear allusion to Belgrade as the capital). Further, the requirement of a passport to cross borders indicates the bureaucratic reality of the time, while the mention of computers bought "for marks in Munich" is explaining

The figure/trope of the smuggler became a recurring trope in 1980s Yugoslavia, especially among the youth who would “smuggle” Western goods from across the border and *Kontrabant* is no exception.

A text-based adventure game set in Yugoslavia and parts of Europe, it draws on well-known Slovenian tales and myths – most notably classical national smuggler legends such as the story of the heroic Martin Krpan⁷ – and connects them to the everyday realities of the 1980s.⁸ As the computer magazine *Moj mikro* wrote in their review of the game in 1984:

The game Kontrabant was written with the desire to give the first Slovenian cassette something truly homegrown. From the title screen, you are greeted by Martin Krpan, the witches of Slivnica, and a knight from Celje. This is a classic adventure game set in Yugoslavia and parts of Europe, vividly illustrating how, in our country, one can most easily come by a computer (Moj mikro in Retrospec – Kontrabant n.d.).

The objective of the game is to build a microcomputer system: somewhere deep within the game’s destinations are a TV, a tape recorder and a microcomputer which the player must locate and assemble. Once assembled, the player assumes the role of a smuggler tasked with transporting the components home, navigating a series of obstacles and checkpoints. If successful, and without resorting to

the practice of acquiring ZX Spectrum, Commodore or other Western technologies through West Germany. Together, these elements reconstruct the symbolic and material environment of late-socialist Yugoslavia and its grey zones of exchange.

7. Martin Krpan is a fictional character from a story by Slovenian author Fran Levstik, first published in 1858. Krpan is portrayed as a strong and self-reliant smuggler who illegally transports English salt – not salt per se, but saltpetre, used in making gunpowder – across the Habsburg Empire, yet ultimately becomes a national hero by defeating a foreign warrior who killed the emperor’s son. The tale is widely interpreted as an allegory of Slovenian resilience, ingenuity and subversive heroism. Since its publication, it has become a foundational text in Slovenian national mythology, often symbolizing resistance against foreign domination and bureaucratic oppression.
8. Along the Yugoslav border with Italy and Austria, “shopping tourism” normalised small-scale contraband of jeans, coffee, electronics and other items. Nečák writes that at its 1970s peak, up to six million Yugoslav shoppers visited the Italian city of Trieste annually (Nečák 2000). These cross-border routines and their moral economies are well documented in studies of petty smuggling in border regions such as Vojvodina (Archer and Rácz 2011), and have since been reframed as heritage through projects like Smuggling Anthologies (a joint endeavour by the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka (HR), Mestni muzej Idrija (SI) and Trieste Contemporanea (IT)) and Lasciapassare/Prepustnica, which curate memories of everyday smuggling across the Yugoslav border.

cheats, the game would provide a secret password that could be sent to the creators in exchange for a promised reward: a ZX Interface 1 (1st prize) and a pack of beer (2nd prize).

In practice, however, few of the players made it to the end of the quest (Moj Mikro in Retrospec – Kontrabant n.d.) – the game had a reputation for being extremely difficult and frustrating to complete. Nevertheless, it captivated players – some of whom played as families –, who became deeply invested in cracking a storyline that mirrored their lived experiences of smuggling. In reality, the contraband in question was not mostly computers, but more mundane goods like washing detergents and jeans. In his analysis, Hvala also points out that *Kontrabant* did not feel only humorous or playful, but also subversive – subversiveness, as explained by Kmet, was the spirit of that time (Kmet in Hvala 2022: 94):

that was that kind of spirit, we were the right age and all of us were, in a way, just fooling around. Not because we had agreed to criticize the authorities – it's just how we lived. It was 1984, and we only had six or seven years left. We could mock things, and of course, we did. Back then, it was simple – we had a single, common "enemy" that was just begging to be ridiculed (ibid).

In the interview with Hvala, Kmet explains that the game was written during his compulsory military service in Yugoslavia, where he even had his own office with a Spectrum and a TV (Kmet in Hvala 2022: 92). Kmet also adds that their intention was not to make the first commercial game – they made it simply because it was possible and because it was something new (Kmet in Hvala 2022: 93).

This atmosphere of creative experimentation and subversiveness was reflected at every turn and played an important role in the creation of the first games, and ultimately also in the reception of computer-related products. The game's popularity eventually led to a sequel, *Kontrabant 2*, this time featuring illustrations enhancing the storyline.

Eurorun

The success of *Kontrabant 1* and *2* spearheaded Žiga Turk, Matjaž Kmet, and a few like-minded collaborators to form their own software label, XENON, and develop a number of ZX Spectrum games (Stanojević 1986).

Eurorun, informally referred to as *Kontrabant 3*, was a 1985 adventure game that also functioned as an educational programme. Through gameplay – structured around completing tasks and navigating Europe – the player learned about the characteristics, landscapes and customs of various European countries, albeit often presented through reductive national stereotypes. Although the

figure/trope of the smuggler still remained central, the player was now no longer just a smuggler engaged in illicit activities, but rather a budding cosmopolitan: traveling internationally, expanding their horizons, and acquiring a sense of “becoming European”.

The goal of the game was to complete various tasks and smuggle culinary delicacies from different countries – such as Albanian cognac, Italian spaghetti, Polish vodka and German potatoes – to a Yugoslav taverna in Belgrade, where the player would consume them all in a final feast. On their travels, the players would also encounter important European figures – Dracula, Napoleon and the Danish Little Mermaid. An important characteristic of the game, reflecting Yugoslav liminality on the border of the Iron curtain, was that the players could travel both to the West and East of Europe without limitations, as long as they were vigilant when crossing the border with their contraband. The game was developed by Žiga Turk, Matevž Kmet and several other collaborators, e.g. Igor Bizjak and Samo Fosnarič, as well as Barbara Železnik, one of the very few women mentioned in historical accounts of the period’s game development (Hvala 2022: 85). Her name appears in connection with several Slovenian games from the time, yet she is neither interviewed nor commemorated in any of the sources currently available to us.

Released in 1985 and published by Xenon, the game is preserved as downloadable TZX/Z80 tape images, with included manuals and a map.

Bajke

Železnik also wrote the third game we want to highlight, *Bajke* (*Tales*), released in 1986 by Xenon (Slovenia) and Suzy Soft (Croatia), which is slightly more complex than *Eurorun* (Hvala 2022: 87). The game continues with the adventure motif but is, most importantly, based on the magical realist book by Slovenian author Janez Trdina (first published in 1882 under the title *Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih* / *Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*). Once again, the game draws on national literary heritage and builds upon national cultural memory and tradition. It is a graphic adventure in which the player seeks a treasure and completes tasks such as: “find a man who has hanged himself in desperation and make a jacket out of his skin”.

At the time, reviewers were smitten with the game, especially because it was seen as a technological success and, as Hvala argues, was the most fairy-tale-like and the most successful and appealing of all Xenon’s games (Hvala 2022: 87). Every location came with different illustrations for day and night settings – something that was considered a world-class achievement at the time (Kastelec 1986 in Retrospec - Bajke n.d.).

While these games were modest in scope and means, they offer telling insights into how technology, identity and politics intersected during late socialism – from the boundaries of the sayable under self-management and non-alignment to everyday bureaucracies, border regimes and Western-leaning desires negotiated through satire and allegory. Yet perhaps even more revealing is what happens to these games after their initial moment – how they are remembered, retold and remade. Memory does not simply preserve the past; it shapes it.

In the following section, we examine how Slovenian and Yugoslav gaming histories are being integrated into contemporary cultural memory, often in selective and ideologically loaded ways.

3 Memorialising technology and gaming cultures

Across Europe, the commemoration of technological and industrial pasts is well established; in the post-Yugoslav space, by contrast, the heritage-making revolving around socialist-era technologies has been slower to consolidate and often politically fraught, as the association with state socialism renders such legacies ideologically sensitive (Petrović 2013). Since the 2010s, however, a renewed turn toward memorialising local technological histories has emerged, reflecting the specificity of Yugoslavia's political-economic and cultural contexts and the uneven dynamics of post-socialist transformations. Rather than confirming a monolithic "socialist bloc", these practices – and our analysis of them – complicate that picture by foregrounding internal diversity, competing temporalities and divergent institutional trajectories. One long-running track, visible since the 1990s, reframes these histories through nationalist lenses, appropriating regional and transnational pasts to fit contemporary political narratives (e.g., Šepetavc et al., forthcoming). As Kuljić notes, cultures of remembrance readily become resources for emerging nationalisms and historical revisionisms (Kuljić in Vidmar Horvat 2024, 5). A more recent counter-current centres on the technological and cultural potentialities of the socialist past, animating speculative visions of alternative regional futures often gathered under the label Yugofuturism (Brezavšček 2025). Important for our understanding of (technostalgic) memory of games and gaming cultures of the Yugoslav 1980s is the notion of cultural memory and the question of "how culture mediates individual and collective memory and gives it substance, form, and social reach" (Rigney 2016: 67). Cultural memory is not a fixed product of the past, but a dynamic and contested process shaped by present-day needs and perspectives (van der Heijden 2015: 105). As several memory studies scholars (e.g. Rigney 2008) argue, memory should be understood as a practice – an ongoing, performative

act of storytelling and mediation. It is kept alive through repetition, circulation and adaptation; what matters is not merely that something is archived, but that it can provoke renewed circulation and resonance.

In this light, technologies such as games, documentaries, publications and digital archives become the key media of memory, shaping how the past is made meaningful and shared. Mediation and remediation of memory – e.g. through forms such as narrativized accounts, images and interactivity – determines both the legibility of memory and its social reach. Importantly, as cultural memory studies have shown, it is not individual media but their interplay across platforms – understood here as the venues and infrastructures of circulation (e.g. publishers, broadcasters, film festivals, and streaming services, museums and galleries, online forums and social media and digital repositories and archives) – that often stabilizes and disseminates particular versions of the past (Rigney 2008; Erll and Rigney 2009).

This dynamic and processual understanding of memory also invites a critical reflection on nostalgia, specifically the role it plays in shaping contemporary perceptions of the past – in this case the Yugoslav techno-cultural one. As Susan Stewart argues in *On Longing*, “nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as felt lack” (Stewart 1993: 23). In this view, nostalgia is less a faithful recollection of historical experience than a narrative desire for a constructed past – one shaped as much by absence and longing as by memory itself.

In the post-Yugoslav context, this is particularly resonant. As Velikonja, writing about the phenomenon of Titostalgia (nostalgia connected to the Yugoslav leader and the old country) notes, nostalgia may be understood as a:

complex, differentiated and mutable, emotionally charged, personal or collective, (non-)instrumentalized story which, in binary terms, celebrates romanticized lost times, people, objects, feelings, smells, events, spaces, relationships, values, political and other systems – and simultaneously, in sharp contrast with a devalued present, mourns their loss (Velikonja 2008: 25).

As Svetlana Boym (2001) argues, nostalgia can represent a dangerous abyss of uncritical engagement with both past and present. At the same time, she emphasizes its potential as a reflective tool. Boym distinguishes between two modes of nostalgic remembering: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. The former centres on *nostos* (the desire to return home) and is characterized by an effort to reconstruct an idealized past in the present. In doing so, it often flattens

historical complexity and glosses over contradictions. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, is tied to *algia*, the sense of longing or pain. Rather than seeking to restore the past, it engages it critically and opens it up to reinterpretation, ambivalence and multiplicity. This mode of nostalgia allows the past to become a site for questioning and reimagining alternative futures.

In the context of former Yugoslavia, technological developments from late 20th century have only recently attracted focused attention from official regional historiographers – including academic researchers and members of the gaming and creative computing communities (cf. Benić 2017: 14; Hvala 2022; Jakič 2014; Retrospec n.d.). Many of these accounts tend to foreground “elaborate national (sociotechnical) imaginaries” (Šepetavc et al., forthcoming).

In Slovenia specifically, memories of the early digital age have resurfaced across multiple media platforms and commemorative spaces: (1) popular books such as *Prva Bitnost* (a history of computer games in Yugoslavia; Sergej Hvala 2022); (2) documentaries – for example, *Tehnika ljudstvu / Technology to the People*⁹ (Slobodan Maksimović 2015), which explores pioneers of the Slovenian/YU pirate scenes and early game development; and *Iskre v času – Svetovni računalniški podvig / Sparks in Time – Worldwide Computer Adventure* (Jurij Gruden, 2021), which focuses on Iskra Delta, a prominent Slovenian technological firm during the Yugoslav era; and (3) grassroots places of commemoration, such as the Computer History Museum in Ljubljana, which opened its doors in 2022.

These examples function as sites of memory (Nora 1989), where stories of local technology and gaming are produced, curated and re-circulated. They are a potent force in shaping both public memory and cultural identity, especially when specific narratives of the past are circulating across multiple media forms. In terms of research, these documentaries, books and sites then serve as cultural artefacts through which we can observe how mnemonic hegemony (Hammar 2019) operates within the field – how certain memories become culturally dominant or “official”, while others are excluded, silenced or rendered invisible.

The excavation, framing and heritagisation of early digital experiences in the post-Yugoslav space thus generate specific themes, values, tropes and practices that demand critical attention. It is crucial to examine how these widely circulated technostalgic narratives provide a shared cultural channel through which gaming memories are not only transmitted but also reified and ideologically structured (Stewart 1993).

9. As Gal Kirn reminds us, documentary *Tehnika ljudstvu* can be read within a longer genealogy of Yugoslav cultural policy: from the 1950s onward, workers’ self-management seeded cultural infrastructures – cinema clubs, houses of culture and amateur film circuits – that later provided the milieu for DIY computing and media cultures (Kirn 2023).

In the following section, we show how two of the aforementioned sites of memory – the popular book *Prva Bitnost* and the documentary *Tehnika ljudstvu / Technology to the People* – narrativize the Slovenian gaming past through nostalgic lenses, but also through acts of omission and erasure.

3.1 Smugglers, pirates and entrepreneurs

How, then, are Slovenian (and broader Yugoslav) gaming histories constructed in cultural memory? What kinds of tropes emerge in stories about the regional early digital age? The media sources analysed tend to centre around narratives of rebellion, ingenuity and subcultural freedom. These are often stories of youngsters (exclusively men) navigating a rigid political and technological environment, carving out spaces of autonomy and play within it.

Both *Prva Bitnost* and *Tehnika ljudstvu* are nostalgic in their aesthetics. The book – the sequel of which has already been announced – actually begins with the quote in which one can detect a semantic dialectic between modernness and unmodernness – a relation that can be identified as a central element in the ways of memorializing and commemorating local technological histories:

ZX Spectrum. Commodore 64. Amstrad CPC. A black-and-white cathode-ray television set. A joystick. My mother's cassette player. A small screwdriver. Nintendo Entertainment System. Game Boy. Game Gear. A handful of cartridges [...]. To the uninitiated, this is merely a pile of plastic and metal junk, destined for bulky waste disposal. It should be disassembled as soon as possible and repurposed into something modern. Yet therein lies the crux: in its unmodernness. In the sensation akin to spotting a vintage car on the road—so distinct from the homogenized sheen of contemporary vehicles that your heart skips a beat. Trailing behind it, in a cloud of exhaust smoke, hover memories (Hvala 2022: 7).

To reiterate Boym's argument that nostalgia can also function as a productive tool of reflection (Boym 2001), the content of early Slovenian computer games – such as *Kontrabant*, *Eurorun*, and *Bajke* – mediates tropes of smuggling, national mythology, and the overcoming of absurd obstacles through wit and persistence.. In these memory narratives, the protagonists are frequently cast as resourceful underdogs: young men smuggling computer parts and cassette tapes through Austrian and Italian borders in beat-up Yugo cars, running from customs officers, hiding in the bushes, and hitchhiking home. Others are remembered as pirates who reproduced and sold popular games at local markets or through classified ads in computer magazines.

The described modes of remembrance can be understood as strategies that involve a romanticization of the pioneering spirit surrounding the arrival of

personal computing – an emergence that, at least in Yugoslavia, coincided, as Mitja Velikonja puts it, with a *cultural and artistic renaissance* during the early 1980s.

Together with the decline of Yugoslavia in economic, political, and social terms, you know, the culture erupted as such. [...] There are two phases of the '80s: This eruption of the popular and alternative culture of civil society in the beginning of '80s (Velikonja in Yugoblok n.d.).

This *atmosphere* – marked by the ambiguity between the decline of the Yugoslav political and social frameworks on the one hand, and a spirit of subversiveness, humour and mockery of authority on the other – can be clearly observed in Kmet's reflection on the motivations behind making games: there was no overarching intention to critique the authorities; rather, as he notes, "it was simply how we lived" (Kmet in Hvala 2022: 94).

Velikonja's analysis – particularly his insights into the role of youth in Yugoslavia – offers a valuable framework for interpreting the emergence of gaming culture. Velikonja explains that during the 1980s, young people were unintentionally constructing a new Yugoslav cultural identity precisely through their distancing from the Yugoslav past (Velikonja 2021; Velikonja in Yugoblok n.d.). Maša Kolanović further provides an incisive account of this historical moment, designating it as "decadent socialism" – her term for the 1980s in Yugoslavia, a period marked by the paradoxical coexistence of socialist structures and the increasing incorporation of Western consumer imaginaries into the mainstream cultural agenda (Kolanović 2018).

Such an attitude was pervasive and significantly influenced the development of early video games as well as the reception of computer technologies, ultimately shaping the emerging gaming culture. As one of the most legendary figures of this scene, Jonas Žnideršič, known by his pseudonym *SatanSoft*, recalls in the 2015 documentary *Tehnika ljudstvu*: "We were Robin Hoods. Stealing from the rich, giving to the poor." After a pause, he adds with a smirk: "Though ... not completely free of charge."

This and other scene in the documentary are also enriched by a subtle visual interplay of objects on the set that evoke associations with the 1980s: an old car, a black market trader at the marketplace standing beside a handmade DIY stall bearing a modest sign reading "100 din", a Spectrum in a washing-powder box (demonstrating the ways in which computers were smuggled), and other details that quietly evoke the era's atmosphere.

Referring to Hvala's aforementioned quote, a key component of technostalgic narratives is the tension – and interplay – between modernity and unmodernity,

where the unmodernity is retrospectively reframed as something “cool” and becomes part of a canonized technostalgic script.

While emotionally resonant, such narrativizations of memory also contribute to what Hammar (2019) calls mnemonic hegemony, as already mentioned. The histories of computing pioneers are often grounded in personal recollections, retrospectively politicized and framed as an alternative to the Yugoslav political system. Most of the computing which is remembered in these media sites of memory was indeed happening outside the Yugoslav state structures and was often seen as a youth revolt against the rigid communist Party of old men – beaten by the changing times – that had an ambivalent attitude towards computers. In *Tehnika ljudstvu* for example, Žiga Turk, the first Slovenian DIY game maker and programmer describes the 1980s computing scene as “a story of civil disobedience”.

However, the local gaming trajectories could easily be read also as an awakening of the dynamic free and capitalist market, where the ever-increasing demand meant that smuggling and piracy were not only a revolt against the socialist state on the one hand and capitalist corporate gaming structures on the other, but – at least for some time and for some people – a profitable side activity and early smallbusiness experiment. Rather than adhering to a grand ideological metanarrative (e.g. Alberts and Oldenziel 2014), these stories privilege individual agency and improvisation, often infused with a fascination with how personal computers and video games were evolving. At the same time, the recollections evoke a sense of solidarity. The small group of DIY Spectrum computing pioneers is represented as embodying “the culture of collectivism, which was still very much alive in Yugoslavia” and which is still often evoked in the recollections of the age as an important factor for the production and exchange of first homebrew video games and the subsequent construction of game infrastructure – publishing houses, the RŠ software department and the computing magazine *Moj mikro*. One could even provocatively argue that Radio Študent functioned as something akin to what we would now call a digital innovation hub – offering, at the time, a fertile environment for the development of creative computing.

3.2 Exclusions and Mnemonic Hegemonies

To fully understand how memories of the early digital age and computing cultures are constructed, we must also examine what – and who – is left out of these narratives, as remembering is often inseparable from processes of exclusion, erasure and silencing. This is particularly relevant in the case of Yugoslav technological memory, where dominant narratives tend to marginalize class dynamics, gendered experiences and rural-urban divides.

Early personal computing was (at least in our local context) not unconnected to class and in particular to the divide between urban and rural environments (Jakić 2014), something most sites of memory have not seriously touched upon. As Jakić writes, import bans on computer equipment was in place through the large part of the 1980s, but this was not “sufficient to deter the well-educated urban youth, which had lost its respect for authority and developed a keen curiosity in the possibilities of the new technology. Only the lucky few could afford to buy a home computer for themselves” (ibid.: 119).

Class is often insufficiently addressed in the recollections of the cultural development of early computer games. This absence can be interpreted through a threefold dynamic. First, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was, at least at the level of official ideology, conceived as a classless society, in which class distinctions were ideologically denied. However, cultural production – particularly the Black Wave cinema of the 1960s – offered some of the earliest and most critical visualizations of class difference, social marginalization and inequality (Levi 2007). Second, during the transition to post-socialism in the 1990s, class did not disappear but rather changed in form, becoming more ambiguous and multifaceted. Although the structure of class became less “clear-cut” than in state-socialist times, class dynamics remained central to understanding post-socialist societies. Similarly, Ost (2009), writing about post-communist Poland, argues that while political and cultural elites often refuse to engage in class discourse, they simultaneously acknowledge that class structures and inequalities are crucial for understanding the nature of social transformation. A similar paradox is evident in countries like Slovenia, where official political and cultural narratives tend to present class as an outdated or already-resolved issue – especially within the teleological framework of European Union integration. As a result, class becomes both politically invisible and structurally central. Third, the ideology surrounding digital technologies reinforces this erasure. Californian Ideology (Barbrook and Cameron, 1995) promotes a techno-utopian narrative in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) are imagined as inherently democratic, participatory and emancipatory. However, as Mariën and Prodnik (2014) argue, this ideology systematically marginalizes the concept of class by framing digital access and technological advancement as neutral or universally beneficial. In doing so, it silences critical discussions about the structural inequalities embedded in digital systems and infrastructures. To sum up: because this recollection of early digital culture takes place within a post-socialist framework, class is effectively erased in both ideological modes – socialist and post-socialist – and consequently also in the digital-cultural objects under analysis.

Another striking omission is connected to gender. Women in early computing and game recollections are basically absent. They only make an appearance rarely and almost never in a flattering way.

One young woman appears on the first cover of the aforementioned influential computer magazine *Moj mikro*, which was initially edited by Žiga Turk. Recalling how they selected the first cover image, Turk explains that he asked his colleague from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Andreja, to pose for the photograph. In the documentary *Tehnika ljudstvu*, he adds: "In this picture, she looks quite surprised to see computers. We spoke recently over Skype, and it seems to me that she still doesn't know how to use computers very well."

The rise, fall and marginalisation of certain stories is a constitutive part of the dynamics of cultural memory. And this includes stories of women who appear either as naive observers – "surprised to see computers" – or are erased altogether. Such gendered representations are reproduced throughout the sources that recall the period. In *Tehnika ljudstvu*, one interviewee (a pirate who sold Spectrum games) reiterates the divide, noting that the girls were at the Commodore booth – reportedly because their fathers, i.e. the older generation, owned Commodore computers, while the young male gamers, smugglers, and pirates, who apparently had their own computer autonomy, preferred Sinclair ZX Spectrums. But because these were two distinct hardware subcultures, often framed as being in rivalry, and because most of the recorded memories come from the self-designated Spectrum gatekeepers, the full picture remains skewed.

This underlines the urgent need to recover and reconstruct the histories of women and other marginalized groups in early computing. In the regional (post-) Yugoslav comparative look at the recollections of female computing pioneers – computer scientists in the region that started their careers in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s – interviews revealed that some had access to home computers (many of them Spectrums), played games and used computers creatively, but were part of different computing cultures, a nuance overlooked in narrations of the period. As one of the interviewees, a renowned computer scientist Barbara Koroušić Seljak, pointed out: "I was interested in programming, not gaming" (Šepetavc et al., forthcoming).

A shift toward examining memorial dynamics demands, among other things, a deeper understanding of the structural factors that allow certain collective memories to become hegemonic – or, conversely, to remain obscured until conditions permit their re-emergence in the public domain.

4 Conclusion

This article explored how Yugoslav and Slovenian gaming cultures both reflected and helped shape the socio-political landscapes of the 1980s, and how they are remembered and reimagined today. In the first part, we showed how locally developed games like *Kontrabant*, *Eurorun*, and *Bajke* encoded alternative scripts of everyday life in late socialist Yugoslavia, often through irony, subversion and playful resistance. In the second part, we analysed the processes of commemorating these games and cultures in the present: through books, documentaries, museums and online forums. We demonstrated how these memory practices are shaped by technostalgic scripts that celebrate male subcultural heroism, entrepreneurial defiance and DIY ingenuity, while often marginalizing the roles of class, gender, and non-urban actors.

As scholars such as Geoff Eley have argued, memory plays a crucial role in identity formation, offering “a way of deciding who we are and of positioning ourselves in time” (Eley 2005: 556). In this sense, remembering Yugoslav digital culture is not merely a backward glance, it is also a way of narrating present-day identities and cultural horizons. The romanticized 1980s often evoked in technostalgic narratives are tied to a techno-optimistic imaginary: the belief that access to technology could empower individuals and reconfigure society. But this vision has shifted.

A telling example comes from the game *SKB Papi*, a beloved and much-discussed late-1990s Slovenian game featuring a piggy-bank character running through the game’s landscape to collect money. Developed for a Slovenian bank SKB and often installed on school computers, the game was educational and whimsical, it encouraged children to collect coins. While remembered fondly today, *SKB Papi* also reflects a turning point: a moment when gaming culture was no longer centred on resistance or imagination but embedded in the logics of financial discipline and capitalist aspiration. As such, it marks a transformation in both digital culture and collective memory – a nostalgia stripped of political edge, pleasant and consumable, but no longer charged with the possibility of an alternative future.

By placing the games themselves alongside their contemporary commemorations, this article has aimed to demonstrate that memory is not merely a retrospective act but an active and mediated cultural practice. Drawing from cultural memory studies, we emphasized that what is remembered and how is shaped by narrative form, media affordances and power relations. Technostalgia emerges here as a particularly ambivalent mode of memory: it can open the space for alternative imaginaries and cultural critique, but can also domesticate the past into apolitical

longing. Following scholars such as Rigney, Velikonja and Boym, we argue for a more reflexive approach to memory work – one that is attentive not only to content but also to exclusions, silences and the materialities of mediation. In doing so, we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of how regional digital cultures are being canonized, remembered and contested in the post-socialist present.

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Robert Bobnič, Jan Kostanjevec

YUGOWAVE AND SERBWAVE ON YOUTUBE: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS BY COMMUNITY DETECTION

ABSTRACT

The article examines the phenomenon of Yugowave, including its offshoots, on the YouTube platform. As an online audiovisual genre, which originated from vaporwave and eventually developed independently, it serves as a remediation of collective memory, featuring nostalgic references to the era of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or the war conflicts that followed its dissolution. Drawing on data from 426 videos and 14,344 comments, we examine the genre's evolution and map audience communities using the Leiden method on a bipartite network linking commenters to their public YouTube subscriptions. The analysis suggests that the war aesthetics of Serbwave prevail among the videos and its commenters may be described as a wide international audience, predominately holding interests in history, militarism and gaming.

KEY WORDS: vaporwave, Yugowave, Serbwave, YouTube, community detection

Yugowave in Serbwave na YouTubeu: analiza občinstva z metodo detektiranja skupnosti

IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava pojav Yugowava, vključno z derivati, na spletni platformi YouTube. Z uporabo nostalgičnih referenc na obdobje Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije ali na vojne konflikte, ki so sledili njenemu razpadu, ta spletni avdiovizualni žanr, ki izvira iz vaporwava in se je sčasoma razvil po svoje, izvaja remediacijo kolektivnega spomina. Na podlagi podatkov iz 426 videoposnetkov in 14.344 komentarjev preučujemo razvoj žanra

ter mapiramo skupnosti gledalcev z uporabo metode Leiden na bipartitem omrežju, ki povezuje komentatorje z njihovimi javno dostopnimi naročninami na YouTube kanale. Analiza kaže, da med videoposnetki prevladuje žanr vojne estetike Serbwave, komentatorji pa predstavljajo internacionalno občinstvo s prevladujočimi preferencami za zgodovino, militarizem in igričarstvo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: vaporwave, Yugowave, Serbwave, YouTube, detekcija skupnosti

1 Introduction¹

Regarded as “the first musical genre born and raised on the internet” (Tanni 2024: 20), vaporwave emerged in the early 2010s on platforms such as Bandcamp, SoundCloud, Tumblr, the now-defunct Turntable.fm and Reddit. The genre is primarily characterized by plunderphonic² sampling, looping, pitch-shifting and slowing down of easy-listening music, cheesy pop licks, smooth jazz, soft rock, muzak, corporate mood music, advertising jingles and other sonic material from the consumer- and corporate cultures of the 1980s and 1990s. The heavily manipulated audio layers are accompanied by a strong visual collage that includes elements like early web design, Windows 95 icons, brand logos, imagery of empty shopping malls, cityscape photography, images of commercial computers and consumer electronics, classical sculptures, Japanese lettering, glitch art and vibrant neon colours, particularly purple hues (Aesthetics Fandom 2025a). Notable are also the names of the songs and artists (of whom many work anonymously or use multiple pseudonyms), such as Laserdisc Vision, New Dreams Ltd., INTERNET CLUB, Prismcorp, 情報 デスク VIRTUAL, or Macintosh Plus, strongly resembling “various brands of techno-corporate exoticism that play off tropes of hi-tech orientalism” (McLeod 2018: 132).

These distinctive audiovisual combinations generating a “weirdly nostalgic, experimental dreamscapes” (THE WEIRDNET 2018) have granted vaporwave not only a large online following, but also a prominent role in debates about the haunting persistence of the past in Western popular culture in the age of intensified technocapitalism (Tanner 2016; Koc 2017; Glitsos 2018; Álvarez 2024).

1. The research included in the article was supported by the ARIS project “Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture: Murals, Film, and Popular Music as Memory Work” (J7-50215) and by the ARIS research and infrastructure programme “The Production of Meaning and Knowledge in a Time of Crisis: Cultural, Religious and Scientific-Developmental Aspects of Societies in Slovenia, the Balkans, and Europe”.
2. Plunderphonics is a music production technique that typically utilizes only sampled sounds. The term was coined by composer John Oswald (Oswald 1985).

Vaporwave quickly fragmented into various micro-genres and niche trends, including future funk, mallsoft, slushwave, hardvapour, signalwave, vapornoise and barber beats, to name just a few. Merging into the continuous flow of user-generated online content, it has transformed into a meme, became entangled in the online culture- and identity wars and with Sovietwave and Yugowave extended beyond its original Western pop-cultural horizon and capitalistic consumer culture.

The case of Yugowave is distinctive. If, according to the much-established interpretation, vaporwave evokes a collective trauma stemming from the post-modern evaporation of history (Koc 2017; Glitsos 2018) or *the slow cancellation of the future* by technocapitalism (Berardi 2011; Fisher 2014), the trauma reflected by Yugowave differs markedly from its Western counterpart. Whereas vaporwave draws on the sonic ghosts of consumer- and corporate culture in the 1980s and 1990s, Yugowave foregrounds the sonic and visual phantoms that haunt the violent collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and its aftermath. This is most evident in Yugowave's offshoot Serbwave, whose main source materials are Serbian war music and the archival footage from Yugoslav wars in the 1990s.

In the only in-depth analysis published to date, Jukić exposes several case studies of the post-Yugoslav appropriation of vaporwave aesthetic principles and argues that Yugowave should be seen as a particularly ambivalent and conflicting form of Yugonostalgia, remediated through the means – or memes – of the vernacular online cultural production. Despite the first productions emerging in 2014, Jukić also observes that at the time of her analysis, Yugowave was “still in its infancy” (2019: 59) and lacked the established “community”³ found in related vaporwave genres. These observations raise questions not only about subsequent development of Yugowave as an online micro-genre, especially given that other online trends such as the multiplication of core aesthetic and brainrot have since become dominant, but also about the audiences that engage with this niche, politically charged aesthetical and mnemonic phenomenon. The last question holds particular importance. The debates about vaporwave are predominantly centered on its form. Consequently, there is a noticeable gap of empirically oriented research, particularly a lack of analyses of its online audiences and its reception. This gap is even greater with its locally specific mutations such as Yugowave.

3. Jukić's use of community should not be confused with the one used in this article. Jukić is talking about communicative associations of users while we use the concept of community as a result of network analysis with which we interpret the traits of its nodes.

In this article, we address this shortcoming with a comprehensive analysis of Yugowave audiovisual material on YouTube and the audiences that actively engaged with it on this main platform for the distribution and consumption of post-Yugoslav vaporwave-inspired aesthetics. Based on the importance that the function of commenting has on YouTube platform, it is epistemologically plausible and pragmatic to identify the audience that actively engages (positively or negatively) with Yugowave and its offshoots with the commenters. Of course, this definition is also influenced and severely limited by the fact that we cannot access the data to identify the viewers or the likers. However, with the commenters' platform identity being public, it is possible to get an insight into the aspects of their cultural preferences such as their subscriptions to YouTube channels.

Drawing on YouTube data from a manually compiled corpus of 433 Yugowave-tagged or aesthetically related videos, together with the associated commenters' data, such as their subscriptions, the aim of the article is (1) to describe the scope and the evolution of the self-labelled Yugowave⁴ content on the platform; and (2) to identify its audience. Our research questions are as follows: (1) Which type of Yugowave and related content can we identify on YouTube?; and (2) What distinct communities can be identified among Yugowave YouTube commenters based on their shared channel-subscription patterns as indicators of their taste preferences, or in other words, which taste communities does the audience of Yugowave videos within the YouTube sphere belong to? To effectively address this last question, we will create a bipartite graph of commenters' co-subscriptions and then apply a community detection algorithm to identify various clusters within Yugowave commenters. This will enable us to infer some key characteristics about Yugowave's YouTube audience.

2 Vaporwave or an introduction into a time when even nostalgia is not what it used to be

Vaporwave captured the cultural zeitgeist of the early 21st century. Its rise coincided with the retro appeal that swept through the popular music industry (Reynolds 2010) and the emergence of new electronic music sub-genres like hypnagogic pop, hauntology, chillwave and witch house. While all these genres explicitly engage with themes of the past, memory, nostalgia and melancholy, vaporwave has become the most prolific and gained wider cultural relevance.

4. We treat the label "Yugowave" as a seed term – an umbrella term for a heterogeneous network of aesthetically related content that seeks to remediate and reconstruct memories of Yugoslavia, including the wars in the 1990s.

The appeal of the genre stems from a distinguished mixture of collective nostalgia, mediated memory of the first internet generations, critique of consumerism and post-irony, all processed through time-axis manipulation techniques⁵ in affordable digital audio workstations and distributed on web platforms.

Although slowed-down earworm tunes of corporate and commercial soundscapes from the late 20th century play on the semantic ambiguity, "its main unifying ideology appears to be a simultaneous critique and parody of consumerism and corporate culture" (McLeod 2018: 124). Eventually, this has positioned the phenomenon at the forefront of discussions about cultural production and imagination in contemporary capitalism. In his influential essay from 2012, Harper framed the narrative when he posed the question whether the genre critiques or celebrates capitalism and answered: "Both and neither. These musicians can be read as sarcastic anti-capitalists revealing the lies and slippages of modern techno-culture and its representations, or as its willing facilitators, shivering with delight upon each new wave of delicious sound" (Harper 2012). Thus, the genre is both ironic and sincere, offering both: a new critique of capitalist culture (always a valuable position on cultural markets) and a genuine affection for its fetish objects. Furthermore, Harper suggests that vaporwave challenges the outdated distinction between capitalistic and anti-capitalistic cultural imagination. He categorizes it as a form of accelerationist pop, drawing inspiration from the core principles of accelerationist theory, which posits that capitalism is a system of positive feedback loops that exist beyond human control. According to this view, the most progressive approach is to accelerate and exploit capitalistic processes rather than merely protest against them with traditional left-wing theoretical, political or cultural methods (Mackay and Avanessian 2014).

On the other hand, vaporwave accelerationist ethos has been interpreted along the more traditional theoretical lines. Based on Jameson's theory of postmodernism, Koc argues that the sampled material evokes a time "before postmodernity's final fracture from history through digital technology" (Koc 2017: 69). With the integration of human culture into the internet, cultural history has been absorbed into digital databases and is now retrievable through computer algorithms via searching or personalized recommendations. In his seminal study

5. The concept of time-axis manipulation refers to the fundamental ability of technical media to capture, store, reproduce and alter temporal sequences, fundamentally changing human perception and experience of time, history and memory (see Kittler and Winthrop-Young 2017; for a discussion about time-axis manipulation in vaporwave, see Tanner 2016).

of otaku fan cultures, Azuma suggested that we are transforming into beings who primarily consume databases, moving away from the narrative or worldview-driven consumption that characterized the past (Azuma 2009). The past is used as a database, and the cultural time or historical consciousness itself has become a vector in the database. This shift sometimes produces glitches in the formation of collective memory, revealing that even nostalgia is no longer what it used to be (Álvarez 2024).

The continuous looping of audiovisual fragments from late-20th-century consumer culture could also be seen as a reflection on and of the human culture's inability to keep up with the technological intensification of capitalistic processes of abstraction and alienation or the decoding of social reality. As the genre's name suggests, every cultural product, style or practice – much like any consumer object or commodity – is already considered obsolete at the moment it appears.⁶ It's not that *the future*, as defined by corporate and commercial narratives, is always already a false promise, but – to use Fisher's (debatable) reflections about the growing inability to create anything new in the 21st century – that the future, in terms of a large transformative potential or creating something with a future shock, has been largely disposed of, monopolized, pre-empted and slowly cancelled by the impersonal and inhuman movement of the capital. As a result, the future now persists like a ghost (Fisher 2014: 31). Hence, the proliferation of repetitiveness, melancholy, depression and hauntology in the (early) 21st century popular culture, acting as a sign of collective exhaustion.

However, vaporwave is not just a post-ironic pop-culture nostalgia music genre, with distinctive visuals and particular appeal to the millennial audiences. In a follow-up essay, Harper (2013) expressed concern that the genre is becoming formulaic, overlooking the fact that vaporwave is not a traditional music genre. Its formulaic or memetic dispositions are characteristic of an internet genre. As Beguš emphasizes, with its constant hybridization, disinterested irony and an (non-ideological) emphasis on creating a mood, vaporwave could be seen as a

6. One interpretation connects the term vaporwave with the word vaporware that refers to hardware or software products that are advertised by manufacturers with no intention to actually release them. As a concept, vaporware has also come to denote 'the cancellation of the future': a promised future technology that does not materialize. Today, or at least for the past 10 years, vaporware is characterized by highly valued companies that do not make profits but operate through speculation and anticipation of fulfilling them in the future. Vaporware is therefore the inherent disappointment that there will be no promised future. Perhaps the most well-known contemporary example is the computer game *Grand Theft Auto VI*, which the Rockstar Games has been announcing since 2014. This frustrated anticipation was itself memefied into a template for tracking other events of the promised future (KnowYourMeme 2025).

prime example of a genre within a technologically changed media environment (Beguš 2019: 15–16). Moreover, vaporwave's preoccupation with mood, or "a vibe" in internet parlance, has led to a vernacular reformulation of the concept of aesthetics. Fans of vaporwave started to invoke the concept of aesthetics, often styled as "AESTHETICS" using Unicode full-width characters to simulate Asian lettering, to express an affirmation of a particular vibe or a general atmosphere that a piece of content generates. But soon, aesthetics started to be used to denote online trends beyond vaporwave. In her book about grassroots culture in the contemporary online sphere, Tanni even argues that vaporwave is the *mother* of a diverse range of subsequent internet aesthetics, or aesthetics as internet gatekeepers, creators, audience and algorithms now find to define:

A passion for transitional spaces – both physical and mental – a sense of solitude, time-lag, nostalgia, a yearning for the infinite, a continuous emphasis on the interweaving of memories and sensations: these are all now ubiquitous themes in internet culture, which branched out from vaporwave to all the main aesthetics that came after it (Tanni 2024: 45).

The offshoots that came after vaporwave also serve as means of expression for diverse global online cultures and political ideologies or simply for shitposting and trolling. Due to its ironic stance and popularity among digital natives, the vaporwave aesthetic has also become part of a more internet-prone, politically oriented propaganda, particularly with the rise of the alt-right and crypto-fascism. The most distinctive and discussed example is fashwave, which attempts to reshape nostalgia and social alienation by "filling vaporwave's virtual space with far-right imagery and shifting the meaning of some of its central signifiers to produce a sense of hope in a fascist future" (Koc 2022: 213). However, among the so-called political (and militaristic) waves, various and sometimes ideologically conflicting sub-genres emerged, such as laborwave, anarchowave, militarywave, NATOwave and also Serbwave (Aesthetics Fandom 2025b).

3 Yugowave: An update on Yugonostalgia?

Vaporwave seems a perfect formula to put the extinct Yugoslavia on the map of online cultural trends. It allows for the creation of online content by tapping into the collective memory of Yugoslavia, resulting in a phenomenon similar to other genres (e.g. Sovietwave) that emerged with the widespread adoption of vaporwave aesthetics online.

Although Yugowave borrows heavily from vaporwave aesthetics, it differs from its predecessor in several crucial respects. Its historical debris is not the detritus of Western consumer capitalism but the fragments left by the disintegration of the

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At first, Yugowave creators attempted to produce genuine vaporwave-like music with a Yugoslav audiovisual base, but soon a more nationalistic and patriotically oriented Yugowave emerged, filled with irony and militarism. The indistinguishable blend of consumerist utopia and dystopia that characterises vaporwave is thus supplanted by a meme-like aestheticisation of violent political reality and war. In Yugowave, vaporwave aesthetics takes an explicitly political turn.

Consequently, Yugowave draws on a distinctive palette of samples: Yugo-pop, Yugo-rock, turbofolk and wartime songs, alongside iconic footage of Yugoslav architecture, socialist rituals or everyday life in Yugoslavian socialism and footage from the succession wars of the 1990s. It is also heavily inflected by synthwave, a retro-futuristic genre that emerged in parallel with other (vapor)wave currents. Another difference is that while vaporwave has become almost canonical within 21st-century internet music, most Yugowave creators never set out to establish a discrete musical subgenre. Instead, they fashioned a strand of post-Yugoslav internet content that coalesced through ephemeral user engagement on sharing platforms. As Jukić observes:

There are (1) creators who find it sufficient simply to slow down selected material and filter it through a reverb effect (e.g., the YouTube channel "TheAthelasProject"); (2) creators who combine disparate samples to craft entirely new tracks in a style reminiscent of vaporwave (e.g., the SoundCloud artist SyntheticSnow); and (3) creators who produce detailed, fully transformative remixes that alter a song's pitch, timbre, mood, instrumentation and texture (e.g., YouTuber Tim Klošar) (Jukić 2019: 59).

Based on an analysis of selected creators, Jukić identified three sub-phenomena that reveal the stylistic and thematic diversity of Yugowave, which ranges from Yugonostalgia to nationalism. The work of SyntheticSnow, a Yugowave pioneer, falls on the most Yugonostalgic part of the spectrum, expressing a longing for an idealized Yugoslav past while maintaining a reflective attitude towards Yugonostalgia. According to Jukić, this attitude is characteristic of most of today's Yugo-sphere (Jukić 2019: 61). For example, in the song *I miss Yugoslavia*, as SyntheticSnow titles his chopped and slowed-down version of Lepa Brena's patriotic hit *Jugoslovenka*, the title word "Jugoslovenka" ("Yugoslav woman") is glitched every time it appears. A similar semantic game can be found in the video titled *BACILA JE SVE NIZ RIJEKU - INDEXI*, posted on YouTube by yugowavenation. While the original title of a song by the Sarajevo pop-rock band Indexi ("She threw everything down the river") refers to lost love and abortion, the Yugowave version offers it as a metaphor for the sad end of Yugoslavia itself.

In contrast, the work of YouTuber TheAthelasProject is focused not on Yugonostalgia or on the SFRY itself, but rather on the wartime period and the emergence of post-Yugoslav nation-states. TheAthelasProject's Yugoslavia-related videos primarily feature archival war footage along with slowed-down renditions of 1990s Serbian pop-folk martial songs with aggressive and nationalistic rhetoric. The titles of these videos are often ironic or sarcastic, for example: YUGOWAVE - VIVA LA VIDA (SLOBODAN) ノ中穏ブビ・, SERBWAVE - AIN'T WAR HELL? 右益きペサ, Serbwave - Chilling in the 90s 竹河そゝヤ or SERBWAVE - YOU CAN BLOW US CLINTON づどり 圧え可飲. As Jukić observes in the comments under TheAthelasProject's videos, this type of content "resonates with popular feeling in Serbia in recent times following years of increasingly conservative, right-wing rhetoric and nationalistic fervor promoted both by politicians and the mainstream media, all presenting an extreme end of the spectrum regarding strategies of symbolic nation-building after the SFRY's disappearance" (Jukić 2019: 63).

Still, she recognizes the persistence of transgenerational post-war trauma in Serbwave, and according to her interpretation, the potential for resolving traumatic memories is represented by the synthwave remix Roki "LAZERYES" Vulević – *Neon Bombarder* by YouTuber PahaMuumiJumala. In this simple remix of popular Serbian turbo-folk singer Roki Vulević's war anthem *Crni bombarder*, the original lyrics have been omitted, leaving only the distinctive synth sounds intact. The accompanying visuals adopt a retro futuristic style, portraying a minimalist cyber landscape alongside Vulević's strikingly portrayed laser-like eyes. According to Jukić, *Neon Bombarder* provides a detached and ironic reinterpretation of a nationalistic anthem, illustrating the genre's capacity for innovative post-traumatic processing of the collective memory associated with war.

It is also important to note Jukić's conclusion that Yugowave and its offshoots represent Yugonostalgia in an "updated" form (Jukić 2019: 66). Yugonostalgia is a widely discussed phenomenon, often linked to the resistance against historical revisionism in former Yugoslav countries and post-Yugoslav nationalist ideologies. It also reflects dissatisfaction with the current social and political realities and serves as a reconciliation process among former Yugoslavs (Maksimović 2017; Popović 2025). Yugonostalgia is also not exclusive to the (last) Yugoslav generations and it can manifest in various ways in today's online sphere. But with updating, Jukić does not primarily refer to the online remediation (see Blom, Lundemo and Røssaak 2016) of nostalgia towards the Yugoslav past. Instead, she emphasizes the ambiguous and often critical dialogue with Yugonostalgia on the one hand and the haunting presence of collective trauma from the succession wars on the other.

However, it is difficult to classify Yugowave solely as a manifestation of updated Yugonostalgia, especially given latter positive reception and integration within cultural sectors. Using Velikonja's (2008) distinction between cultures of nostalgia - which represent the commercialization of nostalgia - and nostalgic cultures, which are rooted in vernacular traditions, we can contend that the often ironic tone found in Yugowave and Serbwave actively opposes the branding and exploitation of Yugonostalgia that occurs in traditional culture, marketing, media, and academia. But as part of the post-vaporwave evolution, they do not fit into nostalgic cultures either. Yugowave and Serbwave differ significantly from other online forms expressing Yugonostalgia or remediating memories about Yugoslavia (for the case of Instagram, see Boccia Arteri and Zurovac 2019).

They should be instead analysed as a genre or a form of internet aesthetics discussed above. This is the reason that we defined Yugowave or Serbwave as distinct from other Yugowave branding, such as a Yugowave retro-party DJ collective, Instagram account yugo.wave and especially YouTube playlists of pop-rock music from the period of SFRY. Aesthetically and ideologically, it is a separate phenomenon. TheAthelasProject's videos also clearly mark the branching of the Yugowave genre and the emergence of Serbwave, a nationalistic and militaristic aesthetic sub-genre, which is often categorized as a sub-genre of political wave, part of the war aesthetic and militainment, or as part of the online right-wing sphere (Waysdorf 2022).

It is therefore important to emphasize that there is both a local and global fascination with the socialist past and the Yugoslav wars, particularly among younger generations born just before or after the breakup of Yugoslavia, along with a persistent exoticism surrounding the Balkans. The fascination with the Balkans and its global representation has certainly become quite fragmented on the internet, but one of the ways in which the Balkans are positioned in global culture is often through war, violence,⁷ chauvinism, nationalism and (South) Slavic self-irony. As we might assume, Yugowave or Serbwave are not merely an aesthetic expression or appreciation limited to post-Yugoslav societies. Rather, they are subjects of global internet attraction and, consequently, a stake in the algorithmic attention economy and various online communities.

7. An example would be Balkan/Slavic Violence Tumblr, an aesthetics on Tumblr blogs with photos, depicting paramilitary groups from Russia and the Balkans, Orthodox iconography, gore, drugs, weapon collections, excessive masculinity and bondage. Because of the NSFW elements, many blogs were deleted during Tumblr Purge in 2018 (Aesthetics Fandom 2025c).

4 Yugowave on YouTube

Although Yugowave albums and playlists can be found on SoundCloud and Bandcamp, our preliminary research indicates that the majority of Yugowave-associated content exists solely on YouTube.⁸ This is consistent with the above-mentioned transition of vaporwave into a vernacular online cultural and aesthetic content, which is primarily distributed and consumed on popular online platforms such as YouTube.

YouTube is the second-largest social media platform, with over 2.5 billion active users (Shubham Singh 2025). It is the leading video service globally and serves as the world's largest audiovisual repository, acting as an information system, ever-growing grassroots archive or an externalized collective memory. The platform hosts billions of videos across a wide range of categories, including various genres of user-generated content, music, live streams and archival footage. There is also a significant presence of YouTube-native content and influencers, commonly referred to as YouTubers, along with other platform-based media production. While users can consume content on YouTube through search functions, subscriptions to creators or uploaders and external links, their experience is primarily shaped by a personalized algorithmic curation system and the intensive attention economy.

An important feature of YouTube's attention economy and platform culture, as well as its role as a social media platform, is the comment section, which over time developed into a unique form of communication, complete with its own codes, phrases, parlance and inside jokes. Comments serve as a way for audiences to discuss and evaluate content, along with any related issues. Accordingly, commenters can be seen as highly engaged viewers; after all, "people who do not have strong feelings are not likely to bother commenting" (Waysdorf 2022: 25).

It is therefore important to consider the platform-specific nature of the phenomenon and the research affordances it presents (Arthurs, Drakopoulou, and Gandini 2018) when analysing content production and audience communities of Yugowave. Researchers highlight that analysing comments "constitutes a

8. We utilized the platform's built-in search functions to gather results for our queries on Yugowave, Yuwave, and Serbwave across Bandcamp, SoundCloud, Spotify and YouTube. While YouTube yielded a larger number of results and SoundCloud had comparatively fewer, Bandcamp and Spotify were more lacking. We can identify only a couple of Yugowave artists on Bandcamp, including SyntheticSnow. On the other hand, searches on Spotify mostly returned playlists featuring music from the time of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or Serbian music from the 1990s.

potentially interesting data source to mine for obtaining implicit knowledge about users, videos, categories, and community interests" (Hussain et al 2018: 21). By scrutinizing the publicly available subscriptions of commenters as indicators of their broader preferences on YouTube, we aim to utilize this data to gain implicit knowledge about the highly engaged audience of Yugowave and its related offshoots.

4.1 Data collection

To collect data, we first manually compiled a playlist of Yugowave-related videos.⁹ We began with the search results for the "Yugowave" and "Serbwave" query terms, then followed YouTube's recommendations for each result. Lastly, we examined the video section of the Yugowave content uploaders' channels. We use the following criteria to compile the playlist: (1) Yugowave, Serbwave or related labels such as Croatwave, Bosniawave, Kebabwave, Arkanwave, Albanianwave, Slobowave; (2) a clear distinction between vaporwave-style Yugowave and playlists containing unprocessed Yugoslav originals: the latter were excluded; (3) related audiovisual aesthetics, e.g., synthwave, slowed & reverb, 8-bit or "doomer" versions of Yugoslav-related music and AI-generated Yugowave; (4) Yugoslav-themed war aesthetics; (5) original vaporwave-style Yugowave-labelled tracks.

The resulting playlist, finalized on 30 June 2025, comprised 433 videos, which we used as our starting point for further data collection. Using the YouTube Data API (Application Programming Interface), we retrieved the following datasets:

- 1) Metadata for videos in the playlist, resulting in a dataset of 426 videos.¹⁰
- 2) From each seed video, we extracted all available comments, recording each commenter's YouTube username/ID. This yielded a list of users who engaged with the seed videos. By focusing on commenters, we captured a set of active viewers, although this approach represents a non-random subset of the overall audience (Traag, Waltman and van Eck 2019). This resulted in the dataset with 26,133 comments and 14,344 unique commenters and their associated metadata.

9. The playlist is publicly available here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-FcIUHXG0lr6BikxK7rWlvwqhkXokRkfa>.

10. Our primary focus is on commenters; therefore, this does not reflect the number of unique videos, as the playlist may contain duplicates uploaded by different channels. The difference between the number of videos added to the playlist and the retrieved videos results from the fact that five videos are set as private and two were already removed by their uploaders by the time of our analysis.

- 3) For every unique commenter gathered in the previous step, we retrieved the list of YouTube channels to which the users subscribe, provided their subscription list is public. (Users can hide their subscriptions, in which case that commenter is excluded from this step.) In our database, 37% ($N = 5,367$) of the commenters have their subscriptions publicly visible,¹¹ and 3,405 of these are subscribing to at least one channel. This yielded a final dataset of 530,523 unique subscriptions and 1,351,532 subscriptions in total.

It is important to note that the playlist we compiled may not be a complete representation of Yugowave and related content on YouTube. However, it is comprehensive enough to provide key insights into evolution of Yugowave on YouTube and audiences that engage with this phenomenon.

4.2 Analysis

To analyse audience structure, we used subscriptions recorded for users in our dataset. The object of analysis is a bipartite (two-mode) network (Borgatti and Everett 1997) linking users to the channels they subscribe to. We retain one edge per (user, channel) pair (duplicates removed) and drop missing values. To reduce noise from isolated activity, we analyse the bipartite 2-core: we iteratively remove users and channels with degree < 2 until all remaining nodes have at least two ties. This preserves meaningful co-subscription patterns while avoiding singletons that cannot contribute to overlap. The resulting 2-core comprises 3,399 users and 134,683 subscribed channels.

Very popular channels and hyper-active users can dominate co-subscription patterns. To dampen this effect without discarding data, we use mild, degree-aware TF-IDF-style weights on user-channel edges (Alupoaie and Cunningham 2013). Intuitively, a subscription to a rarer channel counts more than a subscription to a ubiquitous one, and ties from extremely prolific users are down-weighted. All community detection is performed on this weighted bipartite graph.

Communities are detected with the Leiden algorithm (Traag et al. 2019) optimizing a degree-corrected configuration null model (Reichardt and Bornholdt 2006). This null model asks: given that each user and each channel keep their observed number of ties, what would connections look like if they were formed at random? The method favours a partition only when observed within-community ties exceed that degree-preserving expectation. We fix the resolution parameter (γ) at 1.0 for the main analyses (lower (< 1) γ yields fewer, larger communities; higher (> 1) γ yields more, smaller communities).

11. This represents a comparable proportion to that found in other studies based on similar methodologies (see Clark and Zaitsev 2020).

Because community detection is stochastic, we run Leiden 50 times (same γ) with different random seeds and build a consensus partition. Concretely: for each channel, we record the community it receives in each run, align labels across runs and assign the majority label as the consensus. We also compute a stability score for each channel: the share of runs in which it was assigned to its consensus community. In the analysis, we distinguish core channels (stability ≥ 0.6 or ≥ 0.8) from more ambiguous boundary cases.

To characterize each community, we compute channel-level log-odds enrichment with an informative prior, comparing how common a channel is within a community versus globally. This yields interpretable rankings of representative channels per community. To control for multiple comparisons, we compute a z-score for each channel. We then convert each z-score to a two-sided p-value and apply the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure (Benjamini and Hochberg 1995) to control the false discovery rate, obtaining q-values. We flag channels only if they show both a practically large effect ($|z| \geq 2$) and survive control ($q < .05$), limiting the expected fraction of false positives among the highlighted channels. We assess robustness along three dimensions:

- 1) Seeds (reliability): agreement between each run and the consensus is summarized with the Adjusted Rand Index (ARI); higher ARI (towards the value of 1) indicates more consistent results across random starts (Yeung and Ruzzo 2001). Across 50 runs, mean ARI = 0.526 (SD = 0.092).
- 2) Resolution (scale): we vary γ in a narrow range and compare each partition to the $\gamma = 1.0$ baseline using ARI. Relative similarity is ARI = 0.398 at $\gamma = 0.8$, ARI = 1.000 at $\gamma = 1.0$ (by definition), ARI = 0.408 at $\gamma = 1.2$, and ARI = 0.377 at $\gamma = 1.5$ (for completeness, $\gamma = 0.5$ yields ARI = 0.122). These values indicate that the major communities persist across nearby scales (0.8–1.2), while more distant resolutions diverge as expected.
- 3) Popularity sensitivity: we rerun the Leiden algorithm on (a) the unweighted bipartite graph and (b) a variant that trims the top 1% most prolific users, then compares the TF–IDF baseline with ARI. Relative to the unweighted baseline, the TF–IDF specification yields ARI = 0.429 and the trimmed variant yields ARI = 0.382, indicating moderate sensitivity but broadly similar structure even under harsher popularity controls.

As a validity check against chance structure, we compare the observed community quality to a degree-preserving bipartite rewiring null: we randomize the graph by swapping endpoints while keeping every user- and channel degree, then rerun the Leiden community detection algorithm on these randomized graphs. On the unweighted graph, the observed objective is $Q = 757,865.904$ versus a null distribution with mean $Q = 373,985.419$ and SD = 493.808 (50 null runs;

five swaps per edge), yielding $z = 777.388$. We observed that the quality far exceeds the null distribution indicating a genuine community structure beyond degree patterns.

All analyses were implemented in Python. For network analysis we used SciPy, NetworkX and leidenalg Python libraries.

5 Findings

5.1 The dissolution of Yugowave

To trace the development of the Yugowave phenomenon on YouTube, we first examined its upload trajectory. Although the first videos were uploaded in 2014 and 2015, there was a significant increase in uploads after 2018, rising from 37 that year to 59 in 2020, and then peaking in 2021–2022.¹² The findings thus contradicts Jukić's claim from 2019 that Yugowave had not yet reached its early maturity (Jukić 2019: 59), as it already entered a phase of decline after 2022–2023.

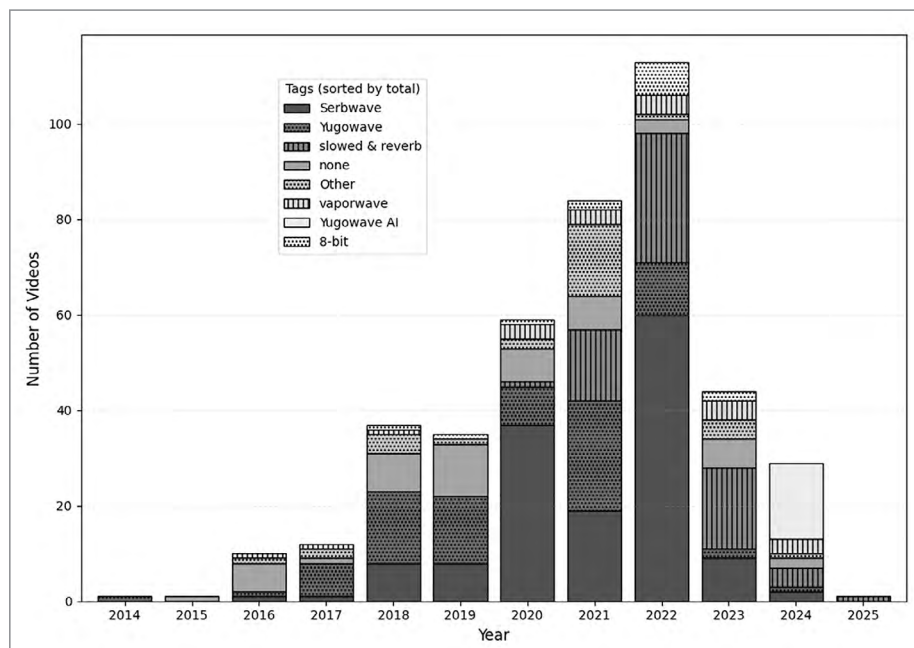
However, the uploading trend does not provide any information about content evolution. To get a more granular view, we therefore manually extracted creators' self-assigned tags from video titles and descriptions (e.g., vaporwave, Yugowave, Serbwave, Croatwave, slowed & reverb), given that tagging and labelling is an important aspect of -wave aesthetics. Because many creators use these categories interchangeably,¹³ tagging data is noisy, but as shown in Figure 1 it still reveals clear trends. Until 2020, the generic Yugowave label dominated, but as the production and uploading expanded, it was overtaken by a Serbwave tag and to a much lesser degree by other post-Yugoslav national sub-waves. Serbwave is also the most popular tag in our dataset, appearing on 145 videos or encompassing 34% of the video dataset.¹⁴ It could also be observed that more neutral tags started to appear after 2022, with slowed & reverbed being the most popular in 2023 and yugowave AI in 2024.

12. The peak in 2022 resulted from 54 re-uploaded videos by TheAthelasProject. The original upload date and the reasons for their removal remain unknown.

13. For simplicity, we have grouped similar tags into single categories: Serbiawave, Serbchill and Serbiavibe have been combined into Serbwave; Bosniakwave and Bosniawave have been merged as Bosniawave; chiptune and 8-bit are now collectively referred to as 8-bit; and doomer and doomer wave have been consolidated into doomer wave. When multiple tags are associated with a single video, we prioritize the more specific one. For example, if both Yugowave and Serbwave tags are present, we will use Serbwave.

14. The tags and the number of videos associated with each tag are as follows: Serbwave (145), Yugowave (83), slowed & reverb (65), none (52), vaporwave (20), Yugowave AI (16), 8-bit (14), doomer wave (6), Synthwave (5), Bosniawave (5), War aesthetics (4), Croatwave (3), Kebabwave (2), Arkanwave (1), Pernarwave (1), Titowave (1), Turbo tugica (1), Albanianwave (1), Slobowave (1).

Figure 1: Uploaders' self-assigned tags from video titles and descriptions.



These findings reflect the broader fragmentation and development of wave aesthetics online, where tagging and naming an aesthetic become creative acts in themselves. Sometimes, this process can launch a new trend, even when the underlying aesthetic principles are similar to those of already established aesthetics. In our case, this is evident with the slowed & reverbed tag, which primarily designates videos closely resembling those of the Serbwave aesthetic. Additionally, tagging aligns with the platform's algorithmic logic: using popular or viral tags increases the likelihood that videos will be recommended.

An important observation is the complete absence of content referencing Slovenia or Northern Macedonia. This further supports our assumption that a significant portion of the Yugowave, as an umbrella term for all the content in our dataset, is not primarily rooted in Yugonostalgia.¹⁵ Possibly, this could be explained by several factors: the lingering collective trauma from the Bosnian War and, to a lesser extent, the Kosovo conflict; the alienation felt by younger generations in newly formed nation-states; ongoing political tensions in Bosnia and Serbia; and the development of local cultural and political identities under the political hegemony of the West. Concurrently, this is influenced by online aesthetic trends and their ideological implications.

15. For the analysis of Yugonostalgia in Slovenia, see for example Velikonja (2013).

If, according to Jukić, the popularity of Serbwave compared to Yugowave, highlights the dominance of nationalistic discourse in contemporary society (Jukić 2019: 66), it is worth noting that an examination of the videos in our playlist shows a significant prevalence of militaristic content. Much of the Yugowave, Serbwave, Bosniawave or Croatwave for that matter therefore fits into the category of vaporwar. With this term, Waysdorf refers to military fan videos with vaporwave aesthetic and the focus primarily on the aesthetic appreciation of war. While vaporwar is undoubtedly influenced by a military-focused fashwave and the alt-right, the phenomenon itself is not strictly centred on nationalism or distinctive political ideology. According to Waysdorf, vaporwar is an internet-based, aesthetic and nostalgic celebration of the military. "This means that its nostalgia is ambivalent, drawing from vaporwave's combination of sincerity and irony to express nostalgia for a past era of the military while avoiding a strong commitment to the yearning that nostalgia typically represents. Its devotion lies with militaries, not a specific cause" (Waysdorf 2022: 34). The war aesthetic associated with Yugowave-related phenomena may suggest that this content is distributed algorithmically among YouTube audiences interested in militainment.

Table 1: Engagement metrics for Yugowave videos (N = 426) on YouTube.

	Mean	Std Dev	Min	25%	50%	75%	95%	Max	Skew
Views (N = 426)	46,006.74	234,426.81	9	514.25	3,047.5	21,796.5	147,022.7	3,486,771	11.16
Likes (N = 423)	954.41	4,556.17	0	15.00	84.0	446.5	2,835.4	57,692	9.63
Comments (N = 424)	61.46	237.44	0	1.00	7.0	34.0	224.2	2,599	7.57

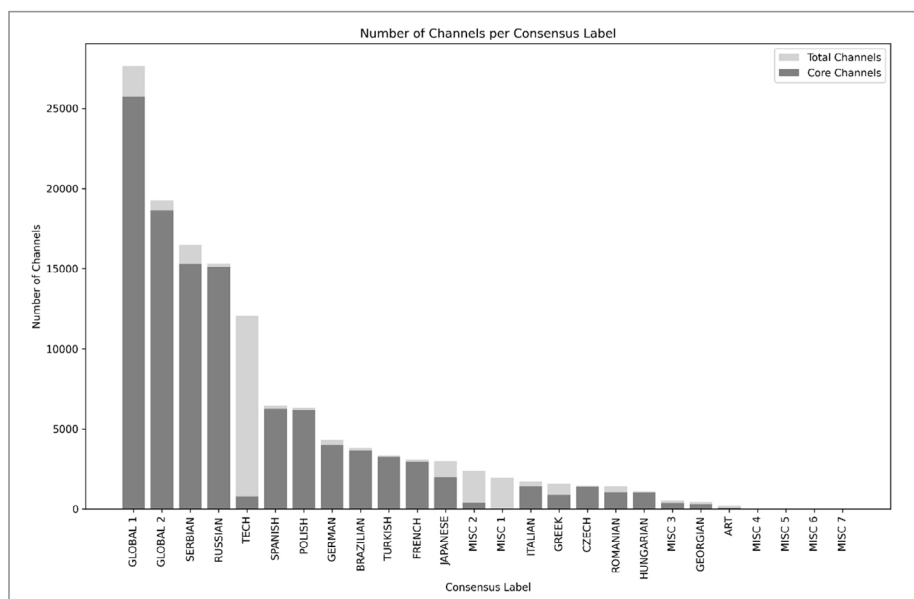
Before we continue with our analysis of Yugowave's audience, it is also important to note that the engagement with this content is concentrated, as expected from an online platform such as YouTube. The videos in our dataset receive an average of approximately 61 comments, but the distribution of comments per video is highly right-skewed, with a skewness value of 7.57 (adjusted Fisher–Pearson, N = 424). This indicates that active viewer engagement is concentrated on only a small number of videos, which also rank as the most popular according to other engagement metrics (see Table 1). The Spearman rank correlations between comments and likes or views further support this observation: $\rho(\text{views, comments}) = 0.92$ (N = 424) and $\rho(\text{likes, comments}) = 0.94$ (N = 422), with all p-values being less than 0.001.¹⁶

16. The Spearman rank correlation value is also strong for views and likes: $\rho(\text{views, likes}) = 0.98$ (N = 423).

5.2 Audience communities

Clustering the user–channel bipartite graph yields approximately two dozen stable communities, which together delineate how Yugowave circulates through YouTube’s heterogeneous public. The consensus solution is reliable (mean ARI ≈ 0.82 across 50 random initializations) and most representative channels within each cluster are consistently assigned across runs (see Appendix for top channels). We therefore interpret these taste communities as meaningful, if porous social formations that allow us to infer some characteristics about Yugowave audience on YouTube. To qualitatively analyse the preferences of this audience, we review core channel titles, their descriptions, and browse through their content.

Figure 2: Detected audience communities with annotated labels.



The communities with a large share of channels consist of platform-wide mainstream audiences. One of the communities (GLO 2 in Figure 2) is centred around channels such as MrBeast (currently the most subscribed channel on YouTube), IShowSpeed and Cristiano Ronaldo’s official channel, attracting viewers who prefer to watch viral YouTubers and subscribe to social media influencers. An adjacent cluster (GLO 1) features influential YouTuber PewDiePie, animated history channels like Internet Historian and Sam O’Nella Academy and pop-science/explainer channels like Vsauce. The subscriptions for these channels indicate preferences for infotainment and edutainment. Interestingly, this mainstream-oriented cluster also includes a strong presence of Slavic content,

highlighted by popular Slavic creator and musician Life of Boris, as well as channels focusing on weapons, like Brandon Herrera and DemolitionRanch. The relatively high number of subscribers to these channels indicates their wide reach among the commenters in our dataset. For instance, 1,119 commenters subscribe to PewDiePie, 843 to Life of Boris, and 417 to Brandon Herrera.

As seen in Figure 2, most communities are centred around nationality, region and language. We identified clusters with a significant number of Serbian, Russian, Polish, German, Turkish, French, Greek, Italian, Czech, Romanian, Hungarian, Georgian, Japanese/East-Asian and some Spanish and Brazilian/Portuguese language channels among their top representatives. While domestic YouTubers and entertainment or comedy channels are common in each of these clusters, the international communities within Yugowave audience show distinct preferences. The Russian cluster is characterized by a preference for music, including classical music channels like Vinheteiro and doomer music channels such as JustMyFavStrangeMusic. The Polish cluster shows an interest in history, with channels like CiekaweHistorie and Historia bez Cenzury. The German community leans towards (grassroots and official) militainment, featuring channels like PARALIGHTWORX and Bundeswehr, the official channel of the German Armed Forces, as well as legacy media like ARTEde and DER SPIEGEL. The Turkish cluster favours historical military or patriotic music, with channels like AgtfCZ and TheKhanate. The Italian community follows domestic channels about history (e.g., Nova Lectio) and music, ranging from Gigi D'Agostino to American post-punk and darkwave bands. The Czech cluster is primarily focused on gaming, with channels like Road to Vostok and Agraelus and Russian post-punk music. The Japanese community is centred around anime and J-pop, while the Romanian community shows a preference for domestic hip-hop, such as the B.U.G. Mafia channel. Since these communities are based on a co-subscription network among a heterogeneous set of commenters of niche YouTube content, it is not surprising that mainstream channels and language play a significant role in their co-subscription clustering, indicating the international scope of YouTube users engaging with Yugowave.

Additionally, there is a third set of communities that are less dense and organized around common interests rather than language or nationality. At least two distinct taste communities can be qualitatively identified. These communities are primarily focused on vintage tech on one side and art/drawing on the other. Despite some interesting observations – in one such cluster, for example, we find Arab YouTubers alongside a communist memes channel, which most likely indicates an audience that favours non-Western and anti-hegemonic content – the remaining communities are less interpretable, so we have labelled them as miscellaneous (MISC).

Within the nationally defined communities, the Serbian cluster stands out as the strongest and most internally cohesive, characterized by the preferences for the history of Yugoslav wars, militainment and wartime music. Commenters from the Yugowave community are subscribed to Rodoljub "Roki" Vulović's official channel, as well as to TheAthelasProject, the creator of Serbwave, which has 409 subscriptions among the commenters. Additionally, they follow Serbian archival and compilation channels such as Naša Srpska Arhiva and Kocayine, a channel dedicated to Yugoslav war footage from all sides of the conflict.

Across all detected communities, there is a notable similarity in interests: history, patriotism, militainment, weaponry, gaming and YouTube entertainment formats, with music being perhaps a secondary interest. Importantly, we also did not identify any vaporwave or other similar online aesthetic channels. Nor did we find any Yugonostalgia-related channels. This suggests that the audience commenting on videos in the dataset constitutes a significant portion of military and war aesthetic fandoms on YouTube. Given the prevalence of patriotism, cringe-worthy historical content and war aesthetics within Serbwave, this trend is unsurprising.

These findings could also shed light on the cultural and demographic characteristics of the Yugowave audience. Additionally, we corroborate the international structure of commenters suggested by the network analysis with (limited) profile metadata. We obtained YouTube data related to individual accounts from our commenter dataset ($N = 14,329$), including account creation dates and self-reported countries of residence. However, since providing country information is not mandatory and users select their own entries – regardless of their actual residence or citizenship – we cannot draw definitive conclusions about the nationalities of the commenters from this data. In our analysis, we found that only 15% of the commenters provided country information; these listed 129 different countries. The most common among these were the United States ($N = 363$), Serbia ($N = 251$), the Russian Federation ($N = 155$), Poland ($N = 105$), Germany ($N = 82$) and Bosnia ($N = 80$). Although the information is limited and potentially unreliable, it affirms the conclusion that the commenters – and, consequently, the audiences of Yugowave – are largely international.

Furthermore, the popularity of some of the viral YouTubers points to the consumption patterns of Generation Z on YouTube. Our additional findings indicate that 60% of commenters created their YouTube profiles between 2015 and 2021. Considering that YouTube requires users to be at least 13 years old (in most countries) to register independently – and that many sign up as older teens or young adults – we can cautiously speculate that the majority of commenters are late Millennials (born 1990–1996) and early Gen Z (1997–2003).

Finally, preferences for military themes and weaponry, along with content that is predominantly produced by and oriented toward males, suggest that this audience is largely male.

6 Conclusion and further work

Yugowave and the related post-Yugoslav wave aesthetic represent an audiovisual phenomenon characterized by ambivalent nostalgic references to the era of the socialist federal state of Yugoslavia and the war conflicts that followed its dissolution. A notable example is Serbwave, which primarily features war footage from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and includes slowed-down versions of pro-Serbian folk-pop war anthems. These digitally manipulated temporalities complicate – or literally glitch – the practices of collective memorization in the region, particularly Yugonostalgia. As an online genre, it reflects the experiences of generations born just after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and represents an example of how memory is remediated through the integration of cultural history into online databases such as YouTube and the algorithmic programming of cultural consumption.

In order to detect audiences that consume this type of content, which was the main aim of the analysis presented in the article, we retrieved full comment threads of 426 Yugowave-related videos and publicly available data about the channels that commenters follow on YouTube. We define commenters as an actively engaged audience, while remaining agnostic about their attitude towards the content. We used their subscriptions as a proxy variable, which, based on a bipartite network of users and their subscriptions, helped us (using the Leiden algorithm) to detect different taste communities on YouTube and position the Yugowave audience within them.

Beyond two large mainstream YouTube clusters, the detected taste communities are predominantly organized around nationality and language. This structure clarifies that Yugowave/Serbwave and related post-Yugoslav aesthetics are not confined to regional (Balkan) audiences: while engagement is strongest across East European/Slavic spheres, the presence of Turkish-, Japanese-, and Brazilian-Portuguese-language channels among commenter subscriptions points to a genuinely transnational reach. The examination of representative channels further shows that audiences coalesce less around genre labels than around shared interests: history, militainment, weaponry, gaming and YouTube-native entertainment formats. Taken together, these patterns are most consistent with a predominantly young male cohort fluent in platform vernacular and (post) ironic internet culture. Ideological inference from subscriptions alone remains

contingent. Nevertheless, the large share of nationalist, patriotic and military content suggests that portions of the audience are in proximity to the right-wing orientation on the traditional political compass.

Our approach, however, has clear limitations. First and foremost, we examine a subset of commenters as a proxy to gain insights into wider preferences of Yugowave audience on YouTube. Commenters are highly engaged but non-representative. Second, we rely on publicly visible subscriptions among the already non-random sample. Third, profile metadata (e.g., self-reported country, account age) is incomplete and not designed for demographic inference; any cohort characterization is therefore tentative.

Future work should scrutinize the comment corpus directly to complement the structural picture offered by subscriptions and explicitly question how commenters evaluate these videos and how they relate to the content. Concretely, applying sentiment analysis and topic modelling can map the affective and thematic reception along axes of nostalgia, patriotism, nationalism and the intricacies of internet meme cultures and trolling practices (including irony and sarcasm).

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Appendix: Annotated clusters with channel examples (max 5), stability score and number of subscribers (degree) from the dataset.

Label: GLOBAL 1

- PewDiePie (stability: 1.0, degree: 1119)
- Life of Boris (stability: 1.0, degree: 843)
- Vsauce (stability: 1.0, degree: 715)
- Internet Historian (stability: 1.0, degree: 506)
- Sam O’Nella Academy (stability: 1.0, degree: 487)

Label: GLOBAL 2

- MrBeast (stability: 1.0, degree: 714)
- IShowSpeed (stability: 1.0, degree: 236)
- Lionfield (stability: 1.0, degree: 149)
- Sambucha (stability: 1.0, degree: 130)
- MaskedArab (stability: 1.0, degree: 109)

Label: SERBIAN

- Rodoljub Roki Vulović Official (stability: 1.0, degree: 414)
- TheAthelasProject (stability: 1.0, degree: 409)
- NSA - Naša Srpska Arhiva (stability: 1.0, degree: 407)
- Sabaton (stability: 1.0, degree: 378)
- Kocayine (stability: 1.0, degree: 351)

Label: RUSSIAN

- Vinheteiro (stability: 1.0, degree: 284)
- Rammstein Official (stability: 1.0, degree: 250)

- BadComedian (stability: 1.0, degree: 146)
- Lofi Girl (stability: 1.0, degree: 140)
- JustMyFavStrangeMusic (stability: 1.0, degree: 132)

Label: TECH

- Lydia Violet (stability: 0.82, degree: 10)
- Jan Beta (stability: 0.82, degree: 3)
- Lynyrd Skynyrd (stability: 0.8, degree: 13)
- Electronics Repair School (stability: 0.8, degree: 8)
- HAUSER (stability: 0.8, degree: 6)

Label: SPANISH

- DubstepGutter (stability: 1.0, degree: 63)
- DrossRotzank (stability: 1.0, degree: 62)
- TRASH 新 ドラゴン (stability: 1.0, degree: 56)
- Ordnance (stability: 1.0, degree: 52)
- 8 Bit Universe (stability: 1.0, degree: 46)

Label: POLISH

- ciekawehistorie (stability: 1.0, degree: 64)
- IrytujaHistoryk (stability: 1.0, degree: 60)
- Historia bez cenzury (stability: 1.0, degree: 59)
- SciFun (stability: 1.0, degree: 59)
- Polish Eagle (stability: 1.0, degree: 58)

Label: GERMAN

- PARALIGHTWORX (stability: 1.0, degree: 83)
- Bundeswehr (stability: 1.0, degree: 69)
- PLW History (stability: 1.0, degree: 60)
- Stromae (stability: 1.0, degree: 41)
- ARTEde (stability: 1.0, degree: 39)

Label: BRAZILIAN

- TFP Student Action (stability: 1.0, degree: 55)
- Sam! (stability: 1.0, degree: 41)
- EricArchive (stability: 1.0, degree: 29)
- GANGSTER SQUAD (stability: 1.0, degree: 28)
- Michael Jackson (stability: 1.0, degree: 26)

Label: TURKISH

- Ruhi Çenet (stability: 1.0, degree: 60)
- Haci Productions (stability: 1.0, degree: 49)
- Bilal Göregen (stability: 1.0, degree: 47)
- AgtfCZ (stability: 1.0, degree: 39)
- edhaje (stability: 1.0, degree: 34)

Label: FRENCH

- Ex Cathedra (stability: 1.0, degree: 111)
- Investigations (stability: 1.0, degree: 43)
- Powerwolf Official (stability: 1.0, degree: 42)
- Black Beard Projects (stability: 1.0, degree: 42)
- ViveLeRoy (stability: 1.0, degree: 33)

Label: JAPANESE

- GARNiDELiA (stability: 0.86, degree: 4)
- Kirsty Partridge Art (stability: 0.82, degree: 4)
- 中国街景 China Street View (stability: 0.82, degree: 4)
- BragonGod (stability: 0.8, degree: 12)
- MRB - MetroRail Blog (stability: 0.8, degree: 3)

Label: MISC 2

- TODAY (stability: 0.78, degree: 11)

- War Maps (stability: 0.76, degree: 12)
- IJustWantToBeCool (stability: 0.76, degree: 9)
- Allison Kane (stability: 0.76, degree: 8)
- Hwasong (stability: 0.76, degree: 7)

Label: MISC 1

- Theo Baker (stability: 0.7, degree: 3)
- ThePaultergeist (stability: 0.68, degree: 4)
- SyrianNationalist Channel (stability: 0.64, degree: 3)
- Geumsaegi (stability: 0.64, degree: 2)
- EyshElly - ايش اللي (stability: 0.64, degree: 2)

Label: ITALIAN

- GIGI D'AGOSTINO (stability: 1.0, degree: 41)
- Nova Lectio (stability: 1.0, degree: 28)
- ShePastAway (stability: 1.0, degree: 21)
- Marty Bones - Roman Edits (stability: 1.0, degree: 16)
- yotobi (stability: 1.0, degree: 16)

Label: GREEK

- MAD GREEK (stability: 0.9, degree: 2)
- Rage Against the Machine (stability: 0.86, degree: 16)
- Luben TV (stability: 0.86, degree: 13)
- Easy Russian (stability: 0.86, degree: 12)
- Practical Thinking (stability: 0.86, degree: 11)

Label: CZECH

- Road to Vostok (stability: 1.0, degree: 33)
- Nemo's Dreamscapes (stability: 1.0, degree: 28)
- ViralBrothers (stability: 1.0, degree: 26)
- MoncaCZ (stability: 1.0, degree: 18)
- Agraelus (stability: 1.0, degree: 18)

Label: ROMANIAN

- Bace Bulgarian Mapper (stability: 0.98, degree: 31)
- Codrin Bradea : Satana (stability: 0.98, degree: 20)
- Recorder (stability: 0.98, degree: 17)

- Ziafet (stability: 0.98, degree: 15)
- B.U.G. Mafia (stability: 0.98, degree: 14)

Label: HUNGARIAN

- FarFromWeak (stability: 1.0, degree: 56)
- Radics Peti (stability: 1.0, degree: 20)
- JustVidman (stability: 1.0, degree: 18)
- PamKutya (stability: 1.0, degree: 15)
- Videómánia (stability: 1.0, degree: 12)

Label: MISC 3

- Earth Wind & Fire (stability: 0.92, degree: 14)
- A&P-REACTS (stability: 0.92, degree: 12)
- Metro Liner (stability: 0.92, degree: 10)
- Mandelin (stability: 0.92, degree: 10)
- Drivr3joe (stability: 0.92, degree: 9)

Label: GEORGIAN

- Warner Classics (stability: 0.94, degree: 12)
- Weltschmerz (stability: 0.94, degree: 10)
- **ROSTMEO** (stability: 0.94, degree: 7)
- იარაღის განხილვა (stability: 0.94, degree: 7)
- Toma Chagelishvili (stability: 0.94, degree: 6)

Label: ART

- Proko (stability: 0.62, degree: 26)
- Beyond The Guitar (stability: 0.62, degree: 10)
- Taioo (stability: 0.62, degree: 9)
- Adam Duff LUCIDPIXUL (stability: 0.62, degree: 8)
- Joel Huenink (stability: 0.62, degree: 8)

Label: MISC 4

- Dani Klarić (stability: 1.0, degree: 3)
- 쏘베리 Ssoberry (stability: 1.0, degree: 2)
- Grubanny (stability: 1.0, degree: 2)

Label: MISC 5

- GamingGargoyle (stability: 0.98, degree: 11)
- Bryan15 (stability: 0.98, degree: 2)

Label: MISC 6

- KN Armada Rijeka (stability: 1.0, degree: 2)
- Qazji (stability: 1.0, degree: 2)

Label: MISC 7

- Milkychan (stability: 0.86, degree: 4)

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ŽALNI NAGOVOR

Franc Mali



V slovo sodelavcu Tonetu!

Spoštovani žalni zbor, spoštovani svojci, kolegi in prijatelji. Zbrali smo se, da se poslovimo od našega dragega sodelavca in prijatelja, izr. prof. Antona Krambergerja, ki nas je mnogo prezgodaj zapustil.

Tone, tako smo ga klicali, je bil naš sodelavec od leta 1995, ko se je zaposlil na fakulteti. Na to, da je sledil akademski karieri in se posvečal izbranim raziskovalnim temam, sta nedvomno vplivali dve okoliščini, ki sta se zgodili že bistveno prej.

Najprej njegova že v mladih let sprejeta odločitev, da po enem letu študija fizike na Univerzi v Ljubljani, s katerim kot odličen srednješolec ni imel težav, presedla na študij sociologije na tedanji FSPN. V mladosti so ga namreč močno zanimala družbena vprašanja, zlasti vprašanje družbene neenakosti, deprivilegiranih družbenih skupin in – kot je nekoč dejal – nikoli v resnici povsem odgovorjeno vprašanje, zakaj se ne glede na naravo političnih sistemov in ideologij nekaterim vedno uspe pririniti na vrh družbene piramide, drugim pa je usojeno, da ostanejo na njenem dnu. Že kot študent je prišel do spoznanja, da je za razumevanje družbe potrebna tako dobra teorija kot tudi dobra empirija. Diplomsko delo, v katerem se je ukvarjal z vprašanji migracij v Pomurju in ki ga je spisal skupaj s še tremi sošolci, je zaradi inovativnega pristopa pritegnilo nenavadno veliko pozornosti tudi v tedanjih medijih. Diplomsko delo si je prislužilo univerzitetno Prešernovo nagrado.

Druga okoliščina, ki je v veliki meri opredelila njegovo ukvarjanje z izbranimi znanstvenimi vprašanji, je bilo dejstvo, da je bil pred začetkom svoje akademske kariere nekaj let zaposlen zunaj univerze. Ker si je zgodaj ustvaril družino, je namreč pohitel z zaposlitvijo na takratnem Zavodu RS za statistiko.

Delal je na mestu razvijalca informatike in statističnega sistema. Tako je pridobil ogromno praktičnih izkušenj s področja statističnega spremljanja družbenih pojavov in družboslovne informatike. Ker je bil taka osebnost, da je znal ljudi povezovati in jih s svojimi vizijami prepričati, je že takrat prevzel v svoje roke predsedovanje Statističnemu društvu Slovenije.

Na FDV-ju se je zaposlil leta 1995 kot pretočni mladi raziskovalec. V tistem času je šlo za poseben zaposlitveni status doktorskih študentov, ki so se premikali v obe smeri, tako z univerze v gospodarstvo kot tudi obratno. Tone je šel po obratni poti. Po dokončanem doktoratu na FDV-ju in vseh opravljenih habilitacijah je vse do svoje upokojitve leta 2021 deloval na naši ustanovi kot učitelj in raziskovalec. Znanstvenoraziskovalno se je ukvarjal z različnimi družbenimi temami. Upal bi si trditi, da je bil v svoji generaciji učiteljev na FDV-ju

daleč najbolj multidisciplinarno usmerjen raziskovalec, z zelo širokim horizontom zanimanja za različna družbena vprašanja.

Ta svoj široki raziskovalni profil je dopolnjeval z vlogo kritičnega javnega intelektualca. V posameznih obdobjih svoje profesionalne kariere je veliko nastopal v javnosti s svojimi jasno izoblikovanimi in argumentiranimi stališči. V času intenzivnega ukvarjanja s tranzicijskimi elitami je predstavil kar nekaj zanimivih in polemičnih zapisov v slovenskem dnevnem časopisu. Bil je tudi večkrat vabljeni gost radijskih in televizijskih omizij.

V širšem intelektualnem smislu ga je še posebej privlačilo vprašanje, kako se različne vrste družbenih elit zgodovinsko oblikujejo in s svojo politično ali ekonomsko močjo delujejo. Kot teoretsko podkovan in na področju empiričnega raziskovanja metodološko rigorozen sociolog se je zavedal, da imamo v slovenskem prostoru zelo malo znanja o procesih družbenega oblikovanja ekonomskih, političnih in vseh drugih vrst elit. Bil je zadržan do tega, da bi se na področju preučevanja slovenskih elit zgolj oprli na tuje teoretske modele, ne da bi jih empirično preučili. Zavedal se je pomena analize neformalnih omrežij slovenskih tranzicijskih elit, ki imajo – kot je poznavalsko zapisal v enem svojih besedil – zapleteno dvojno strukturo. To je, da imajo poleg legalnih tudi mnoge vzporedne, latentne in javnosti prikrita strukture, žarišča in težišča.

Tone je bil med prvimi v Sloveniji, ki razvil celostni raziskovalni instrumentarij za analizo družbenih elit in ga na empirični ravni tudi izvedel. Sodelavci, ki so z njim pri tem projektu sodelovali, pravijo, da je ravno zaradi svoje prepričljivosti in posebnega intelektualnega šarma, s katerim je pristopil k večno nečimrnim »pomembnejšem«, tj. predstavnikom elit, dosegel, da so sedli za mizo in se študentom pustili več ur anketirati. Enak vtis o njegovi izjemni komunikativni sposobnosti smo dobili tudi vsi tisti, ko smo obiskali serijo odmevnih javnih razprav na temo »Elite nekoč in danes«. Ta serija (petih) pogovorov, ki jo je zasnoval in moderiral Tone, je potekala v eni izmed vedno polnih dvoran Cankarjevega doma. Bila je odličen primer, kako se da neko kompleksno družboslovno temo na zanimiv način približati širši javnosti.

Tone je o delovanju družbenih elit v Sloveniji skozi njeno zgodovino zbral veliko arhivskega gradiva. Ta tema mu je ves čas predstavljala velik intelektualni izziv. Imel jo je za svoje nedokončano delo in glede nje je imel veliko načrtov tudi po upokojitvi. Žal sta mu je zahrbtna bolezen in prezgodnja smrt preprečili, da bi dokončal vse, kar si je zamislil.

Rezultati raziskav o tranzicijskih elitah in tudi rezultati drugih raziskav, ki so se ukvarjale z družbeno neenakostjo, zaposlovanjem in izobraževanjem, so bili osnova za Tonetovo vključevanje v mednarodne projekte. Imel je veliko zaslug, da so se partnerji iz Slovenije v teh mednarodnih raziskovalnih konzorcijih ponašali

z ustreznim teoretsko-analitskim okvirom in standardiziranimi podatki, ki so omogočali primerjave med Slovenijo in drugimi evropskimi državami. Opravil je tudi znanstvena izpopolnjevanja v tujini in predaval na nekaterih tujih univerzah. V svoji raziskovalni karieri je bil vključen v izredno veliko število aplikativnih in razvojnih projektov – bilo jih je več kot dvajset. To plat raziskovalnega dela, ko se je iz kabinetnega znanstvenika prelevil v eksperta in svetovalca odločevalcem na ministrstvih, agencijah in drugih uradih, je resnično dobro obvladal. Na temelju svojega razvejanega raziskovalnega dela je objavil več monografij, ki segajo na zelo različna tematska področja, od kadrovske sociologije do kulturologije. Rezultate svojih raziskovanj je objavljajl tudi v slovenskih in mednarodnih znanstvenih revijah s področja družboslovja in humanistike.

Tone je v svoji profesionalni karieri veliko svoje delovne energije namenil aktivnostim v strokovnih društvih ter urednikovanju revij in knjižnih zbirk, kot so Družboslovne razprave, Metodološki zvezki, sociološka knjižna zbirka Ost in še številnim drugim uredniškim poslom. To strokovno delo je v akademski skupnosti pogosto manj vidno, tudi manj cenjeno in ne prinaša nujno veliko točk v postopkih akademskega napredovanja. Tone je vsako izmed teh del opravljal zavzeto in odgovorno. V letih 2000–2004 je bil predsednik Slovenskega sociološkega društva. V letih 2000–2005 je bil odgovorni urednik osrednje slovenske sociološke revije Družboslovne razprave. Kot urednik je storil pomemben kvalitativni premik. Pred njegovim urednikovanjem je imela ta revija v glavnem status nacionalne znanstvene revije, v katero besedila avtorjev iz tujine niso zašla. Z veliko napornega dela je dosegel, da je bila revija vključena v nekaj uglednih mednarodnih znanstvenih indeksov. To je pripomoglo k temu, da se je revija tudi po strukturi avtorskih objav začela odpirati v mednarodni prostor. Slovensko sociološko društvo mu je za prispevek k razvoju slovenske sociologije podelilo naziv častnega člana.

Tone je bil v prvi vrsti cenjen in spoštovan profesor številnim generacijam študentov na FDV-ju ter mentor mnogih diplomskih, magistrskih in doktorskih nalog. Kot učitelj, najprej kot asistent in potem profesor, je v času svoje poklicne kariere na FDV-ju deloval na treh različnih katedrah: Katedri za menedžment organizacij in človeških virov, Katedri za kulturologijo in Katedri za družboslovno informatiko.

Bil je tudi del FDV-jevskega kadra, ki je pomagal pri vzpostavljanju metodoloških predmetov v učnih programih tistih javnih univerz na Slovenskem, katerih ustanovitev po osamosvojitvi je bila v nacionalnem interesu – v mislih imam na Univerzo na Primorskem. Kljub vsakokratnim tedenskim vožnjam iz Ljubljane v Koper in nazaj je to pedagoško delo opravljal z velikim veseljem. Sam sem si to razlagal ne samo s tem, da se je vedno dobro počutil v predavalnici, obdan

s študenti, temveč tudi z dejstvom, ker se je vsaj toliko kot Ljubljčan počutil tudi Koprčan. Zaradi očetovega službovanja je del mladosti, vključno z gimnazijskimi leti, preživel na Obali.

Med študenti je bil priljubljen profesor. Pri njem so študentje cenili jasnost in nazornost v podajanju najbolj zapletenih teoretskih vsebin. Njegova predavanja so jim širila splošno razgledanost in spodbujala kritičnost mišljenja. Bil je eden tistih profesorjev, pri katerem so radi opravljali svoja zaključna dela. Vedno jim je bil pripravljen svetovati in si zanje tudi vzeti čas. Bil je mentor kar 124 diplomskim delom, 5 znanstvenim magisterijem in 6 doktorskim nalogam. Ogromno časa je žrtvoval za delo v komisijah za zagovor študentskih zaključnih del, saj smo ga sodelavci tja kar naprej vabili. Te dogodke je namreč znal s svojo intelektualno pronicljivostjo in duhovitostjo še kako dobro poživiti.

Sodelavci se Toneta ne bomo spominjali le po njegovih raziskovalnih in pedagoških dosežkih, pač pa tudi in predvsem kot cenjenega kolega in prijatelja, znanega po svoji umirjenosti in človeški toplini. Vedno je bil pripravljen na pogovor s sodelavci. Predstavljal je lik klasičnega profesorja v najboljšem pomenu besede, ki ga v današnjem pohitrenem in vedno bolj površnem akademskem svetu težko srečamo. Njegovo delo ter njegova pokončna in plemenita osebnost bodo za vedno ostali v našem spominu.

Dragi Tone, počivaj v miru. Družini in svojcem v imenu sodelavcev fakultete izrekam iskreno sožalje.

R R R R R R R R

Anastasia Barone

Ana Kralj, Tanja Renner, Vesna Leskošek, Metka Mencin, Mirijana Ule and Slavko Kurdija: Abortion and reproductive rights in Slovenia. A case of resistance. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2024. 158 pp., (ISBN 978-1-03-256152-3), £135.00.

Abortion and Reproductive Rights in Slovenia: A Case of Resistance is a timely and significant contribution to contemporary academic and political discussions on reproductive rights. Initially published in Slovenian in 2021 and now translated and adapted into English, the volume arrives at a particularly contentious moment, with abortion rights facing renewed threats globally, including the US Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In this context, Slovenia serves as an important case study, offering lessons about how reproductive rights can be defended against the conservative backlash.

The book provides a comprehensive examination of the evolution of sexual and reproductive rights in Slovenia where the right to abortion is secured in the Constitution, and despite persistent challenges, has maintained its robust legal protection. The book illustrates Slovenia's broader 'resistance' to efforts aimed at restricting access to abortion. The authors not only offer an in-depth look at Slovenia's history but also draw parallels with global trends concerning reproductive rights and the movements that seek to protect them.

In the first chapter, Vesna Leskošek traces the origins of the abortion rights movement in Slovenia, beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when women's journals first addressed reproductive autonomy. The chapter then considers the evolution of reproductive rights in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: major milestones include the 1969 General Law on the Termination of Pregnancy and the 1974 Constitution, which recognised the right to decide freely concerning childbirth. This historical account extends beyond the right to abortion, exploring related issues such as contraception, family planning services, and sex education, reflecting the broader socialist programme for the emancipation of women.

In Chapter 2, Metka Mencin examines the shifting political landscape in the 1980s and 1990s, focusing on how nationalist movements used concerns with declining birth rates to challenge women's reproductive autonomy. As Yugoslavia dissolved and Slovenia attained independence, conservative and nationalist forces increasingly targeted abortion. Pronatalist policies began to emerge, linking women's roles to reproduction of the nation. In a compelling analysis, Mencin illustrates how the threats to abortion rights formed part of a broader attack on the socialist legacy, framed as undermining the "natural essence" of women. The author takes a closer look at the debates within the Constitutional Commission on abortion that unfolded after Slovenia's independence in 1991. After harsh discussions, Article 55 guaranteed that everyone shall be free to

decide whether to bear children. While the article did not explicitly mention abortion, an explanatory memorandum accompanying the article unequivocally clarified that it included it.

Despite constitutional protection, attempts to undermine reproductive rights persisted in the decades following independence. In Chapter 3, Ana Kralj and Tanja Renner investigate these ongoing threats, such as proposals to remove abortion from state-funded healthcare and introduce policies aimed at reducing women's reproductive choices. The authors analyse the strategies employed by anti-abortion movements, which have adapted to the legal protections for abortion by operating outside formal political channels. For example, the Catholic Church has supported secular-sounding civil society organisations that promote anti-choice agendas. This strategy mirrors broader efforts by the Vatican to challenge gender equality and reproductive rights globally, often cloaking moral arguments in the language of cultural preservation. At the same time, feminist and LGBTQ+ activists have mobilised to resist these threats, although they face considerable challenges, including limited funding and organisational instability. Kralj and Renner delve into the contradictions of professionalisation within feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, which can bring resources and stability yet may also compromise autonomy and grassroots energy. Chapter 4 thus offers valuable insights into the strategies and challenges of feminist organising in Slovenia, particularly in the face of growing conservative forces. The authors show that while legal protections remain intact, the ongoing threats to reproductive rights call for constant vigilance and activism.

In the last chapter, Mirjana Ule and Slavko Kurdiija turn to public opinion and show that Slovenia ranks among the highest in Europe in support for abortion rights, with levels similar to those found in Scandinavian countries. Such data underscore the widespread public support for reproductive autonomy, even as political and religious forces continue to challenge it. The authors present statistical data which suggests a robust culture of support for reproductive rights, a factor that has helped sustain these rights in the face of opposition. However, they caution that public opinion alone is not enough to guarantee long-term protection, especially in an era when conservative movements are becoming more sophisticated in their tactics.

Abortion and Reproductive Rights in Slovenia offers several key contributions to the study of reproductive rights and social movements. The book provides an extremely rich examination of the Slovenian case, which highlights the specific nature of the country compared to other former socialist countries. At the same time, the analysis of the case provides valuable insights that enrich the study of reproductive rights and gender politics beyond the country's specific features. Indeed, the book is an essential contribution to the study of both past and present developments in the field of reproductive rights in Slovenia, underlining how the distinct local history intertwines with broader global trends.

The book also contributes to the study of contentious gender politics by offering a thorough examination of how women's reproductive rights become the instrumental target of different political ideologies and discourses: From the ambiguous, albeit emancipatory socialist policies promoting women's employment and supporting women's reproductive

rights in the light of a broader discourse about workers, to nationalist discourses that frame women as biological gatekeepers of the nation and view abortion as a deviance from women's natural essence. Therefore, the book shows how reproductive rights, notably abortion, have constituted a public battleground for broader ideological struggles. The analysis of how anti-communist politics challenging the emancipatory legacy of socialism framed its discourse as going against "communist abortion culture" (p. 59) is a vital contribution of the book.

Further, the book offers a rich examination of feminist and LGBTQ+ groups in Slovenia and the challenges they face nowadays. On one hand, the analysis of feminist and LGBTQ+ activists' networks shows how alliances and coalitions have been crucial for countering anti-choice initiatives and protecting reproductive rights and, on the other, considers the difficulties of the precarious and often ephemeral life of these groups. In this regard, the book also adds to the study of feminist movements in the context of the conservative backlash.

Finally, the book provides important insights into the strategies of anti-abortion actors in circumstances where the right to abortion is legally protected by the Constitution. It examines how these actors present themselves as concerned citizens, masking their political agendas, a tactic that mirrors similar trends in other countries. This analysis contributes to a broader understanding of anti-choice and anti-gender movements in Europe, revealing the subtle ways these groups navigate legal frameworks to advance their ideological goals.

In conclusion, *Abortion and Reproductive Rights in Slovenia: A Case of Resistance* offers a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the historical and contemporary struggles surrounding reproductive rights in Slovenia. The book's insights into the evolving political and social contexts that shape these debates make it an essential resource for scholars and activists alike. While it documents the ongoing threats to reproductive rights, it also points out the resistance of the movements that continue to fight for reproductive rights in an ever more hostile global landscape.

Tjaša Učakar

Niko Toš, Peter Klinar: Sociologija in teorija mednarodnih migracij. Ljubljana: Založba FDV, 2023. 796 str., (ISBN 9789612950477), 35 EUR

»Migracije so trajna sestavina družbene resničnosti« (str. 9), v pojasnjevalni *Prolegomeni* poudari Niko Toš in s tem poda osnovni vrednotni okvir celotnega dela. Širok naslov na prvi pogled bralca vodi v mišljenje, da je pred njim sistematičen, pregleden popis horizonta socioloških teorij mednarodnih migracij. A že prelet kazala in Toševe uvodne besede pojasnijo, da gre za precej drugačno teoretsko široko delo, ki pa témo mednarodnih migracij naslavlja od spodaj, prek konkretnih raziskav, po induktivni metodi, od posameznega k splošnemu. Dejansko gre za spise, ki so nastajali v sedemdesetih in osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja v okviru raziskovanja vključenosti Slovencev in Slovenk v tokove mednarodnih migracij, ključni osrednji del knjige pa so Klinarjeve teorije mednarodnih migracij, ki so s svojo sistematiko, tehtnostjo obravnave, širino vključene literature in virov ter izvirnostjo dognanj v sedemdesetih in osemdesetih letih slovensko raziskovanje migracij umeščale ob bok evropski in svetovni migracijski literaturi.

V uvodnem delu Niko Toš začrta zgodovinski kontekst raziskovanja migracij v 20. stoletju, torej v obdobju, »ko se ljudje, socialne skupine, celo narodi, na videz po svoji volji, dejansko pa bolj ali manj prisilno, premikajo, se selijo, naseljujejo v nova okolja, predvsem zaradi preživetja« (str. 21). Migracije torej Toš takoj v uvodu izpostavi kot družbeni pojav, ki vedno vsebuje vsaj majhen element prisile, kar je ključno osnovno izhodišče vrednotnega umeščanja migracijskih vprašanj; in podmena, ki v aktualnih migracijskih politikah pogosto umanjka. Toša zanimajo predvsem delovna migrantstva in begunstvo, pa tudi mehka meja med pojmi selitve, preseljevanja in pri- oziroma izseljevanja. Avtor se po polju razvoja migracijskih teorij sprehaja izjemno sistematično in natančno. Začne v 19. stoletju s Simmelovo teorijo tujstva, nadaljuje s konceptom horizontalne mobilnosti, ki je v šestdesetih letih dopolnila pomen vertikalne mobilnosti. Medtem ko slednja pomeni premik po lestvici socialne stratifikacije, horizontalna mobilnost pomeni premik v prostoru, sprememba družbenega prostora, pri čemer pa se že pojavljajo ekonomska motivacija ter različni procesi prilagajanja med migranti in okolji priselitve. Avtor v tem sistematičnem pregledu vsak novi vsebinski fokus analiz migracijskih študij, ki se je skozi stoletje pojavil, umesti v širši družbeni kontekst ter ga tako osmisli, kar je pomemben znanstveni doprinos pričujočega dela in relevantno branje za vse, ki se danes ukvarjajo z vprašanji migracij. Razumevanje geneze znanstvenega diskurza raziskovanja migracij namreč omogoča marsikateri uvid v današnje navidezno nasprotujoče si diskurze zapiranja, zamejevanja in humanitarne, solidarne pomoči. Avtor tako tematizira vznik begunstva kot fokusa raziskovanja, ki se pojavi šele v postmigrantski družbi, torej družbi, kjer že sobivajo heterogene skupine »domačinov« in »imigrantov« (str. 53). Postmigrantska družba ne pomeni družbe v času, ko migracij več ni, temveč

raziskovalno osredotočenost na družbo kot celoto, ne le na njene migrantske segmente. V tem kontekstu niso več ključne delitve glede na izvor in migracijsko ozadje, ampak so ključni položaj in odnosi v družbi priselitive, kjer migrantski status posameznika ni odločujoči dejavnik socialnega umeščanja. V tem kontekstu avtor razpravlja o novih pristopih v migracijskem raziskovanju, kot so integracijski paradoks, interkultura, večinska manjšinska družba, generacija miks, paralelna družba, védenje o migracijah ipd. Vsak pojem razloži v smislu njegove geneze in umeščenosti v aktualno raziskovanje na polju migracij.

Toševemu prispevku sledi obsežen osrednji del knjige, ki je namenjen dvema ključnima spisoma Petra Klinarja, s katerima je slovensko migracijsko raziskovanje postavil ob bok svetovnemu. Prvi zvezek iz leta 1974 se osredotoča na odnose med imigrantsko družbo in imigrantskimi skupnostmi, pri čemer se opira na razredno teorijo. Avtor razvije hipotezo, da so odnosi med imigrantsko etnično manjšino in dominantno večino »v bistvu razredni odnosi, saj gredo imigrantom – izhajajoč iz dimenzije družbene moči – v imigrantskih družbah po večini t. i. negativne avtoritarne vloge, torej vloge podrejenosti« (str. 97). Druga Klinarjeva knjiga, *Mednarodne migracije v kriznih razmerah*, ki je nastala dobro desetletje po prvi, leta 1987, se ukvarja z vedno bolj razširjenimi krizami in konflikti glede migracijskih vprašanj. Kot zapiše Klinar, »migracijska politika se je spremenila; vse manj pomembna je migracijska politika emigrantskih družb in vse bolj prevladuje enostranska migracijska politika imigrantskih družb« (str. 101). Oba Klinarjeva spisa sta s časovne distance in v današnjih razmerah precej zaostrenega antiimigracijskega diskurza v Evropi še toliko bolj aktualna, saj ponujata sistematičen pregled teorij, konceptov in družbenih področij, pregled procesov in odnosov med imigrantsko družbo in imigrantskimi etničnimi skupnostmi ter tako obračata pogled od trenutnih konfliktov in sovražnosti na osnovna vprašanja motivov migriranja ter procesov, ki se pri tem sproščajo med skupnostjo migrantov in domačinov.

Tretji del knjige je namenjen pregledu obsežne empirične sociološke raziskave migracij na primeru izseljevanja Slovencev v Nemčijo. Objavljena je dejanska projektna dokumentacija, prikaz celotne operacionalizacije projekta, vključno z vsemi vprašalniki in izbranimi podatki iz raziskave. Gre za izjemen vpogled v dejansko empirično raziskavo, kar je v splošno dostopni literaturi redkega fenomena. Avtorje raziskave je v sedemdesetih letih pritegnila dvoumnost državnega odnosa do emigracij/imigracij. Po eni strani je bila emigracija videna kot nasprotje patriotizma, a je bila po tistem sprejeta kot izhod v sili v zaposlitveni krizi, nato pa celo sistemsko podprta v obliki delovne emigracije. A ostajal je diskurz o »naših delavcih na začasnem delu v tujini« (str. 600); torej s predpostavko vrnitve v domovino, ki pa se ni vedno uresničila. Ta odhajanja so imela trajne končne posledice za družbi izselitve in priselitve, in natanko to si je ta raziskava zadala, da razišče. Interes družbe, ki je desetletja gradila socializem, »ki je normativno in deklarativno zgrajen na človeku-delavcu in na ravni sistema na delavskem samoupravljanju«, nato pa svoje delavce pošiljala v tujino, je raziskovalna skupina zaznala kot prvi znak krize družbenega sistema. Izvedli so empirične raziskave med Slovenci v Nemčiji, med Slovenci, povratniki iz Nemčije, in med pari. Zaključno poročilo predstavlja Klinarjev spis *O mednarodnih migracijah v kriznih razmerah*. Skozi leta so ugotovili naraščanje

obsega prisilnih remigracij in razrast konfliktnih odnosov med remigranti in nemigranti v emigracijskih družbah. Kot glavno gonilo kriznih razmer Klinar izpostavi »neusklajenost med ekonomsko adaptacijo imigrantov in akulturacijskimi procesi, ki zaostajajo pod vplivom diskriminacije« (str. 615) – ugotovitev, ki je še kako aktualna tudi danes v 21. stoletju.

Delo Toša in Klinarja ima ambiciozen naslov in res je, da na prvi vtis zavede. A naslov zavaja v pozitivno smer, saj knjiga dejansko ponudi veliko več, kot obljublja naslov. Gre za dokument nekega časa, ki pa ne izgubi niti drobca na aktualnosti. Klinarjeva spisa ponujata celovit teoretski pregled širokega sociološkega spektra migracijskega raziskovanja, ki je še kako aktualen za razumevanje današnjega sveta, ki ga bolj kot kdaj koli prečijo vprašanja izseljenstva, priseljevanja, delovnih migracij, begunstva ipd. Na drugi strani pa celovit popis empirične raziskave izseljencev iz Slovenije v Nemčijo predstavlja edinstven vpogled v drobne obsežne sociološke empirične raziskave, za katero danes, v poplavi hiperprodukcije in kratkoročnega projektnega financiranja, ni na voljo ne časa ne finančnih virov.

Marko Hočevár

**Tibor Rutar: Capitalism for realists:
Virtues and vices of the modern economy.
London: Routledge, 2023.
188 p., (ISBN 978-1-032-30592-9), £35.99.**

The questions of how capitalism works, the analysis of the benefits and drawback of the market, and the specific social, economic and political outcomes of capitalism have been considered by numerous different authors over the last century. Is there anything new left to say about capitalism and its strengths and weaknesses? In his very interesting and provocative book *Capitalism for realists: Virtues and vices of the modern economy*, Tibor Rutar shows us that many things which we thought we know about how capitalism, markets and governments function and the social and economic outcomes of capitalism do not necessarily hold true. His unique approach of combining different theoretical traditions – his attempt is to combine some Marxist insights with libertarian approaches within the rational choice paradigm – lead him to uncover a host of very interesting details about capitalism.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first one initially presents some historical data concerning the development of capitalism. Rutar shows how the interest in and affinity with Marxism and critical approaches to capitalism have not disappeared, notwithstanding the positive effects that the spreading of the market has brought in the last three decades: with declines in extreme poverty, child and infant mortality rates, and inequalities. He devotes a lot of time to explaining which insights of Marxism (relying on reinterpretations within Analytical Marxism and scholars like Cohen, Elster and Wright) are either empirically false or have serious theoretical and explanatory limitations. Rutar goes on to present some of Marxist theoretical insights as correct, although he claims that these are not distinctively Marxist. He then presents his synthesis of some Marxist insights with public choice theory, stressing the rational calculation behind political and economic actors' decisions and actions, which makes it not so dissimilar from specific Marxist assumptions about how actors function.

In the second chapter, Rutar discusses the specificities and exceptional nature of capitalist economic growth while critically analysing manner three different cultural interpretations of the transition from feudalism to capitalism (theories of Weber, Henrich, and Mokyr) and drawing on statistical data. In the second part of the chapter, Rutar follows a materialist explanation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism relying on Marxist historical sociology, institutional economy, and historiography. He argues that the transition was quite a unique occurrence in England in the 15th and 16th centuries, while it had much to do with the economic and structural changes and the interests of the main actors.

In Chapter 3, the author discusses some economic consequences of capitalism, especially concentrating on poverty and the discussion between Jason Hickel and Max

Roser regarding poverty in capitalism and precapitalist societies arguing against their thesis and showing that capitalism actually reduces extreme poverty. From here, he argues that exploitation does exist in capitalism but, instead of using the Marxist theory of value or other concepts, Rutar stays within the framework of rational choice theory and mainstream economics. He contends that even though capitalism actually “tames exploitation”, it can structurally never completely do away with it. Finally, Rutar looks at wealth and income inequality trends in different countries and regions and also on various levels: world inequality, and between- and within-country inequality.

Chapter 4 focuses on specific problems with neoliberalism. He questions whether the world has become more neoliberal in the last four to five decades and, if so, has this led to certain problematic social and economic outcomes. The author also discusses the Washington Consensus and the literature on the effects of it while detecting that it had little impact on growth prior to 2000 and an important impact after 2000. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the relationship between capitalism and political democracy where Rutar compares the arguments and statements of Milton Friedman with the insights of Marxist and more critical theories.

In Chapter 5, Rutar combines his analysis of capitalism and neoliberalism especially with the insights of psychology, behavioural economics and international relations. He considers several negative impacts of neoliberalism and market imperatives and shows that according to the most recent data it can hardly be argued that neoliberalism leads to more aggressiveness, selfishness and mistrust. He point outs that, according to recent scholarship, small government size – as one of the indicators of neoliberalism – does negatively correlate with trust. Despite these results, Rutar concludes the chapter by claiming that, usually and pervasively, capitalism and neoliberalism have had a positive impact on pro-social outcomes.

In the last chapter, Chapter 6, Rutar discusses the capitalism–environmental crisis relationship. He shows that capitalism per se is not the sole problem but it is especially the levels of industrial production and industry, while arguing that the environmental aspect is one of those that resembles well the mixture of capitalism, which contains “many virtues that are ignored, denied, or down-played by its critics, and it embodies quite a few vices one would not know about if one only listened to the most passionate proponents of capitalism” (p. 161). He stresses that although the climate crisis is a serious problem, no degrowth or other unspecified alternative can do better than capitalism does, while stressing that it is not the countries pursuing capitalism which have been the reason for these developments, and that real-socialist countries have also followed quite an unecological path.

The book has a very strong empirical basis and is filled with different data that shed light on the more global picture of capitalism and neoliberalism, while also focusing on some more micro details. However, when reading his arguments carefully, especially some of his theoretical conclusions, a few contradictions appear. Below, I will reflect on one of those.

Rutar presents a strange argument in the introductory chapter where he first discredits some of the original Marxist insights regarding capitalism because they are determined

to be false, while some others, which according to him are correct, he discredits as not original or not unique, hence making Marxism a paradigm which has very little to offer today and should be seriously questioned and in the last instance abandoned because the only true claims of Marxism are not really specifically Marxist. Yet, if some of the insights of Marxism (such as that the state typically functions in line with the interests of the capitalist class, or that there is class antagonism in society, that exploitation exists, the separation of the economic sphere from the political, just to name some of those that Rutar refers to) are also taken up by other theoretical schools, one should actually question whether this is actually not evidence of the strength and not the weakness of Marxism. Is it not that the others who have taken up the arguments of Marxism have very little to offer to us and hence we should abandon or at least seriously question them, not Marxism?

Rutar's approach is special and deserves credit for the theoretical reflections and especially for gathering and presenting such strong empirical datasets. It opens up many new questions with respect to inequalities, poverty, functioning of the markets, the environmental crisis etc. and gives a fresh perspective on how to think about capitalism as it functions in reality. One only has to question the validity of some of his theoretical assumptions and conclusions in the light of the different possibilities and individual preferences, which do not necessarily speak about the strengths and weaknesses of a specific theoretical stream.

Igor Jurekovič

Olivier Roy: Je Evropa krščanska?

Ljubljana: Založba Krtina, 2023.

148 str., (ISBN: 978-961-260-158-4), 22 EUR

Se spomnite škandala, ko je trgovska veriga Lidl z linije grških izdelkov blagovne znamke Eridanous, na katerih je slovita panorama otoka Santorini, s pravoslavnih cerkva izbrisala križe? Čeprav smo morda ob takratnem rohnenju medijev, kakršen je Nova24TV (2017), le zamahnili z roko in zavili z očmi, nas Oliver Roy v knjigi *Je Evropa krščanska?* želi opozoriti, da pri takšnih primerih ne gre za nebodigatreba občutljivost konservativnih Evropejcev, marveč da v ozadju tovrstnih razprav brbota nič manj kot »kriza evropske kulture« ali »kriza definicije evropske identitete in mesta religije« (str. 13), ki po avtorju izhaja iz preprostega vprašanja: kakšno mesto ima religija v evropskem javnem prostoru?

Francoski politolog Olivier Roy je znan preučevalec islama. Zaslovel je delom *Globalizirani islam* (2007) – prevedeno je tudi v slovenščino – v katerem je prepričljivo dokazoval, da sodobnih pojavov radikalnega islamskega fundamentalizma ne gre razumeti kot znamenja zaostalosti, temveč izrazite sodobnosti islama. V svojem najnovejšem delu je ostrino analize uperil v sociološko dokaj obrabljeno tematiko evropskega odnosa med krščanstvom in sekularizacijo. Ob priznavanju neizpodbitnih krščanskih korenin Evrope avtorjevo izhodišče sestoji iz danes poznane dejstva, da Evropa ni več v osrčju krščanstva, da bi nato na dobrih 140 straneh odgovoril na vprašanje, ali je krščanstvo še v osrčju Evrope.

Roy na majhnem prostoru zavidljivo spretno stke zgodovino krščanstva v Evropi od protestantske reformacije pa vse do sodobnih odločitev Evropskega sodišča za človekove pravice, ki se tičejo urejanja religije. Avtor za glavnega igralca te zgodovinske drame izbere Katoliško cerkev, s katero pokaže na oklevajoče prilagajanje krščanstva modernizmu, ki je vrhunec doživelo z drugim vatikanskim koncilom (1962–1965). Toda zgolj tri leta kasneje je papež Pavel VI. izdal encikliko *Humanae vitae*, s katero se je po Royu zoperstavil »antropološkemu prelomu« (str. 71) šestdesetih let. Katoliška cerkev je z encikliko vzpostavila sistem vrednot, ki je utemeljen na vprašanju spolnosti in družine zavračal »vrednote svobode in hedonizma« (str. 80). Roy ta sistem vrednot prepozna kot temelj cerkvenih odnosov z državo in civilno družbo v prihodnjih desetletjih.

Sledi argumentacijsko jedro, v katerem Roy prav gotovo najbolj blesti. V njem dokazuje, da se je evropsko krščanstvo v minulih letih bodisi samosekulariziralo, kar naj bi bilo značilno za evropski protestantizem, bodisi je žrtev sekularizacije od zunaj, kar je privedlo do preobrazbe krščanstva iz religije v identiteto, kar odlično ponazarja nedavna izjava slavnega ateista in biologa Richarda Dawkinsa, ki se je oklical za kulturnega kristjana. Roy uspe prepričljivo dokazovati, da k sekularizaciji paradoksalno prispeva tako Katoliška cerkev sama kakor tudi raznovrstni desničarski populist – bodisi s poskusi rehabilitacije krščanskih znamenj v javnem prostoru, ki izpraznjeni religije obstanejo

kot neposrečeni označevalci folklore, bodisi s proti islamu uperjenimi sodnimi pregoni, ki zgolj poglobljajo nadvlado sekularne normativnosti nad religijskimi zadevami.

Pri tem Roy ponudi vrsto izjemnih primerov – naj izpostavim dva. V prvem Roy okrca francoske populistične identitarce, ki so v promocijo krščanstva organizirali javna uživanja svinjskih klobas in rdečega vina. Čeprav je tarča namere očitna – islam – takšni populisti obenem delajo karikaturu evharistije, s čimer nevede uničujejo tisto, kar naj bi promovirali. V drugem pa avtor izpostavi primer bavarskega notranjega ministra, ki je leta 2018 zahteval javno izobešanje razpel v vseh vladnih stavbah kot izraz bavarske družbene in kulturne identitete. Na uredbo se je mdr. ostro odzval kardinal in Münchenski nadškof Reinhard Marx, ki je dejal, da če na križ gledamo kot na kulturni simbol, potem ga očitno ne razumemo (str. 117). Roy tako v odgovoru na naslovno vprašanje odkima – in obenem prikima. Sklene, da Evropa, če želi biti krščanska, »potrebuje preroke, ne zakonodajalcev« (str. 141). V luči brbotajočega krščanstva na globalnem jugu v zaključku smelo doda, da je »pri prerokih nevarno to, da jih ni tam, kjer jih pričakujemo« (prav tam).

Občudujoča širokopoteznost pa se kakopak izkaže za dvorezni meč. Royu se namreč pripeti kar nekaj spodrslijav, ki jih sicer ne gre razumeti kot usodne za končno izpeljavo. Tako npr. beremo, da naj bi se papež Benedikt XVI. leta 2004 zavzemal za omembo krščanskih korenin v preambuli Evropske ustave (str. 9), čeprav je takrat še papeževal Janez Pavel II. Po drugi strani ustanovitev slavnega Alfa tečaja krščanstva pripiše katoličanom (str. 89), čeprav je plod dela anglikanskega in evangelijskega duhovnika Nickyja Gumbela. Podatkovnim napakam gre prišteti še nekaj splošnejših kritičnih opažanj. Prvič, avtorjev zapis, da je protestantska reformacija »razbila univerzalnost Katoliške cerkve« (str. 22), bo po eni strani verjetno presenetila pravoslavne kristjane, po drugi strani pa sprožila pomisleke, ali se Roy nemara ne posveča predvsem zahodni Evropi. Drugič, čeprav je z vidika preučevanja odnosa med religijo in državo osredotočenje na Katoliško cerkev morda razumljivo, obrobje, na katerega so postavljene številne protestantske cerkve, vendarle pušča grenak priokus. Avtor jih na stranski tir analize postavi rekoč, da so se samosekularizirale, s čimer so boj zoper sekularnost prepustile Katoliški cerkvi. Toda pri tem ne ponudi natančnega odgovora na vprašanje, zakaj naj bi npr. danska državna cerkev, ki priznava tako istospolne poroke kakor tudi istospolni kler, nujno veljala za sekularizirano. Ali obratno: zakaj naj bi religijsko bilo zgolj katoliško vztrajanje pri prepovedi splava? Čeprav Roy zapiše, da se bo v knjigi posvečal *sociološki* sekularizaciji, s katero meri na upad udeležbe pri krščanskem bogoslužju, bralstvu ostane nepojasnjeno, zakaj naj bi ravno ta lastnost označevala sekularnost.

Žal pa Roy ni edini, ki si sem ter tja privošči spodrslijaj. Čeprav smo slovenski religiologi od slovenjenja angleškega izraza *religion* s slovenskim *vera* praktično že povsem otopleli, vendarle velja znova opozoriti, da se pri takšnem prevajanju pripeti *konceptualna* zmešnjava. Religiologija v zadnjih desetletjih kar kipi od študij, ki dokazujejo, da sta *vera* (ang. *faith*) in verovanje (ang. *belief*) neprimerni sopomenki za obči koncept religije, saj sta oblikovani na podlagi osredinjenja (primerjalne) religiologije na krščanstvu. To je privedlo do analitično neopravičljivega abstrahiranja *partikularnih* krščanskih pojmov na mesto *univerzalnih* kategorij religijskih pojavov.

Toda na našo nesrečo se kategorične napake pri prevajanju nadaljujejo pri nepoznavanju razlik med *evangeličani* in *evangelijci*. Prve v naših krajih običajno poznamo tudi kot luterane, saj gre za neposredne dediče reformacije, ki se združujejo v Evangeličanski cerkvi augsburške veroizpovedi. Nemara najbolj znani slovenski evangeličan je tudi njihov prvi superintendent – Primož Trubar. V tej luči je dokaj nerodno brati, da so »evangeličanski protestanti« na polje evropske »verske prenov« stopili v »80. letih 20. stoletja« in da jih »preteklost sploh ne zanima« (str. 11). V resnici je v tem primeru govor o drugi skupini protestantov, tj. o evangelijcih, ki jih poznamo kot protestantske skupnosti, ki so se v Združenih državah Amerike razmahnile predvsem v 19. in 20. stoletju. Evangelijci so verjetno najbolj poznani po entuziastičnih slavljenjih, spretni uporabi digitalnih medijev in zagrizenem evangeliziranju. Mednje npr. štejemo baptiste – v Sloveniji poznamo kar nekaj baptističnih evangelijskih skupnosti, kakršna je npr. Evangelijska krščanska cerkev – in binkoštnike, ki se pri nas združujejo v raznovrstne Binkošne cerkve. Čeprav gre v vseh primerih za protestantizem, je njihovo razlikovanje izrednega pomena. Vendar tovrstnih napak ne želim pripisati niti prevajalki niti uredništvu, temveč vsesplošni religijski nepismenosti, na katero opozori tudi avtor (str. 69–70).

Ne glede na vse zapisano je knjiga dobrodošel opomnik strokovni in občji javnosti, da je dandanes religija še kako pomemben pojav, vreden naše pozornosti – ne zgolj v obliki esejističnega mnenja, kakršno je pričujoče delo, temveč tudi v obliki podrobnih analiz. Le želimo si lahko, da bi slovensko družboslovno in humanistično založništvo prepoznalo sušo, ki vlada na področju religioloških prevodov. Do rodovitnejšega časa pa si bomo z delom *Je Evropa krščanska?* lahko zadovoljivo potešili žejo po sodobnih razpravah o pomenu religije.

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Primož Krašovec

James M. Robertson: *Mediating Spaces. Literature, Politics and the Scale of Yugoslav Socialism, 1870–1995.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2024. 304 p., (ISBN 978-0-2280-2137-7), CAD 110

Although I personally remember him as a darling of the post-Yugoslav new-left intellectual social circles when he was still doing research on his PhD on a Belgrade-Zagreb-Ljubljana axis in the early 2010s, James M. Robertson has since become a widely published scholar of some stature. He is currently teaching at the School of Humanities at University, Irvine, USA and researching the intersections of geopolitics and cultural politics in the history of Eastern European and especially Balkan socialism(s).

His *Mediating spaces* reads like the work of an accomplished historian with none of the flaws usually associated with debut books: its central thesis is highly original and intriguing; it is of just the right length without unnecessary digressions or polemics; it is expertly composed and organised; and it is accessible to a wider readership without sacrificing analytical rigour or historical detail. It is readable without being superficial, short (for a work of history) without being shallow, and written in a very engaging style that is never tendentious.

Given Robertson's commitment to socialist politics, the choice of topic and historical period considered in the book are hardly surprising. The author's politics serve as a guiding light that uncovers a crucial dimension of proto-Yugoslav and Yugoslav socialist history that is often overlooked in standard historiography, which typically focuses on either its national (multiethnic state building) or its global (its complicated relations to the Eastern and Western blocks, the Non-Aligned Movement) scale, a supranational dimension in between the national and the global or, as Robertson calls it, mediating spaces, which is also the titular main concept of the book.

So, what are mediating spaces? For Robertson, they present a geopolitical frame for South-East European socialist national self-determination movements in the late 19th and the 20th century. They are supranational (more than national, less than global) (geo) political spaces in which the complicated power relations characterising the history of the Balkan region were and continue to be mediated. Attention to this supranational dimension in Balkan socialist politics emerged from the realisation that – given the region's history of being divided between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires that lasted until the end of the First World War – Balkan nations cannot become truly independent and begin to develop alternative forms of socialist economy and society on a national scale alone as that would mean that they would remain too weak and easy prey for the newly emerging imperial powers of the 20th century on one hand and the accelerating global capitalist processes on the other. Moreover, given that the Balkan region was historically a patchwork of subjugated imperial provinces, regional socialist movements neither could nor wanted to make the Balkans into a global imperial power. Instead,

the idea of a Balkan federation as a mediating space able to transcend ethnic primordialism and give the Balkan nations enough leeway to construct a socialist alternative was becoming increasingly influential in Balkan progressive circles during the final crisis and collapse of the *ancien regime* empires.

Starting from this early idea of a Balkan federation, the book then traces its (per) mutations during the long 20th century that, in book's periodisation, lasts from the early Serbian socialism of the 1870s to the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its wars in the 1990s. In Robertson's highly original (re)interpretation, Yugoslav socialism does not start with the Yugoslav Communist Party nor with the Second World War partisan resistance movement, but with a new spatial awareness and regional politics of the late 19th century (his case study is a close examination of discussions within the Serbian social democracy) and a reimagination of the Balkans not as the backwaters of Europe but as a vanguard in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

This new awareness came into full bloom in the 1920s with the explicitly anti-European orientation of both the Yugoslav Communist Party as well as the literary avantgarde. In the interwar period, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia became a very sensitive geopolitical site, sandwiched between European restoration after the demise of the old empires and Russia's post-revolutionary geopolitical ambitions. In this situation, socialist politics continued to be imagined and practised in a supranational space, mediated by the global geopolitical power struggles, and the Balkans continued to be understood as a positive alternative to Europe and a key site of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist resistance. After the intense political repression of the Communist Party, socialist politics retreated into culture and avantgarde writers like Krleža, Micić and Kosovel demystified Europe as a supposed beacon of freedom and progress and instead presented it as a declining and corrupt hotbed of war, imperialist oppression, capitalist exploitation as well as ethnic and cultural chauvinism.

In the context of positioning the Balkans vs. Europe, Robertson also provides a very innovative reading of the famous dispute about the Yugoslav literary left during the 1930s, whose mainstream textbook interpretation is that it was a falling out between modernist defenders of the notion of artistic autonomy on one side and social realist defenders of explicit political tendentiousness on the other. For Robertson though, the dispute was more about rival strategies of cultural development and the scale on which this development should take place, whereby social literature neglected the spatial scale and tried to integrate Yugoslav culture into a seemingly frictionless global counter-hegemonic cultural project, while its critics emphasised the spatial scale and contradictory regional power relations. In this sense, social literature represented a kind of abstract cultural internationalism and was opposed by more spatially sensitive and concrete supranational cultural strategies. Robertson demonstrates this with a thorough study of the role of the periphery and provincialism in Krleža's writing.

Later on, commencing with a brief period of rapprochement with Europe during the 1930s' popular front phase of the Yugoslav Communist Party, whereby Europe was imagined as a civilised ally against oncoming fascist barbarism, the idea of a Balkan federation as a mediating space gradually fell out of favour. During the Stalinist period

of Yugoslav socialism in the 1940s, it was replaced by a mediating space of racially conceived Slavism, whereas after Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union a Third-World-focused non-aligned mediating space took centre stage. In the 1980s, supranational mediating spaces were abandoned and replaced by ethnic nationalism, culminating in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. However, the Balkans as a mediating space flared up briefly in the writings of two key critical intellectuals of the 1980s: Matvejević, who integrated the Balkans with Asia and Africa in a mediating space of the Mediterranean; and Ugrešić, who defended the vision of cosmopolitan Yugoslavia vs. the parochial notion of Central Europe, beloved by the concurrent anti-communist dissidents.

To conclude in the present: in the 21st century Balkans, a dominant geopolitical programme is the integration of nation states into the EU and mediating spaces have no place in official state politics. Yet, on the political margins there is a new awareness of the neoliberal reality of the EU that defies its official narratives of peace, unity and progress, as well as a critique of the EU's collusion in the new imperialism(s) and *Mediating spaces*, with its rare and precious combination of literary sensitivity, broad historical perspective and political engagement, will definitely not go unnoticed here.

Gorazd Kovačič

Tomaž Mastnak: Civilna družba.

Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2023.

219 str., (ISBN 978-961-05-0799-4), 12 EUR

Tomaž Mastnak je bil v osemdesetih letih preteklega stoletja v središču opozicijskega gibanja in kulture. Imel je vodilno vlogo pri njegovi teoretski osmislitvi, stikih z drugimi vzhodnoevropskimi disidentskimi gibanji in (po njihovem zgledu) tudi pri njegovem samopomenovanju kot civilne družbe. Kmalu po izteku takratnega gibanja in preusmeritvi njegovih akterjev v oblastne strukture, privatizacijske posle, akademske kariere ali desničarstvo je Mastnak v knjigi *Vzhodno od raja: civilna družba pod komunizmom in po njem* korenito revidiral, kaj je gibanje počelo, kako in s pomočjo katerih pojmovnih okvirov in njihovih slepih peg je mislilo družbo, politiko, gospodarstvo in samo sebe ter kakšne transformacije je s tem doživel ohlapni označevalec civilne družbe. Vendar besedilo tiste knjige po avtorjevih besedah ni bilo dovršeno, temveč je šlo za tipkopis v delu, ki ga je urednik objavil brez avtorjevega soglasja. 29 let kasneje se je Mastnak s *Civilno družbo* vrnil h kritiki pojma civilne družbe, ki ga je štiri desetletja prej lansiral v slovenski javni prostor. Tokratna izvedba samokritike je reartikulirana in bistveno bolj zrela kot tista iz leta 1992. Odlikuje jo tudi uporaba številnih virov in literature.

Mastnakova *Civilna družba* paradigmatsko spada v pojmovno zgodovino. Njena osnovna predpostavka je, da pojmi vsebujejo določene predpostavke, fokuse, vrednotenja in spreglede, ki prodrejo v mišljenjski okvir skupaj z rabo določenega pojma, četudi ta v javnih razpravah učinkuje kot plavajoči označevalec. S te perspektive avtor oriše vrsto premen pojma civilne družbe in skozi nje nakaže ideološki horizont družbenih bojov določenega obdobja, pa tudi omejitve intelektualnih artikulacij teh bojov.

Knjiga se začne z zgoščenim poglavjem o izbranih etapah v modernem pojmovanju civilne družbe s poudarkom na škotskih razsvetljencih, ki so jo enačili s tržno, poslovno usmerjeno družbo, na Heglu, ki je poudaril vlogo države pri brzdanju egoističnih in konformističnih teženj v civilni družbi, in na Marxu, ki je državo reducirjal na prisilni aparat vladajočega razreda, vreden ukinitve, in je po Mastnaku s tem prispeval k liberalističnemu razcepu med civilno družbo in državo.

Sledi osrednji del, posvečen ponovnemu odkritju pojma civilne družbe v vzhodnoevropskem disidentskem gibanju pod komunizmom. Avtor kratko, a jedrnato dokumentira razvoj pojma v različnih srednjeevropskih državah in jugoslovanskih republikah ter podrobneje v Sloveniji.

Ena njegovih ključnih ugotovitev je, da so disidenti ponovno odkrili omenjeni pojem skupaj s kritiko socialistične države, z zgodovinskim revizionizmom ter z lastno opustitvijo marksistične teorije in programa reformnega komunizma ali demokratičnega socializma, ki sta predstavljala predhodni okvir znotraj in prosocialistične kritike avtoritarne partijske države. Do sedemdesetih let je intelektualna notranja opozicija uporabljala pojem civilne družbe v okviru svojega zavzemanja za demokratizacijo socializma

(socialistična civilna družba, v Jugoslaviji tudi v navezavi na samoupravljanje). Po zatrtju praške pomladi in študentskega gibanja je nova generacija opozicije oblikovala svoj idejni horizont onstran socializma. Socialistični projekt je izenačila z represijo ter tej nasprotovala z zavzemanjem za človekove in državljske pravice ter za »civilno družbo«. Pri promociji diskurza civilne družbe so sodelovali določeni zahodni intelektualci, ki so vzhodnoevropskim disidentom verificirali produktivnost njihovega ponovno odkritega pojma civilne družbe.

Šibkost protikomunističnih disidentov je bila, da niso poznali in študirali liberalistične tradicije, iz katere izhaja izvorni pojem civilne družbe, zato so spregledali določene političnoteoretske implikacije pojma. Z njegovo pomočjo so si organizirali svojo politično misel okrog nasprotja med represivno državo in med »civilno družbo«. Ta pojem so uporabljali kot nalepko za marsikaj. Tako so menili, da se vzporedne komunikacijske in akcijske mreže za samopomoč lahko imenujejo civilna družba in da je civilna družba kot prostor avtonomnih praks identična z demokracijo. Demokracijo so torej mislili zunaj države, njihov edini program, povezan z državo, pa je bil program omejitve njenih pristojnosti in poseganja. Njihova neposredna tarča je bila konkretna socialistična država, ki so jo pomagali zrušiti, ne da bi hoteli prevzeti oblast, saj jih je zanimala gradnja avtonomnih struktur, se pravi distanciranje od avtoritarne države. Posledica njihovega antietatističnega diskurza je bila, da zatem niso zmogli misliti razkroja države v nacionalizme, v vladavino oligarhije ter materialno, kulturno in politično osiromašenje večine prebivalcev ter v periferno kompradorsko integracijo v globalne proizvodne verige.

Mastnakova osrednja teza je, da je vzhodnoevropsko disidentsko gibanje pod komunizmom prek nerefektiranega ponovnega odkritja pojma civilne družbe uvozilo liberalistični idejni okvir. Žal uvodni del knjige zaradi omejitve obsega ne poseže še nekoliko dlje in podrobneje v novoveško zgodovino pojma kot sestavnega dela nastajajoče liberalne družbene in politične teorije. S tem bi avtor natančneje analiziral, katere liberalne predpostavke so uvozili s ponovnim odkritjem pojma in zakaj je bil to problem na pragu obnove periferne kapitalizma.

Zgodovina pojma bi se lahko začela z Lockom, ki je skozi pojem civilne družbe že v poznem 17. stoletju artikuliral razredne interese nastajajoče buržoazije. Po njegovi drugi *Razpravi o oblasti* so razvita razredna razmerja, prakse in institucije obstajali že v družbi naravnega stanja, civilno družbo kot družbo družbene pogodbe z javno oblastjo pa so ustanovili zavoljo zaščite lastnine tistih, ki jo imajo, pred tistimi, ki je nimajo, potem ko so jo prvi nakopičili v procesih primarne akumulacije oz. razlaščenja in prilaščanja. Kasneje, ko sta se povečala politična moč in samozavest buržoazije, so njeni ideologi razvili pojem civilne družbe v predstavo o sferi, ki lahko deluje avtonomno in samoregulativno, se pravi v zahtevo po vitki državi, reducirani na obrambo in pravosodje. Sredi 19. stoletja, ko se je industrijski korporativni kapital lastniško koncentriral in si podredil državno oblast, pa so buržoazni misleci opustili normativni pojem civilne družbe, saj je ideja avtonomije pred državo postala zanje odveč. Prejšnji liberalni imaginarij civilne družbe kot samoregulativne sfere pa je ponovno vzniknil v funkcionalistični sociologiji in tudi v utopičnih projekcijah marksistov (idealna družba).

Tisto, kar so protikomunistični vzhodnoevropski disidenti ponovno odkrili in zaradi česar je bil že zdavnaj opuščeni pojem civilne družbe zanje spet zanimiv, je bil program avtonomije pred državnimi posegi. Ta okvir je usmerjal njihovo mišljenje politične situacije in njihovih bojov. Z njegovo pomočjo niso mogli misliti države. Obenem jim je diskurz civilne družbe kot postmarksističen diskurz usmerjal pozornost proč ob problemov restavracije kapitalizma. S tem so pripravili teren za skorajšnji neoliberalni program deregulacije, privatizacije in vzpostavitve periferne države.

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Antonija Todić

Brigitte Aulenbacher, Helma Lutz, Ewa Palenga-Möllenberg, Karin Schwiter (eds.): Home Care for Sale: The Transnational Brokering of Senior Care in Europe.

London: SAGE, 2024.

322 p. (ISBN 978-1-5296-8041-6), 70€

The publication of the edited volume *Home Care for Sale: The Transnational Brokering of Senior Care in Europe* is very timely as it reflects on certain challenges faced by most European societies when it comes to providing senior care. Edited by Brigitte Aulenbacher, Helma Lutz, Ewa Palenga-Möllenberg and Karin Schwiter, the book focuses on the complex transnational brokerage of home care, facilitated by the increased marketisation of care and growing demand for care services among the ageing population. Consequently, there has been a proliferation of a wide variety of institutional and individual intermediaries that provide different services to cater to the needs of seniors and their relatives but also foster new forms of social inequality or reinforce existing ones. With contributions from over 20 authors spanning diverse disciplinary perspectives – including sociology, social geography, anthropology, and gender studies – the volume covers an extensive range of countries, as well as the multidirectional mobilities between them. It thus presents a striking mosaic of the arrangements, policies, experiences, and social relations involved in cross-border care in Europe.

The book is divided into five parts. In Part I, *Care Markets, Care Provision, Working Conditions and the Role of Brokering Agencies*, live-in care is examined via the interplay of emerging care markets, welfare states, and the intermediaries that connect employees with employers across transnational value chains. The chapters in this part highlight, on one hand, the role of agencies in formalising home care and transforming care markets, as well as the contradictions arising from their efforts to provide affordable care and decent working conditions while making profits at the same time. This affects business practices in various ways, usually leading agencies to diversify their services and exploit grey zones in regulation (Chapter 3 by Mercille). Yet, on the other hand, informal arrangements remain a crucial element of home care as either a dominant mode of placing care workers through migrants' social networks, as Cvajner describes in Chapter 4, or the hidden underbelly of the formal sector that enables businesses to reap the benefits from various informal agreements between clients and workers.

Part II, *Transnationality, Mobilities, Border Regimes and Global Care Chains*, shifts attention to transnational political economies of care, revealing different aspects of the international division of care across European borders. A prominent feature of care migration in Europe is East–West migration, historically rooted in the division between capitalist and socialist countries and reinforced by EU structures. This gives rise to new patterns of transnational care mobility that also involve semi-peripheral countries as simultaneously sending and receiving migrant carers, as Hrženjak and Breznik (Chapter

7) demonstrate in the case of Slovenia. In Chapter 8, Uhde addresses the highly salient issue of gender inequality stemming from the "extraction" of care from East to West, which brings about a "distorted emancipation" only for those women who benefit from the labour of migrants in the care economy.

Part III, *Worlds Apart: The Household as a Workplace*, as the title suggests, offers an in-depth look at the dynamics within homes employing live-in (migrant) care workers. The specificity of private households functioning as workplaces is especially clear in relation to defining working hours and leisure time. As Giordano (Chapter 11) notes, the lines between work and "mere presence" (p. 168) are often blurred, negatively affecting the remuneration of live-in workers and leaving them with little to no free time. The home, the symbolic and physical space of intimacy and care, is rendered a place of isolation, burnout, and subordination, as Lutz and Benazha (Chapter 15) so vividly demonstrate: "'You live the life of the family'" (p. 227). Although this issue is evident in most chapters, Hussein, Turnpenny and Emberson (Chapter 14) go a step further by providing a useful framework for studying care workers' well-being that lends itself to reuse in future studies.

The hugely important questions of fairness and ethics are further explored in Part IV, *Contested Labour Rights, Fair-Care Initiatives and Labour Organizing*. By examining the Western ideals of "decent" and "just" work, Emunds (Chapter 16) discusses whether live-in home care is, by definition, an unfair arrangement. The commentary is beautifully complemented with a case study of Caritas Switzerland (Chapter 17 by Schwiter and Villalba Kaddour), which consciously tries to organise home care fairly for the (mostly Romanian and Slovak) migrant women working in the sector. Despite the organisation's optimism-inspiring efforts, the authors conclude that "a 'fair' care arrangement requires a considerable number of mobile care workers in addition to the live-in worker to cover the latter's hours and days off. In consequence, live-in care can only ever be a solution for well-off care recipients" (p. 258).

The last part consists of an afterword (Chapter 20 by Peng), which provides a valuable synthesis of individual chapters and reflects on the overarching themes. Given the variety of perspectives, occasional inconsistencies in methods, concepts or terminology can arise across the chapters, which makes this expansive view particularly beneficial. Further, by zooming out from Europe to examine the global stage of care migration it offers a conceptualisation of the uniqueness of the European case presented here, notably in contrast to other major intraregional care chains like those in Asia. While the distinct parts are useful in breaking down this relatively extensive collection into more manageable sections, in all honesty the chapters could be organised in several ways since most of the studies arrive at similar conclusions. After all, senior care is universally quite a physically and emotionally demanding job subject to ongoing social and economic devaluation. Some themes that crop up repeatedly in the volume were mentioned already: informality, leisure vs. work, labour struggles, and workers' well-being. Another such theme is the role of states in shaping transnational markets by way of various interventions, from visa exemptions to labour regulation. In addition, and unsurprisingly, many studies include a perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic (especially Chapter

9 by Ezzedine), which generally revealed or exaggerated practices already in place before its onset.

Overall, this edited volume is an invaluable resource for scholars of the subject, relevant policymakers, and the broader public. With its wealth of empirical examples and theoretical perspectives, it contributes significantly to the debates on care work and care migration. Even though each national context, or transnational care chain, has its specific features, the biggest strength of this volume's approach is that it presents the phenomenon of care migration as deeply transnational and interconnected. At the same time, the many useful models, typologies and frameworks found in the book can no doubt be adapted for further studies in different contexts. For readers interested in the Slovenian case, along with the chapter dedicated to it, chapters on its neighbours (Italy, Hungary, Austria) offer insights into trends in transnational home care that are important links in the chains involving Slovenia. Moreover, the findings from other countries serve as both an affirmation of research in the local context and a haunting warning of what is to come should the currently nascent policies continue to be pursued. One thing is clear: the increasingly transnational nature of senior care makes it imperative that research is also as transnational as possible to generate knowledge that is both comprehensive and decentralised. In this respect, the book *Home Care for Sale* is an exemplary contribution to the field.

Majda Černič Istenič

Lev Centrih, Polona Sitar: Pol kmet, pol proletarec: integrirana kmečka ekonomija v socialistični Sloveniji, 1945–1991.

Koper: Založba Univerze na Primorskem, 2023.

253 str., (ISBN 978-961-293-238-1), 25 EUR

Kmečki sloj je v slovenskem družboslovju in humanistiki redko v ospredju kritičnih in poglobljenih analiz. Monografija Leva Centriha in Polone Sitar *Pol kmet, pol proletarec* je ena izmed redkih svetlih izjem. Nastala je v okviru temeljnega projekta *Koncepti kmečke ekonomije: teoretični in empirični primerjalni pristop*, ki ga je v letih 2019 in 2022 financirala Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije, izvajala pa skupina raziskovalcev in raziskovalk s Fakultete za humanistične študije Univerze na Primorskem. Vodja projekta Aleksander Panjek v predgovoru zapiše, da je vpetost kmetov v nekmetijske panoge »ena vidnejših značilnosti v zgodovini slovenskega podeželja vsaj od konca srednjega veka dalje« (str. 9), s čimer utemeljuje nujnost in upravičenost obravnave te teme. Ob tem poudari, da je monografija sestavni del večletnih prizadevanj skupine zgodovinarjev iz Slovenije in tujine ovreči zakoreninjeno prepričanje o družbeni in gospodarski pasivnosti kmečkega prebivalstva. Tako gledanje poudarja naravnost kmetov zgolj k samozadostnosti in samooskrbi ter preživetju v skromnih razmerah, ne priznava pa jim lastne pobude, iznajdljivosti in sposobnosti za delovanje in vplivanje na tok družbenih procesov. Analiza zgodovinskih raziskav, statističnih podatkov, arhivskega gradiva in terenskih polstrukturiranih intervjujev, ki zajemajo čas od druge svetovne vojne do zgodnjih devetdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja za Slovenijo in delno tudi za nekdanjo skupno državo Jugoslavijo, predstavljena v tem delu, take poglede oz. tezo prav tako postavlja pod vprašaj.

Monografija obsega uvod Žarka Lazarevića ter tri poglavja in zaključne povzetke obeh omenjenih avtorjev. Uvodno besedilo postavlja obravnavano temo v problemski kontekst domačega in mednarodnega zgodovinopisja. Bralca seznani z opredelitvijo pojma »integrirana kmečka ekonomija« (IKE), zasnovanega v krogu domačih in tujih zgodovinarjev ter dojetega kot vključenost kmetov tako v primarne kot tudi v raznolike dejavnosti v sekundarnem in terciarnem sektorju, pri čemer vse tri dejavnosti blažijo nihanja in nedovršenosti vsake od njih. Obenem poudari pomen raziskovanja tega pojava v obdobju socializma v Sloveniji, ko so imeli kmetje kot posamezniki in kot skupina poseben položaj v družbi. Oblasti in del javnosti so v kmetih videli sloj, ki v razmerah koncentriranega lastništva zemlje in monopolizacije proizvodnje kot mali proizvajalci dolgoročno ne morejo preživeti. Kot poudarja Lazarević, je kmetijska politika v prvem obdobju socializma kmete poskušala odpraviti kot poseben družbeni sloj, kasneje pa jih je zaradi neuspešnih poskusov omejila na ozke proizvodne okvire. Poleg teh poudarkov uvodno poglavje vključuje še opredelitev periodizacije kmetijske politike do kmetov v socializmu, ki ji sledimo v nadaljevanju monografije. Prvo obdobje, 1945–1953, zaznamujejo agrarna reforma, prisilna kolektivizacija in odkup, ukinitve

trga in ekonomskih spodbud ter posledično odvzem ekonomske subjektivitete kmetov. Za drugo obdobje, 1953–1957, je značilna opustitev prisilne kolektivizacije; kmetje lahko zapustijo kmetijske zadruge, hkrati pa z dodatno agrarno reformo, ko socialistična oblast zameji zasebna kmetijska gospodarstva na 10 hektarjev, kmetijska proizvodnja še naprej temelji na državnem kmetijskem sektorju, ki je z reorganiziranim združnim sektorjem nosilec tehnične preobrazbe in produktivnosti kmetijstva. Tretje obravnavano obdobje, 1957–1965, ki mestoma sega v začetek devetdesetih let, zaznamuje vrsta nadaljnjih sprememb – zmanjševanje prvotne restriktivne kmetijske politike do kmetov. V vseh teh obdobjih, kot poročajo naslednja poglavja, IKE ni bila opuščena, čeprav je bila ovirana.

V prvem in najobsežnejšem poglavju monografije, *Rdeče klasje*, Lev Centrih predstavi ekonomske strategije podeželskih gospodinjstev v okolici Ljubljane v prvem povojnem obdobju. Na podlagi uporabljenih virov potrdi obstoj oz. nadaljevanje praks IKE v času agrarne reforme, ko so različno posestno velika gospodinjstva združevala dohodke iz različnih dejavnosti, kot so dninarstvo, rokodelstvo, mezdno delo v industrijskih obratih, prevoz in trgovina z različnimi izdelki, gostinstvo, tihotapstvo. Priložnosti za podjetnost in podjetništvo iz prejšnjih časov so se zožile zaradi ideoloških idej Partije o nujnosti prenosa podjetništva z ravni posameznika in gospodinjstva na delovno skupnost (zadru-go). Vendar so potrebe po delovni sili ob obnovi porušene domovine in industrializacije podjetij kmetom odprle nove možnosti in priložnosti za zaposlovanje. Centrih ocenjuje, da je v omenjenem obdobju delež dohodka iz dela članov kmečkih gospodinjstev zunaj kmetijstva znašal med 50 in 65 odstotki.

V drugem poglavju z naslovom *Pred traktorji* Centrih obravnava gospodarski razvoj v Sloveniji v letih 1957–1965, to je v času neuspešnih preusmeritev kmetijske politike, ki so privedle do gospodarske reforme leta 1965. Za to obdobje je bilo značilno znatno povečanje naložb v agroindustrijski kompleks v državni lasti, ki naj bi zapolnil primanjkljaj v proizvodnji hrane in znižal njene cene. V novem pojmovanju zadrug so bili zasebni kmetje zamišljeni kot partnerji države. Zadrugam so lahko prodajali presežke pridelkov ter od njih dobili semena in gnojila z ugodnimi krediti, odplačanimi v naturalijah. Na voljo sta jim bila svetovanje in pomoč z mehanizacijo. Svojo zemljo so lahko zadrugam oddajali tudi v zakup. V tem obdobju je potekala živahna polemika o preskrbi zasebnih kmetov z mehanizacijo, na podlagi katere je bila kmetom dana možnost nakupa traktorjev in drugih strojev, ki je prej niso meli. Ker so se takrat povečale tudi priložnosti za kombiniranje prihodkov, je intenzivno naraščalo število polkmetov oz. polproletarcev. Od njihovega dela je bila odvisna vrsta industrijskih panog. Poleg stabilnih dohodkov, ki so prispevali k razvoju kmetij, in nastajajočih vrednot potrošništva je bil pomemben dejavnik vključevanja kmetov in njihovih družinskih članov v sekundarni sektor tudi njihova izvenzetost iz sistema zdravstvenega in pokojninskega zavarovanja vse do konca šestdesetih oz. začetka sedemdesetih let. Druge poklicne skupine so bile v ta sistem vključene že leta 1945. Centrih ugotavlja, da je vključevanje kmetov v nekmetijske dejavnosti, zlasti v industrijski sektor, koristilo podjetjem in nacionalnemu gospodarstvu, saj je omogočilo odložitev naložb v gradnjo stanovanj in dvig plač. Hkrati pa je bilo problematično, ker je izčrpavalo in krnilo produktivnost te delovne sile. Kot ugotavlja, je

šlo za izrazito samoeksploatacijo – neskončno garanje članov kmečkega gospodarstva, kar je sicer pretežna značilnost vrednostnega sistema kmečkega habitusa.

Osrednji del tretjega poglavja *Za boljši življenjski standard* Polone Sitar temelji na analizi intervjujev s kmeti obeh spolov, rojenimi pred drugo svetovno vojno, in njihovimi potomci, rojenimi med letoma 1950 in 1960. Intervjuji omogočajo vpogled v vsakdanje življenje in vrednote kmečkega sloja – moralne razsežnosti trdega dela, poštenosti, podjetnosti, kmetijska znanja, ki so se prenašala med generacijami, ter njihovi načrti, uspehi in razočaranja. Opozarjajo tudi na vztrajnost tradicionalizma, skupaj s kulturnimi in zgodovinskimi vzorci, kot so družinske ideologije in odnosi med spoloma. Analiza intervjujev še kaže, da se je IKE v tem obdobju še okrepila. Avtorica pojasnjuje, kako se je življenjski standard kmečkega prebivalstva povečal zaradi vključevanja v več dejavnosti, pa tudi kako je uvedba sodobne tehnologije spodbudila in tudi olajšala vključevanje članov kmečkega gospodinjstva v nekmetijske dejavnosti. Prav tako ugotovi, da je uvedba kmetijske mehanizacije vplivala na procese upadanja kmečkega prebivalstva in razslojevanja podeželja. Bistveni prispevek te analize pa je ugotovitev, da se je industrializacija v Sloveniji lahko razvila prav zaradi nekmetijskih dejavnosti kmečkega prebivalstva. Kljub uvedbi mehanizacije je bila zaradi vztrajanja pri največ 10 hektarjih zaradi trdovratnih ideoloških predsodkov zamujena priložnost za oblikovanje sloja sposobnih neodvisnih proizvajalcev (močnih kmetov), nosilcev sodobne in visoko produktivne kmetijske proizvodnje.

Analize bogatega gradiva v monografiji skozi koncept IKE omogočajo vpogled v politične, gospodarske in družbene procese ter položaj kmečkega sloja v obdobju socializma na Slovenskem, v veliki meri pa omogočajo tudi vpogled v razloge za sedanjo številčno majhnost kmečkega sloja. Nakazujejo odgovor, zakaj in kako kmetje še naprej kombinirajo svoje dohodke – skoraj vsi si socialno varnost zagotavljajo z zaposlitvijo v drugih sektorjih. Odprto pa ostaja vprašanje, kako lahko le peščica kmetov poskrbi za prehransko varnost vsega prebivalstva. Nedavna pandemija covid-19 je opozorila na resnost te zagate. Bilo bi torej smiselno, da se slovenski sociologi in sociologinje v večjem številu kot doslej pridružijo živahni akademski razpravi, ki o tem in podobnih vprašanjih poteka v mednarodnem okolju.

Instructions

1. Submissions for Papers and Short Scientific Articles should be sent to the following e-mail address: editorDR_SSF@sociolosko-drustvo.si; Submissions for Reviews should be sent to: rok.smrdelej@ff.uni-lj.si. Papers can be written in either the Slovenian or English language.
2. Papers should be double spaced with Times New Roman letter font size 12 and aligned to the left-hand margin. The pages should be numbered consecutively.
3. Articles can be submitted in short and standard form. Short scientific articles (see guidelines below) should not be longer than 4,000 words, and should be structured like standard articles. Standard articles should range from 5,000 to 8,000 words in length, including notes, a list of references and a list of graphic images; the length of book reviews/presentations should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words. Graphic images should also be included in the word count – see instruction 12 below.
4. The Editorial Board reserves the right not to commence the review procedure of a paper which fails to meet the standards of formal written language. British English is requested (with e.g. -ise, -sation and -yse spellings, no Oxford comma) is requested.
5. An author will be informed about the results of the reviewing procedure within 2 months of submitting a paper. Unpublished papers will not be returned to the authors. Book reviews and revisions will not be double-blind reviewed.
6. Any past or simultaneous publication of a submitted paper in another journal should be explicitly noted.
7. The author's name and surname, academic title and/or professional title, e-mail address and phone number, along with the title of the scientific paper should appear on a separate sheet. Authors should suggest the classification of their paper in one of three categories: original scientific article, review scientific article or short scientific contribution.
8. The first page of the paper should only contain the title or a possible subtitle of the paper without any designation of authorship.
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 - D'Andrade, Roy (1995): A Folk Model of the Mind. In D. Holland and N. Quinn (eds.): Cultural Models in Language and Thought: 112–151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Lamont, Michele, and Fournier, Marcel (eds.) (1992): Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
 - Le Goff, Jacques (1999): Medieval Civilization. Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell.
 - Garton, Luis, et al. (1997): Studying Online Social Networks. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 3 (1). Available from: <http://jcmc.huji.ac.il/vol3/issue1/> (Accessed 20.5.2001).
 - Laurenti, Jeffery (1998): The New U. N. Assessment Scale and Analysis of the Rate Revisions Adopted by the 52nd United Nations General Assembly. Available from: <http://www.unaosa.org/newindex.asp?place=http://www.unaosa.org/programs/scale.asp> (Accessed 9. 12. 2004).
 - Aratani, Lauren (2020): "Tsunami of Untruths": Trump Has Made 20,000 False or Misleading Claims. Report. The Guardian, 13. 7. 2020. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/13/donald-trump-20000-false-or-misleading-claims> (Accessed 10. 10. 2020).
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 - McAuliffe, Cameron (2015): Graffiti Sessions: The Art and Justice of Sociable Cities. Graffiti Dialogues. YouTube, 15. 1. 2015. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dufgmQrNya8&list=PLAUgzWv9IVJnZteo0TqJ7SjD3b6BFyg1> (Accessed 13. 10. 2020).
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