

Editorial

by Sandra King-Savić

Introduction

Tim Judah first coined the term Yugosphere in *The Economist* in 2009.¹ He further refined the evolving concept within the frame of European Union (EU) integration processes in an LSE Research Paper.² Since the publication of the article in *The Economist*, and the longer LSE Discussion Paper, authors variously conceptualized the Yugosphere in the digital realm,³ cultural manifestations in music and film,⁴ from the perspective of intergenerational perceptions thereof,⁵ as well as collective memory aspects and Yugo-Nostalgia,⁶ to name but a few examples. One might presume that Judah appreciates the wide use of the concept, seeing that his aim was not “to present the idea as a *fait accompli* but rather to initiate discussion and provoke debate”.⁷ The authors in this *Euxeinos* issue contribute to the ongoing discussion with a focus on migration and mobility from, to, and within the Yugosphere.

Conceptual Aspects of the Yugosphere

Judah introduces his readers to the evolving concept by way of recounting an anecdote taking place at the 15th Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt. Boris Tadić, then president of Serbia, referred to the NAM glory-days and specifically the 1961 summit held in Belgrade. What struck Judah as interesting, however, was not the seemingly off-the-cuff remark. Judah was rather struck about how Tadić and Stipe Mesić, then president of Croatia, referred to the former Yugoslav space as “our countries”.⁸ Indeed, people and governing bodies within the Yugosphere have, according to Judah, much in common.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Yugosphere concept might be its at once physical and mental mapping propensities. Here, Judah states that young people who have not grown up to experience SFRY, perceive the region as theirs, nevertheless. Going to a former member state, in other words, does not mean that one is going abroad. Going to Romania, Bulgaria, or Greece, in contrast, constitutes traveling abroad.⁹ Individuals from the former SFRY, moreover, do not require a visa to visit neighboring states.

With the exception of the Albanian speaking population in the former Yugoslav space, a great majority of individuals speak Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS), a pluricentric language with four variants.¹⁰ Nearly everyone in the former SFRY is therefore able to speak and/or understand BCMS. A common language, by extension, allows for a common media landscape. Publishers, bookfairs, and the media cater not only to individuals within the former SFRY space, but also to the diaspora in the Yugosphere.¹¹

Ties are also being re-built in the geopolitical realm. Former SFRY states cooperate in the Regional Cooperation Council regarding EU integration, by extension the United Nations (UN), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹² Cooperation within the international realm further includes collaboration within the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) of which Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania are members.¹³

The MARRI Initiative has gained much in significance since the Balkan Route serves as a space of transit, as well as (temporary) settlement for asylum seekers since 2015. Since the so-called 'migration crisis', experiences of war, expulsion and flight have thus coalesced in the Yugosphere.¹⁴ Dragana Kovačević Bielicki examines the at times ambivalent encounters between the local population and individuals in search of safety as portrayed by the media in this issue.

The Yugosphere: Too Broad an Analytic Tool?

One might criticize the framework as too broad and malleable, seeing that researchers apply the concept of the Ygosphere to understand ties by way of economic and geopolitical networks, art performances, music, media, and connections in the virtual sphere. One might further disapprove of the Ygosphere as a framework that caters to Ygonostalgia, and one that heralds the coming of a third Yugoslavia without consideration for the lack of proper lustration mechanisms following the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. Also, the Ygosphere might contradict the logic of national sovereignty. Yet, following Judah's argument, this is not the case. He illustrates his argument by way of recounting the experience among Albanian labor migrants in SFRY: "[A]ll Albanians live within the general European sphere and all Albanians live within an Albanian sphere but only some Albanians, i.e., those that once lived within the former Yugoslavia can also be said to co-exist within the Ygosphere".¹⁵ Rory Archer illustrates this Venn Diagram in which Albanian labor migrants experience, and shape the Ygosphere in this issue. His essay serves as an important reminder that labor migrants did not only emigrate to Western and Central Europe for work. Instead, the former SFRY itself served as a space of immi- and trans-migration.

While migration patterns within the former Yugoslav space continue to shape the mental and physical maps and thus the Ygosphere regionally, so too does emigration from the region. There are, one might argue, three dominant phases of emigration from the former Yugoslav space. Labor recruitment by firms located in Central and Western Europe, and thus outmigration from the former Yugoslav space long dominated emigration patterns from Yugoslavia until the oil shock in the 1970s. In a second phase, individuals fled to Central and Western Europe in search of safety from the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. At present, a third phase of outmigration dominates migration patterns from the former Yugoslav space. Labor

migration, as was the case in the first phase, seems to dominate this third period. It is crucial, however, to point toward the fact that individuals do not simply *choose* to emigrate. Emigration is, in other words, not based on a seemingly voluntary basis. Instead, one ought to conceptualize this outmigration as coerced migration.¹⁶

During the first phase of emigration, following the recruitment stop in the 1970s, individuals traveled to Central and Western Europe within the family-reunification scheme. Labor migration was yet considered temporary, however. Karolina Novinščak Kölker examines the question of temporary recruitment, visa renewals, and the quasi permanence of labor migrants without the ability to shape their place of residence, in this case Munich, politically. She examines how permanent residence and political participation were only made possible after the dissolution of SFRY in this issue.

Being eligible for residence permits, let alone permanent residence and political participation was, analogous to the German case, equally difficult to come by for labor migrants in Switzerland. Because labor migrants were considered temporary, integration seemed beside the point all the way up into the 1990s. Since then, the degree to which state bureaucracies consider foreigners as integrated is measured to deduce whether or not migrants deserve citizenship, or not. Sandra King-Savic examines the practices and experiences of and with integration from the perspective of those who experienced migration so as to rethink the discursive and sociopolitical construction of migrants in this issue.

Labor migrants in German-speaking states were, as Mišo Kapetanović elucidates in this issue, stereotyped as a nationalistically inclined community. While Belgrade was inclined to control labor migrants abroad, Yugoslav successor states redefined the diaspora as an ethnically defined group. He asks if post-Yugoslav labor migrants can be understood through the ethno-political lens, or whether informal networks, established throughout the three successive chapters of emigration from SFRY, remain relevant in the present Yugoslphere.

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Endnotes

- 1 Tim Judah (2009), Former Yugoslavia patches itself together - Entering the Yugosphere in The Economist, accessed 6 April 2021 at <https://www.economist.com/europe/2009/08/20/entering-the-yugosphere>
- 2 Tim Judah (2009), Good news from the Western Balkans – Yugoslavia is Dead, Long Live the Yugosphere, LSE Papers on South Eastern Europe, accessed 5 April 2021 at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/LSE-Research-on-South-Eastern-Europe/Assets/Documents/Publications/Paper-Series-on-SEE/Yugosphere.pdf>, pp. v - vi
- 3 Mazzucchelli F. What remains of Yugoslavia? From the geopolitical space of Yugoslavia to the virtual space of the Web Yugosphere. *Social Science Information*. 2012;51(4):631-648. doi:10.1177/0539018412456781
- 4 Edward Alexander, Yugosphere Insiders or Croatian Outsiders: The Reception of Serbian Films in Croatia since the Breakup of Yugoslavia, Vol 18 No 1 (2017): Audiovisual Memory and the (Re) Making of Europe; See also Eniko Farkas (2014) Yes for the Yugosphere, No for the Yugoslavia – A Case Study of Domestic Music and Identity in Serbia and Croatia, MA Theses submitted to Central European University
- 5 Simonida Kacarska In Cooperation with Nina Branković, Jelena Džankić, Ervin Mete, Engjellushe Morina, Vladimir Pavićević, Antonija Petrušić, Vladimir Todorčić, Miroslav Živanović (2012), Opinion Paper Supporting Policy Development Paper Series no 1, European Fund for the Balkans
- 6 Matijević, Tijana (2016), National, Post-national, Transnational. Is Post-Yugoslav Literature an Arguable or Promising Field of Study? In *Grenzübräume–Grenzbewegungen: Ergebnisse der Arbeitstreffen des Jungen Forums Slavistische Literaturwissenschaft in Basel*, 101–112. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag.
- 7 Judah (2009)
- 8 Judah (2009), pp. 2
- 9 Judah (2009), pp. 3
- 10 Snežana Kordić (2010), *Jezik i Nacionalizam*, Zagreb: Durieux.
- 11 Judah (2009), pp. 5
- 12 Judah (2009), pp. 12 - 16
- 13 For more information, please see: MARRI – Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, accessed 5 April 2021 at <http://marri-rc.org.mk/about-us/>
- 14 See, for instance: Azra Hromadžić, Notes from the Field – “Migrant Crisis” in Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina in Movements, Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies accessed 8 April 2021 at <https://movements-journal.org/issues/08.balkanroute/08.hromadzic--notes-from-the-field.html>
- 15 Judah (2009), pp. 21
- 16 See, for instance, Kendra Strauss (2012), Coerced, Forced and Unfree Labour: Geographies of Exploitation in Contemporary Labour Markets in *Geography Compass* 6/3
- 17 RGOW 2-3/2020: Jugosphäre accessed May 19, 2021 at <https://www.g2w.eu/zeitschrift/rgow-archiv/2020er/2020/1676-rgow-2-3-2020-jugosphaere>