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Infrastructures in Politics and Politics in Infrastructure: The Case of Two Yugoslavias

What are infrastructures? Following the anthropologist Brian Larkin's definition infrastructures are "[...] built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space".¹ They are objects, and they are systems along which objects move as they mediate exchange and endow the flows with a certain direction in space.

The ontology of infrastructure is best described in the simultaneity of paradoxes that are constituted in their antagonistic complementarity. Infrastructures are punctual and situational as they can arise out of a very specific situation and its needs, and then suddenly vanish - like making a temporary bridge over a river for wartime army transfer that gets destroyed later, or the creation of a Serbian civil plan as a societal reconstruction program that never gets to see the light of day. At the same time, infrastructures are systemic and structural in nature. They require systemic approaches without ignoring the issue of contingency, equally important for understanding their history(ies), present and future impact.

Infrastructures have global and local nature, and are built and developed in specific places, in accordance with the ecological settings. This makes the history of infrastructures very local and place-based in nature, calling attention to the specific evolving environmental and social context-based factors. At the same time, however, infrastructures are an immanent part of a global phenomenon as they embody the modernist paradigm shaping and reconfiguring different places all over the world while offering multiple, widely dispersed experiences of the global similarity. Finally, infrastructures simultaneously comprise of a material and non-material dimension as they build on multilayered entanglements between the material world and the socio-political spheres.²

Infrastructures are heavily dependent on the different (raw) materials, such as iron, timber, asphalt, through which they materialize in a place and can be seen and felt. At the same time, they often act as embodiment of promises,

¹ Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42:3 (2013), 327–343, here p. 328.

² Martin Meiske, "Empire, Extraction, and Externalization. Wood Impregnation in Early 20th Century Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Precarious Legacy" in Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš et al. (Eds). *Environmental histories of the Dinaric Karst* (Cham: Springer, 2023) forthcoming.

evoke fantasies, and trigger emotions, pride or despair. In short, they are experienced through our body and mind.³

From a different perspective, infrastructures comprise two characteristics: ubiquity and multifacetedness. Infrastructures are all around us. Just think about the light bulb, an integral part of most of the electrified households, or the streets and, railways we use to get to our jobs, homes, friends' houses. Media are also part of infrastructures - TV, Cinema, Radio are all parts of technological systems around us. The authors in this Anthology also remind us of this ubiquity as they study not only the traditional imagery of infrastructure as technological objects, railways, and roads as part of political economy, labour management or market integration, but elevate other objects of study that are equally present in our everyday life - such as cemeteries, housings, societal reconstruction programs. Being an immanent part of our everyday life, infrastructures shape our individual and collective experiences of ourselves, our surroundings, our space in relation to other spaces. Infrastructures also shape our language on a daily basis. We need to recharge when exhausted, and are shocked by unexpected events and electrified by excitement.⁴

Experiences of infrastructure are multifaceted and multilayered. They are large-scale technical systems often consisting of massive infrastructural networks that have come to transform nature and society, redress social relations, and organize everyday life. More importantly, and as Fredrik Meiton reminds us, once infrastructures are built, they are often narrated and related in the neutral and apolitical language of technics.⁵ Apart from that, there is the bodily experience of infrastructure such as sitting in a train, next to passengers both very familiar to us or total strangers, an experience of sitting on a long-haul flight or standing in a line, drinking coffee at a railway station.

Humans interact with infrastructures on multiple levels, not only through their bodies, but also minds and emotions. Numerous representations of infrastructures in social media, in political campaigns or commercials often stimulate imaginations, fantasies, and feelings. These sensorial experiences are often directed not only towards infrastructures per se, but also towards those actors and instances which infrastructures often stand for, represent or symbolize: state-power, a company, a societal group affected by infrastructures, eco systems.

Given the multifaceted nature of infrastructures, their history can be written in different ways - through history of labour, economic history, political history, history of technology, cultural history that includes ways of depicting infrastructures, imagined in the social media or history of emotions that explores the popular sentiments that infrastructures can evoke. Infrastructure(s) and mobility as objects of historical studies in Southeastern Europe are nothing new, even

³ Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁴ Meiton Fredrik, *Electrical Palesinte: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2019), 4.

⁵ Ibid. 4f.

though their share in the historiographic knowledge production is rather limited compared to other omnipresent topics such as ethnic relations, nationalism, or violence. So far infrastructures have been studied from the traditional perspectives of economic history and history of technology bringing finances and investments needed to make them real to the fore, and describing their role as an important engine of growth in the economy of the state or a specific region. They have also been studied from the perspective of technological innovations or technical equipment they are based on.

The authors in this anthology move away from these traditional approaches to infrastructure. They do so by offering a more synthetic approach, an historiographic and analytical retooling that points into two directions. First, the chapters go beyond the often-flattening notion of neutral infrastructures and embed them analytically into domains of politics, governance, culture, and religion. They unpack, disentangle and analytically visualize the power structures behind the stages of building infrastructure as well as the power of infrastructure accumulated in and exercised through their very material nature and persistence. They give another, unexpected or rather hitherto unreflected dimension about what constitutes the political in the multiple Yugoslav spaces. Secondly, the contributors make the issue of infrastructure central to the understanding of the history of the Yugoslav states and their fragmented and failed nation-state building processes. In other words, infrastructures are taken as a central prism through which the consolidation process of the political domain of the two Yugoslavias is analyzed and understood. This is a book that tells a story about infrastructures being embedded in politics and politics understood through infrastructures. It is a first important impulse to historiography on the Yugoslav spaces to reflect about what infrastructures offer to the historical analysis of the Yugoslav political, economic, and social history and its multiple consolidation processes of the state structures under socialist and national ideological pretexts throughout the 20th century.

One of the underlying questions that shape these texts is to what extent infrastructures directed the course of Yugoslav state-building or rather hindered the integration of the two states. It is important to note that the empirical chapters in all their thematic varieties depart from a rather broad conceptual understanding of infrastructures as they differentiate between “hard” and “soft” infrastructures. Hard infrastructures are studied here in terms of the very material dimensions of transportation systems in the country, and soft infrastructures in terms of institutional settings and patterns of systematic value. Even though the political effects of these two different types of infrastructure often operate in different ways, as the authors show, they both are equally important to understand how the state-building and the political realm were constituted in the two Yugoslavias. By doing so, the contributions illustrate the multiple ways in which power relations embedded in institutional spaces and political systems matter as they shape, create, or destroy infrastructural systems. Previously hidden realms of politics and social formation that are immanent to infrastructures are made visible and

conversely the multiple case studies illustrate how the same infrastructures in their hard and soft materiality exercise power and become determining factor in the consolidation process of the political realm and the state.

Consciously or not – they also relate to the Marxist understanding of infrastructures as phenomenon that directs the historical course.⁶ At the same time, however, they resonate with more recent approaches to infrastructures that have evolved over the last twenty years in multiple disciplines, ranging from history and anthropology, and that have given important impulses for illustrating their determining power in constituting the political realm. A central subject here has been the complex entanglement between technological systems with the political domains showing how the political sphere and citizenship are formed in conjunction with the very material nature of infrastructures.

In the Indian case focused on the water supply in Mumbai the anthropologist Anand illustrates the nature of infrastructural undertakings as politically directed projects. He shows how the realization of infrastructures that form material necessities for local communities in the slums are dependent on the political mobilization of social networks among these same communities that form an electoral body whose support is necessary for the political fractions in charge of the infrastructural water supply projects. Thus, as Anand shows, the inextricable dialectics between the bottom-up political mobilizations of social networks and the politically top-down directed water supply infrastructures are mutually indispensable in their respective consolidation and realization processes, which Anand poignantly conceptualizes as ‘hydraulic citizenship’.⁷ Similar observations on infrastructures as constitutive arena where citizenship is both constituted and contested, have also been offered by Von Schnitzler and his study of water supply in South-Africa. Far from being just neutral water provisions, these infrastructural projects were mediating a strategy of government aiming to produce certain ethics among its citizens.⁸

Similar observations on the political effects of infrastructural projects can also be observed in the case of the two Yugoslavias as the authors in this volume show in multiple ways. The introduction, foremost the maintenance of an infrastructures, was based on the assumption of the citizen’s loyalty towards the state shaping through certain tax forms, or by paying consumption bills. At the same time, infrastructural programs in the country were revealing government strategies as they were shaping the very notion of citizenship with its educating programs. In this anthology they are described as the pedagogical dimensions of infrastructures, aiming at shaping a certain sustainable approach and usage of infrastructural supplies among its citizens as the major consumers of infrastructures.

⁶ Larkin, "Politics and Poetics", 329.

⁷ Nikhil Anand, "Municipal disconnect: on abject water and its urban infrastructures", *Ethnography* 13:4 (2012), 487–509.

⁸ Antina von Schnitzler, "Citizenship prepaid: water, calculability, and techno-politics in South Africa", *Journal of southern African Studies* 34:4 (2008), 899–917.

Another important nexus between hard/soft infrastructures and politics is given by the very fact that infrastructures most often are associated with the state in form of its presence, absence, or fragmentedness. Their very existence reflects upon the commanding capacities as well as failures of the state. In my hometown of Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I have experienced several times how the absence of a time table and many delays in the city traffic let frustrated passengers associate the lack of time tables with the absence of a state. “Where is the state!”, irated passengers would commonly yell at bus and tram stops. In his work on anthropology of state in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stef Jansen describes such exclamations as expression of the citizens’ longing for a state, as they experience mostly its absence. The irregular transportation systems, missing trams and buses become the governments’ failed promises to their people.⁹ There are also numerous examples of opposite political effects of infrastructures that trigger different, more positive popular feelings such as affectual relations to infrastructures, fascination, pride that are directed towards the state.¹⁰

Infrastructure, State-Building Processes and Failures

One central question that the editors ask in the introduction and that permeates all empirical studies is to what extent were Yugoslavs trapped by the inability to overcome the infrastructural challenge? As they note, the very materiality, robustness, large-scale dimensions, and economic excessiveness lend infrastructures long-lasting persistence. This stability often transmutes into political legacies of those regimes that built these infrastructures as existing networks and systems, at the same time setting directions for new infrastructure-building projects for the new successor regimes to embark on. At the same time, as infrastructures represent existing state-powers, they also embody the legacies of previous, older regimes. The authors refer to these processes as accumulated power of infrastructures, their resilience, immunity to changes, political shifts. This accumulated power can last, as we get reminded, for decades, sometimes even for centuries.

In their persistence and resilience, infrastructures counteract the logics of the political discursive practices and self-images of new, successor states. Usually, new political regimes try to mark a break with previous ones - they set ideological and political boundaries in order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. They promise new futures, orientations, better lives. They want to create new societies, carve new individuals, not only during times of crises and occupations, but also in times of peace. The case of the two Yugoslavias makes it very obvious. Once the Communist Party seized power, the ideological project

⁹ Stef Jansen, *Yearnings in the meantime: ‘normal lives’ and the state in a Sarajevo apartment complex* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

¹⁰ Penny Harvey & Hannah Know, “The Enchantments of Infrastructure”, *Mobilities* 7:4 (2012), 521–536.

of state-building was very much defined as an antipode to the interwar Yugoslavia.¹¹ A federation was placed instead of a centralized state with the promise of economic equality between the different republics and autonomous regions as socio-economic entities. On a more ideological level, Yugoslavism was proposed as a political and ideological identity, but never with any national or ethnic connotations. This is not a single case, as there are global similarities to the antipodal logics of state-building processes that define their identities in opposition to previous regimes and states. Post-imperial and socialist state-building projects offer probably the most articulate cases. Czechoslovakia had to be defined in opposition to the previous Habsburg imperial governance of the region and in opposition to the Catholic church, which was seen as a symbol of the long Habsburg imperial rule.¹² At the same time, most of the post-Habsburg successor states, including Czechoslovakia, built on and related to existing realities, political cultures, institutional spaces and practices, socio-economic circumstances, as well as infrastructural realities, in terms of both their very existence or very absence.

Apart from post-Habsburg transition, the Yugoslav spaces have also been very much defined by the complex post-Ottoman transition that marked the transformation of Balkan polities in the wake of the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire. This was a crucial period where many regions embarked the path of statehood either through the creation of a new political entity or through transformation of a pre-existing one.¹³ In regard to the post-Ottoman transition dominant frames of interpretation have often stressed complete ruptures with the Ottoman imperial past, while the Ottoman legacy was portrayed as the unassimilable pre-modern background against which the ‘proper’ development of Western modernity progressively unfolded.¹⁴

The contributions in this anthology critically address these dominant historiographic narratives by putting infrastructures and their persistence at the center for understanding the dynamics of state-building processes. They invite us to think about political shifts from a transitional perspective that stresses the relatedness of the different regimes and the entanglements of their legacies as they materialize through infrastructures. After all, the construction and maintenance of infrastructures as well as technological communication systems have served as

¹¹ Iva Lučić, *Im Namen der Nation: Der politische Aufwertungsprozess der Muslime im sozialistischen Jugoslawien 1956–1971* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 49; Dejan Jović, “Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism. From Tito to Kardelj” in Dejan Djokić (Ed.): *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea 1918–1992* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 157–181.

¹² Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls, National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands 1900–1948* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2011); Iva Lučić, *Geborchenes Brot. Ein Frauenorden zwischen den Weltkriegen – Die Eucharistieschwester* (Salzburg: Anton Pustet Verlag, 2019).

¹³ Tassos Anastassiadis & Nathalie Clayer, “Introduction: Beyond the Incomplete or Failed Modernization Paradigm” in Tassos Anastassiadis & Nathalie Clayer (Eds.), *Society, Politics and State Formation in Southeastern Europe during the 19th Century* (Athens: Alpha Bank, 2011), 11–32, here 13.

¹⁴ Edin Hajdarpašić, “Out of the Ruins of the Ottoman Empire: Reflections on the Ottoman Legacy in South-eastern Europe”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 44:5 (September 2008), 715–734.

major tools of not only empires, but also successor states.¹⁵ One of the remaining challenges in the field is, as some authors remind us, to unpack the “changing motives and ideologies behind technology transfer” and to reflect upon the ways in which infrastructures (re)produce spaces and identities.¹⁶

One of the major theoretical frameworks that serves as *idée fixe* in all of the contributions is the concept of path-dependence, which reminds us of the power of structures, both material and non-material structural settings that are resistant to changes. In the realm of infrastructures, the authors explore path-dependence articulated through the existence of technological settings, spatial distributions and directions of roads, railways, railway stations that both offer opportunities and set limits to subsequent episodes of technological system building processes. Another important realm, which lies at the center of their inquiries, is the describing institutional infrastructures in terms of the longevity of their organizing principles, decision-making processes, informal practices and alliance-building logics. Thus, path-dependence related to infrastructures materialize and symbolize the ways in which the different regimes interacted, overlapped or diverged.

In the case of the two Yugoslavias, which occupy center-stage in the anthology, the political transitions were of different qualities, transpiring in the respective infrastructural projects. In the case of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the political shift was more dramatic in geo-political sense as it marked the starting point of a state-entity whose geographical body comprised now multiple post-imperial transitions of very different kind, including Ottoman and Habsburg legacies. Former imperial regions were now sharing the same geo-political and administrative frame with other regions whose past did not have imperial connotations. Thus, Kingdom of Yugoslavia resembled an amalgam of several (post-imperial) socio-economic and ecological spaces of varying technical standards. The transition from Interwar Yugoslav to Socialist Yugoslavia in the wake of World War II was geographically less dramatic, as the spatial bodies of the state were the same, whereas their inner state organization and ideological context changed. In both cases, however, the new states encompassed and tried to harmonize multiple transitions within the Yugoslav space, inheriting different conditions of technical systems that often proved difficult to integrate into an infrastructure.

This makes Yugoslavia nothing special or new, but rather typical for any infrastructural projects. As Hughes reminds us, each infrastructural system or network usually starts with a series of smaller, varying technologies. The birth hour of infrastructure, however, is when these different independent technologies become integrated into a uniform network - either when one technological system

¹⁵ Daniel R. Headrick, *The tools of empire. Technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

¹⁶ Jonas Van der Straeten, Ute Hasenöhl, “Connecting the Empire. New Research Perspectives on Infrastructures and the Environment in the (Post)Colonial World,” *NTM* 24 (2016): 355–391, here 355f.

comes to dominate over others, or when several independent systems converge into a network.¹⁷ Moreover, as technological systems grow further and develop into infrastructures within a state as well as beyond it, spatial borders of the political entities might mutate.

One of the major challenges for both Yugoslav governments has been developing the requiring techniques of adaptation and translation of existing technologies in order to make them converge into an infrastructural system. In this regard it might also be noteworthy to ask to what extent the two Yugoslavias had an infrastructure at all, or if both states remained rather an amalgam of technical, administrative, and financial techniques of different kinds. The extent to which there was a convergence or divergence between the infrastructural projects of the different political regimes offer a powerful prism to look at the capacities and qualities of the state-building processes, their successes and failures.

Infrastructures, Multiple Temporalities, and Modes of Modernities across Political Regimes

Apart from accumulated power of infrastructures, the observations, which the contributions in this anthology offer through the conceptual prism of path-dependence, also imply strong interventions in the well-established periodization in the history of the two Yugoslavias and their respective state-building processes. As most of the chapters illustrate, infrastructures seem to have their own temporalities marked by stabilities and offering chronologies that often go against the more dynamic and turbulent trajectories of the political history of the region. At the same time, infrastructures are integral part of the political history(ies) of Yugoslavia(s). After all, and as the authors show, infrastructural projects are intimately entangled with the state as they are conceived in government centers and require a set of political mobilization and lobbying. The pre-history of their realization and existence evolves in concrete political contexts and frameworks, narrated in the field of political history. This is explicated in the chapters that most prominently show how infrastructural projects were deeply embedded in the political negotiations and decision-making processes, evolving far away from the sites of construction - be its railways, the building of housings, cemeteries, or the building project of a newly envisioned society. And yet, infrastructures resist to follow the same logics, the same pace of the political history we are familiar with. Their materiality or the lack of their material realizations point towards a different logic of building historical trajectories through which infrastructure shaped their own historical presence in the region.

¹⁷ Thomas P. Hughes, "The evolution of large technological systems" in W. E. Bijker, T. P. Hughes, T. Pinch (Eds.): *The social construction of technological systems. New directions in the sociology and history of technology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: MIT Press, 1987), 51–82.

They can be read as an invitation and an impulse to transpose the idea of path-dependence to chronologies, pointing towards the pluralisms of temporalities that marked the historical trajectories of the two Yugoslavias. It is only when we put these two temporalities into dialogue and into a relation of interdependence that we gain a more nuanced understanding of the qualities and capacities of the state-building projects in the Yugoslav historical experience.

Political domains that transpire the allegedly neutral appearance of infrastructures and technologies are also embedded in the way we encounter infrastructures as manifestations of modernity or modernizing projects of the respective state. As Larkin reminds us, infrastructures are rooted in the conceptual entanglement of the Enlightenment that proposed the free movement of people, ideas, and goods in the name of progress and the global paradigm of modernity.¹⁸ In fact, in the 19th century and throughout the 20th century Yugoslavia, nothing else seemed as dramatic a sign of modernity as infrastructures.

By studying different forms of infrastructures as they evolved in post-imperial contexts and throughout the history of the two Yugoslavias, the chapters can be read as expressions of the different modes and strategies of modernizing the Yugoslav space. In a comparative perspective, Ottoman and the Habsburg Empire, as well as both Yugoslavias, did engage in the building of infrastructures in the region, but under very different governing structures and ideological frameworks, ranging from colonialist settings paired with global capitalist consumption and expansion to socialist settings marked by planned economy and strong state presence.

The chapters in all their variety of case studies and thematic focal points invite us to think and compare different political contexts in which modernization processes were articulated and to ask in what ways these socio-political and economic spaces of articulation determined the qualities of infrastructural modernization. They invite us to consider both similarities and differences of the respective infrastructural projects including technical, financial, and administrative modes of implementing their respective modernity projects. Where does path-dependence start and is there a difference in the commanding capacities of the path-dependence depending on which Yugoslav state-project we look at? When does it make sense to think about temporal divides between the imperial, the inter-war and the socialist Yugoslav and when not? Given the dynamics and shapes of the intertwined structures of technological change, state power, and capitalism in the different modes of infrastructural modernization projects, does it make sense to refer to multiple but overlapping modernities originating in their respective political regime from which they derived? These questions certainly await to be treated by future academic work. They can also offer new ways of theorizing infrastructures based on the historical experience of the two Yugoslavias.

¹⁸ Larkin, "Politics and Poetics", 332.

State-building and Infrastructures Among Unequals

Apart from the accumulated power of the old transport technologies and infrastructures, the trajectories of the Yugoslav infrastructure were equally determined by the actual economic circumstances, as well as imbalances of power relations in the political decision-making processes. One could also claim that legacies of old infrastructure become accumulated powers as much as economic and political factors paved ways for their persistence. Most of these political spaces were characterized by political asymmetries within the Yugoslav state and competing visions among the different regions/republics.

The way the political inequalities and economic competitions within the Yugoslav state played out on the infrastructural projects in the country is shown by the case of ŠIPAD's proposal to build a direct railway line from Knin to Šibenik in the 1920s. As a conglomerate and the country's largest producer of wood and lumber with headquarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ŠIPAD was proposing this railways project as a way to manage the ever-rising transport costs of its Bosnian timber destined for global export through from the port of Šibenik. As it soon turned out, however, in the eyes of the Dalmatian authorities in Split, the proposed extension of the railways represented a threat to their own port trade, which triggered major political mobilization against the ŠIPAD initiative. Eventually, the proposal was turned down and never got realized.¹⁹ This ŠIPAD episode illustrates the contested nature of infrastructural projects, as it is also illustrated in several of the chapters in the anthology. Moreover, by looking at an envisioned infrastructural project and whether or not it actually materialized, it offers an analytical prism to explore the capacities and willingness of political entities on regional, republican, and state-level to mobilize political consent, capital investments, and labor and what (in)formal networks were at stake. After all, the failed railways project reflects the Yugoslav political landscape which was marked by socio-economic and political inequalities that also shaped the infrastructural projects of the two Yugoslavias. After all, failed infrastructural integrations were not only a consequence of path-dependence but also of a state-building process that evolved among unequals in both economic and political terms.

We might also frame the unequals as a landscape of multiple internal peripheries in relation to political and economic centers that were operating on multiple spatial and administrative levels, ranging from local, regional to republican levels. More importantly, these economic and political inequalities were an integral part of the infrastructural projects in Yugoslavia, as they had not only an integrating capacity of the Yugoslav space but were also building border within it, disclosing certain socio-economic or geographical spaces. Related to this aspect it is important to raise the question whose infrastructures were built and whose remained just a vision. Thus, infrastructural projects remained very

¹⁹ Keith Chester, *The Narrow Gauge Railways of Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Malmö: Frank Stenvalls Förlag, 2008), 221.

unequally distributed, due to which not all parts of the country became well connected.

What the anthropologist Begoña Aretxaga points out in relation to divided urban places such as Belfast in Northern Ireland, certainly can apply to infrastructures in the Yugoslav contexts: “place [...] is both the product of relations of power and the material through which such relations are culturally articulated, challenged and reproduced”.²⁰ Joanne Randa Nucho argues in the similar vein when writing about political and religious sectarianism in Urban Lebanon. She points to the fact that infrastructure in their successes and failures not only reflect political and religious sectarianism (or in our case inequalities) but at the same time “...it is the very networks of infrastructures, institutions, and services that reproduce particular notions of sectarian belonging and community”.²¹ Thus, infrastructure had commanding powers to integrate spaces but it also could create borders, disclose certain socio-economic or geographical spaces.

Infrastructures as Parts of Everyday Life and Ordinary People’s Lives

Infrastructures are not only about top-down, politically directed and monitored processes of systemic building by means of financial, technical, and administrative tools. They are also about the very social dimension of everyday life of ordinary people who appear as its consumers or users. Infrastructures without doubt exercise tremendous transformative effects on the societies, their interactions, political and cultural integration processes as well as their everyday life.²²

The early phases of infrastructural projects were often introduced by state-led appropriation of lands for public work. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was the Habsburg imperial government and its property regime based on cadastral surveys and land-registers that facilitated land appropriation for the construction of railways.²³ Even though many of these acquiring processes were negotiated on the local basis, they had critical effects on the ordinary people and their everyday life that were affected by these state dictates. Infrastructural hunger for land intensified as infrastructural network expanded. Land acquisitions multiplied as road networks were built with tremendous material but also political impact on people’s livelihoods. These acts of state interference were punctual, situational but of lasting effects on certain people’s or family’s lives and futures.

²⁰ Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 24.

²¹ Joanne Randa Nucho, *Everyday Secterianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 6.

²² Ritika Prasad, *Tracks of Change: Railways and Everyday Life in Colonial India* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5.

²³ Iva Lučić, “The Bosnian Danger?: Bosnia’s Timber Extraction and Export in the Age of Empires 1878 – 1914”, *Economic History Yearbook*, Themed issue, *The Wood Processing Businesses and the Economic Development of Europe* 65:2 (2024), forthcoming.

The further research needs to show the ways these experiences of loss for ordinary people changed or remained over the course of the different political regimes.

Land acquisition cases for the purpose of infrastructural projects exemplify how infrastructures shaped their historical presence in everyday people's lives. But one can also invert this perspective and ask in what way ordinary people's agencies shaped their very presence in the historical trajectories of infrastructural projects. Here I think of less traumatic experiences, such as the construction works in the early socialist period conducted by the Youth brigades, which socialist Yugoslavia often successfully mobilized under the ideological pretext of building not only a new infrastructure but a new socialist reality. On a side note, infrastructures do not foster only a hunger for land and natural resources, but obviously for labour as a non-material but human force of production. They were of critical importance for the building of the Brčko-Banovići as well as the Šamac-Sarajevo railway, as well as the famous Borderhood and Unity Highways that stretched throughout the whole socialist Federation - from northern Slovenia to southern parts of Macedonia.

Apart from the fact that these youth brigades provided the new socialist state with the much needed unpaid/free labour, they also had strong symbolic meaning as they were intended to train new socialist citizens for a particular relationship to the state power and the Communist Party. More importantly to our specific context, these episodes also tell us about how infrastructures permeate the everyday lives of people. Oral history accounts, as well as written memoirs, linguistically reflect on individual biographical connections to infrastructural projects. One of the most famous and best known such accounts is without doubt the British historian E.P. Thompson's edited memoirs of his and his British fellow youth volunteer's participation in the construction of the "Youth Railroad" in 1946-1947, under the title "The Railway: An Adventure in Construction". Retrospectively, Thompson framed his experience as a life-changing biographical episode that made him attentive to agency and self-activity of the people.²⁴

Looking at less popular Yugoslav participants in the same construction projects youth brigade actions were/are remembered often with nostalgic and romanticizing tones, often associated with love histories, the building of life-long friendships or the first occasion to stay far from its own home. Compared to land acquisition, they are less traumatic and exemplify how ordinary people, often deemed to silence and invisibility, inhabited these large-scale technological meta systems and their capacities to shape them. The above elaborated examples are shorter or longer, but both timely delimited episodes of interactions with infrastructural projects. Apart from those there are also continual engagements with infrastructures by ordinary people. Historians in other parts of the world have also explored these lasting interactions with infrastructure and their effects on the shaping of historical trajectories of political and social realms. Prasad's work on

²⁴ François Jarrige, E. P. Thompson; <https://laviedesidees.fr/E-P-Thompson-A-Life-of-Struggle> [assessed 2023-10-23].

colonial India makes this very clear: the way in which ordinary people (in his context colonial subjects) contested, adapted, accommodated to the increasing presence of infrastructures (in his case railways) shaped the political, social history India, in both colonial and post-colonial settings.²⁵

Processes of negotiated technologies have global analogies and the case of Yugoslavia was no exception to it. One of the questions that some of the authors touch upon, and which certainly needs to be explored further, is the question of how ordinary people navigated these new infrastructures and how it shaped their everyday life. Questions about the popular understanding of space, the mobility and not least the speed of movement across space arise as important cornerstones in the inquire of the ubiquitous, quotidian and ordinary ontology of infrastructures.

Posing these questions does not mean that we leave the political domain. Instead, these questions lend themselves to the analysis of the political domain as it stretches out to an important critical political constituency, and that is ordinary people as political subjects or citizens. The ways in which people negotiate with infrastructures, such as railways, roads, housing programs, water supplies, is also about how people engage with state power. These perspectives require questions about daily routines and experiences of railways, roads, institutional spaces by the Yugoslav society and the ways in which they shaped their very historical presence in the Yugoslav spaces. Such an approach looks not only at how local people were *affected* by the making of infrastructures, but also how they *experienced* the increasing presence of infrastructures and their structural powers, and how they *acted* in regard to this reinforced, challenged or even altered them. This requests a methodological retooling, of course. Apart from state-generated records on different administrative levels, such questions require a broader range of the type of records we might need to engage with ethnographic works, oral history, ego documents, individual's descriptions of journeys - be it railway, motorway, first flight etc. that give us another dimension of the political relationships between states and citizens.

A Quest for Environmental Perspectives on Infrastructures

Finally, I would like to end this chapter by opening up for new perspectives for further research on infrastructures in Southeastern Europe. To conclude, the chapters in this anthology offer important revisions to the historiography on the two Yugoslavias and Southeastern Europe. They do so in two ways - thematically and conceptually. Thematically by elevating infrastructures as a phenomenon worth being analyzed in its multifacetedness and conceptually by taking infrastructure as an empirical prism to understand broader issues of state-building processes in the two Yugoslavias and their transformative effects on politics and

²⁵ Prasad, "Tracks of Change", 6.

society. However, one important aspect that remains untreated in the chapters is infrastructures in relation to environment and ecology in the Yugoslav spaces.

An environmentally conscious approach to the history of infrastructures in Yugoslavia is certainly a research desideratum that waits for future research generations to be brought up and studied. One central question that needs to be addressed and that has the potential to give more nuanced insights on the commanding capacities of the two Yugoslavias in their state-building processes is about the ways in which nature and ecology of the respective space set both possibilities and limits to the technical operations of infrastructures and how these challenges were dealt with.

Infrastructure and ecology are linked synergistically. We are reminded of it by the ‘naturalized basis’ of infrastructure. Their very presence is realized through nature seen as resource. Thus, infrastructure precludes extractivist processes, penetration into natural habitats that are transformed, or rather destroyed for the sake of infrastructure.²⁶ In most cases the natural ecosystems, which serve as the material base for infrastructure, are not necessarily bound to the place of the infrastructure construction. Often they are remote from these building sites. In the Yugoslav case, the construction of railways relied on the massive deforestation processes that were geographically focused in Bosnia, which eventually ended with the extinction of these types of broadleaved forests in the region. Another environmental disaster caused by infrastructures were the wood impregnation techniques that were used in the late 19th and early 20th century. Based on highly persistent creosote material this mode of railway maintenance soon led to disastrous pollution of water bodies in Bosnia.²⁷ Apart from nature, deforestation for the sake of infrastructure building also had a huge impact on the local people in Bosnia, whose lives were much integrated with the forests as their livelihoods often depended on the access to the very same forests. Thus, the environmental perspective on infrastructures elevates other types of afterlives of technology in terms of wicked legacies of infrastructures with hazardous long-term threats for both society and ecology.²⁸

Infrastructures not only change environments, but also create new ones. William Cronon has described these processes as the transition from ‘first nature’ to ‘second nature’. In contrast to first nature that reflects primitive, untouched natural landscapes, second nature stands for “transformative geography of landscapes and environments associated with investment in second nature”.²⁹ These two natures are materialities that interact in different ways. They can compete but

²⁶ Sigfried Giedion, *Building in France, building in iron, building in ferroconcrete* (Los Angeles: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995).

²⁷ Meiske, Empire, "Extraction and Externalization".

²⁸ Iva Lučić, "Law of the Forest: Early Legal Governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Inter-Imperial Transition between Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Rule, 1878–1901", *Slavic Review* 81:3 (2022), 585–608.

²⁹ Gordon Winder & Andreas Dix, "Introduction: Trading Environment", in Gordon Winder, Andreas Dix (Eds.), *Trading Environments: Frontiers, Commercial Knowledge and Environmental Transformation, 1750-1990* (New York: Routledge 2016), 7.

also complement each other. On the one hand the construction of e.g., railways or building of road networks alters the very environment and the spaces, in which infrastructures materialize. A once quiet forest place or a wilderness can be turned into a passage of frequent railway traffic that adds not only noise to the place, but can cause pollution, fires, land erosions and a widespread destruction of habitat. What alters the place of infrastructure is also its very connectedness which is enabled by infrastructure. Space gets transformed as it becomes a part of a nationally and sometimes also internationally integrated economy.³⁰

Finally, infrastructures are essential in the consolidation process of such socio-natures. They reflect very specific, modified human-nature relations. For the sake of modernity and progress, infrastructures built throughout the 19th and mid-20th centuries reflect the idea of the human mastering the nature. Today, such approaches are seen as old-fashioned. Led by the idea of sustainable infrastructures, new projects take a more reciprocal human-nature or rather nature-based approach that aims to set infrastructure in harmony with the ecology of its place.³¹ A sensitive optics for the ways in which the different Yugoslav states dealt with environmental challenges to their respective infrastructural projects promises to tell us about their commanding capacities of these polities, their styles of reasoning and (non) changing rationalities. This research remains for future generations to explore.³²

³⁰ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: WW Norton, 1991), xiv.

³¹ Socio-ecological reshaping of European Cities and Metropolitan Areas, <https://catreshapecities.wixsite.com/my-site> [assessed 2023-10-14].

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