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Introduction

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More than 30 years since the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, the talk about this country is still highly emotionally charged and situated in the registers of passion, pain, sentimental recollections, or nostalgia. However, what if we go further and take the sphere of affective, sensorial, and embodied as fundamental to understanding the historical project of Yugoslavia and its afterlives? The chapters in this book address this question and explore how affect is simultaneously constitutive to and unsettling of the social lives in the (post-)Yugoslav space in its different temporalities. We aim to discuss how the attempts to conceptually capture our social realities in their messy nature raise a more general question about how we have thought and written about (post-) Yugoslavia in particular historical moments.

The task of theorizing the work of affect means understanding social realities in their constant transformations, which often challenge not only the expected politics of belonging, identifications, and solidarities but also how we (as scholars) give them a socio-political meaning.[1] In doing that, we tend to show that focusing on affect enables observing the instances of identification and social dynamics beyond an exclusive focus on the ethno-national (and increasingly racial) differences emphasized in the scholarly examinations of this geographical region.

We start from the assumption that affect has complicated the picture of the social realities during Yugoslavia and in the post-Yugoslav present and that it unveils fleeting and indeterminate interactions, encounters, and relationalities

1 Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth write that affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters but also its non-belonging (2010, 2).

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that profoundly shape our social worlds. However, our interest is not in exploring affect as a universal, hidden force that drives social relations. This volume comes at a moment when universalizing discourses and approaches are gaining significant appeal in the research of state socialism and its aftermath. There is an increased interest in looking at the socialist and post-socialist world through the perspectives of global networks of power, subordination, and "the global formation of race" (Baker 2018). The region's social, political, and cultural formations, encounters, and inequalities are examined in their global constellations, often through an explanatory apparatus that universalizes quite diverse (local, regional) contexts and historical periods. Through the lenses of postcolonial critique and global history, scholars have encouraged an understanding of Yugoslavia's ambiguous position that was subjected to long-lasting frictions between hegemonic colonial powers and exploited populations and classes. However, colonialism, post-colonialism, and decoloniality, and related concepts often serve as metaphors that provide a framework in which very diverse historical realities and processes are positioned, regardless of the actual existence of both the colonizer and the colonized. The (post-)Yugoslav space and the Balkans are frequent but not exclusive subjects of such (re)positioning,[2] usually used as an example (often with other post-socialist countries) that destabilizes the colonizer-colonized binary due to its specific semi-peripheral position toward Europe/West and yet implicit identification with European whiteness.[3] Still, the global approach, informed by postcolonial theory rests on (and often

2 In his article on Ukraine and its position in Europe in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea, Timothy Snider interprets processes of integration and disintegration as colonization and decolonization. According to Snyder, "colonization began to yield to decolonization in the 20th century in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but in the 19th century in Europe. Balkan revolutions against Ottoman rule, usually categorized as national, were the beginning of the decolonial moment" (2015, 696). For theoretical approaches that engage with the intersection between post-socialist and post-colonial, see Tlostanova (2012) and Koobak, Tlostanova, and Thapar-Björkert (2021).

3 About the need for reclaiming the Global East as a liminal space that complicates the notions of North and South, see Müller (2020). For the ambiguous position of Yugoslavia in the global racial entanglement, see Baker (2018), and for post-socialist Eastern Europe's engagement with the politics of race, see Imre (2005) and Mark and Betts (2022).

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perpetuates) hierarchical distinctions between core and periphery, metropole and province, or center and margin.

While we do not deny the value of the global perspective in explorations of (post-)Yugoslav social worlds, we tend to embrace such epistemological promises only to the extent that they do not dismiss the concrete historical and material contexts in their dynamic and lived manifestations. We are keen to keep the perspective that is historically specific and informed, that is, "in which time-bound and place-bound specificity counts" (Todorova 2015, 711). Likewise, without reducing it to a universalized embodied intensity, we discuss how affect, translated between multiple registers—discursive, cognitive, and visceral—is operationalized and historically and culturally situated for allowing particular social relations, marking particular bodies and differences (or equality) among them. We draw on the work of scholars who offer a sophisticated interpretation of affect that is placed beyond the dichotomy between culturally situated and universalizing approaches, as they call for a recognition of the existence of an "escaping autonomy" which is embedded in the concrete historical, cultural, social, and political environment.[4] Therefore, our analysis foregrounds the explanatory capacities of affect in its historical and context-specific workings in different historical periods, ranging from pre-World War II Yugoslavia to post-Yugoslav societies.

After Affect

"We are in the moment after the affective moment," wrote Nigel Thrift in his essay from 2010, claiming that the scholarship of affect had moved away from simply arguing that affect is a propelling explanatory concept. New studies draw attention to the specific forms and works of affect in distinct political

4 Such as the works of Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009; White 2011, 2017; Ahmed 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Gill 2017; Newell 2018; Garcia 2020 and Hofman 2020.

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and cultural situations, thus deepening existing theoretical and methodological approaches (Thrift 2010, 289). Thrift was right in many aspects: 12 years later, at the moment this book was taking shape, affect has been a well-established field of inquiry. Some would say "so well-established" that it has become an academic fashion or even an "empty concept," a label often circulating in scholarly works to prove their timeliness. However, precisely this "sense" of omnipresence makes the exploration that concentrates on affect either the exclusive domain of "affect theorists" or underacknowledged in its full explanatory capacity by other scholars.

Why then write another book on affect *after affect*? For us, after affect is more than a phase in the development an explanatory field. Thinking *after affect* is the ability to conceptually engage with the field of embodied, sensorial, and material in all its contradictions, limits, and potentialities.[5] For this reason, in this introduction, we decided not to delve into yet another overview of the dominant streams in theorizing affect or offer a programmatic approach to affect and what it brings to the epistemological turn (Jansen 2016, 63). We made this decision not simply because there are already many excellent reflections on the genealogy of affect studies[6] or because we do not believe in the epistemological move an affect-oriented view makes. This book is situated after affect in that it tends to engage exactly with the tensions and blank spots in the vast field of inquiry that claims to bring "an (affective) turn" in humanities and social sciences.

As a result of such an epistemic position, while chapters in this book draw on the broader range of approaches that are today subsumed under the "affect theory," our take on affect is deeply contextually informed and, in many ways, tends to provincialize the theory production on affect. The theorizations of

5 As suggested by the organizers of the recent conference entitled "AfterAffects," we need to move beyond an "affective turn" that has been superseded or foreclosed and instead reimagine the limits and affordances of the affect theory and its methods (The University of Chicago n.d.). See also Anna Gibbs's text "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication" (2010).

6 For example, see Laszczkowski and Reeves (2018) and Desai-Stephens and Reisnour (2020).

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affect, dominantly produced in the Global North/Anglophone academia, are often blind to the power hierarchies behind the presumed "universality" of the power to affect and be affected. As Xine Yao, in her book *Disaffected*, points out, emotional expression is not simply the signifier of a "universal human" but is deeply conditioned by the very operation of "humanity," as it is itself based on an exclusion of the Other, to whom the very possibility to be included into this category is denied and whose feelings are not recognized as such (2021, 5). She joins the scholars who are attentive to the epistemic erasures and argue for turning to the context and scope to challenge Western intellectual tradition in studying affect.[7] We concur with such claims and draw on the existing theorizations in this field while simultaneously nurturing the explanatory apparatus used to capture affect arising from the distinct historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts of the (post-)Yugoslav space. While we would say more about the context-specific ways to denote the very diverse and rich social lives of affect (such as *merak*, *sevdah*, *čaga*, *dert*) later in the text, here, we would like to emphasize that the contributions in this volume tend to build on the historically informed, process-oriented workings of affect.

In doing that, the ontological status of affect, which is key to the "disparate nature of affect studies" (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2017, 4), does not appear relevant. Thus, we are not perpetuating the split based on the conceptual distinction between affect and emotion and the two strands of theorizing affect: on the one hand, by theorists who, drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and Massumi (1995; 2002), claim affect's autonomy from the social constructivism and understand it as a living intensity that connects us to the world and matter, and which cannot be "reduced" to subjective feeling; and, on the other hand, by theorists who refuse this gap and the existence of something—regardless of being visceral, sensory, tactile, and unconscious—that can "exceed" the capture by socio-cultural context (Mazzarella 2009; Rutherford 2016; White 2017).

7 As suggested by Gill (2017, 188–89); see also Mankekar and Gupta (2016).

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For us, in the words of affect theory, affect is both "fleeting" and "sticky." In recognizing these qualities, we embrace its transitive ontology (Yao 2021, 5) and its attachment to subjects and objects, as Sara Ahmed puts it (2010). Some contributions in this book sustain the division between affect and emotion and consider affect an autonomous force. Mišo Kapetanović, for example, discusses encounters among post-Yugoslav migrant workers as constituted by a "never-to-be-conscious autonomic reminder" (Massumi 2002, 25), something that inhabits bodies of post-Yugoslavs and allows them to recognize each other's commonalities, without establishing communalities. Marina Simić similarly draws on Deleuze and Guattari, whose emphasis on an encounter between bodies (including non-human bodies) helps her to theorize how affect is key to politics of (un)becoming. Others do not see the affect-emotion gap as productive and use affect, emotions, feelings, and sentiments interchangeably, placing an emphasis on the subjectively recognized affective states, mediated and signified in the representation or discourse. However, they all agree on the relational capacity of affect (Slaby 2016) and its ability to connect personal and interpresonal, social and visceral.

The Aesthetics and the Social

At the center of our conceptual engagement is not what affect *is* but what affect *does*, which is the key question many theorists pose (see Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004; Murphie and Bertelsen 2010, 140). In her seminal work, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed argues for the "sociality of emotions" (2004, 8). For her, we are not simply inhabited by affects and emotions, but they establish the surfaces and boundaries between individual, collective, and social worlds (2004, 10). This emphasis on sociality resonates not only with our theoretical strivings but also with the material upon this book is built. The chapters engage with music, sound, film, and literature in their affective potentiality through which socialities materialize. The authors explore how affective engagements with specific musical genres, performances, or practices of listening, sound environments, and film and literary works on/from the region weave or dissolve

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the social fabric, senses of belonging, and social formations in often unexpected and contradictory ways.

Our approach aligns with the insights of numerous scholars from different disciplines for whom the expressive practices and aesthetics are not some "surplus" of the political realm but its inherent element.[8] In particular, scholars inspired by Jacques Rancière's thought on politics as the "distribution of the sensible and the visible" pay attention to sensory perception as the most fundamental dimension of political and social relations (Moreno and Steingo 2012; Sykes 2015; Steingo 2016; Benčin 2019). For example, for Gavin Steingo, aesthetics is neither related to a particular artistic practice or object nor is it a theory of the beautiful and its judgment but a particular mode of sensory experience (2016, 6). He claims that aesthetics should be taken seriously if we want to understand the potential of "this experiential modality for particular political action" (2016, 20).

This book is driven by the same desire to expand the understanding of social forces through the affective dynamics governed by the content, practices, and behaviors usually considered entertaining, banal, or quotidian, and, therefore, "apolitical." Going against that grain, in our consideration, we focus on the relationality of affect in its political potentiality, exploring how the sensorial and embodied draw attention toward subtle, fleeting, dynamic forms of sociality and their political effects. For instance, Martin Pogačar in his chapter attends to the role of mundane pop-entertainment music in boosting national(ist) sentiments and tracks how the notions of Slovenian exceptionalism and victimhood were affectively disseminated by the popular band Agropop. Through mixing various musical styles and its "humorous" take on the banal, quotidian, and "apolitical" topics, which can hardly be attached to any "real" political engagement (in comparison to punk or other alternative musical genres), Agropop's music affectively resonateed with the majority of Slovenians.

8 Among many others, Ahmed 2004; Anderson 2010; Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020, and Hofman 2020.

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Nevertheless, we agree that building an argument on fleeting and situational social relations demands a profound theorization of denials, limits, and failures. Because of that, we are cautious in dealing with one part of the literature on affect, which argues for its presumed ability to exceed power relations. Many authors assert that attending to affect becomes synonymous with a promise (Anderson 2010; Muehlebach 2013). They critically address the tendency to theorize affect's key role in transformative encounters and becomings exclusively in a positive light often ignore the processes of affective alienation, isolation, and distance, usually attached to the marginalized or unrecognized social strata (Yao 2021, 11). In our examination, we share the stance that the centrality of affect's political promise for scholars derives from the crisis-riddled scholarship in humanities (Hemmings 2005, 551) but also from the more general urge to offer a theoretical "way out" from the totalizing sense of global neoliberalism, followed by the feelings of apathy and exhaustion, also in terms of theoretical dead ends (Hofman 2020).

The chapters in this volume challenge a "promise" of affect in bringing a "new politics" detached from the socio-political mechanisms and power struggles. Instead, drawing on the abovementioned claim that social realities and political projects are deeply affect-imbued, we see the conceptual power of affect in connecting the micro and macro levels of political lives. Our view—focused on the expressive practices of playing, singing, listening, and acting—attends to the affective dynamics of political mechanisms in their mundane and ordinary existences. In doing that, we stand in between two dominant strategies: one that takes affect as a category to understand/emphasize new forms of political communities and often obscures the social conflict and tensions, and the other that invests much explanatory potential in the fixed social categories, predominantly ethno-national identities and is, therefore, less nuanced in explaining the (post-)Yugoslav social worlds in their hectic materialities and realities. We study an ability to affect upon and be affected by expressive means as deeply attached to the material and political conditions of life and labor, power relations in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and race, social subordination, inequalities, and exploitation. Therefore, we critically

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engage with the conceptual gap between the fields of affect or aesthetic on the one hand, and the concrete material, political, and social realities, on the other (Reber 2016; White 2017; Hofman 2020; Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020; Garland 2021). In the context of former Yugoslavia, this means considering several profound shifts in political systems, economy, and state formation from the pre-World War II monarchy through the socialist project, its dissolution and the violent ethnic wars, and the present post-socialist neoliberal Yugoslav states.

Theorizing (Post-)Yugoslav Affective Regimes

We can hardly say that scholars did not recognize the significance of emotion- and affect-centered views for exploring the radical societal transformations in the region. The collapse of socialism was the fertile ground for examining the intense emotions of the citizens of the former Second World. In the volume *Post-socialism and the Politics of Emotion in Central and Eastern Europe*, Maruša Svašek writes that post-socialist Europe is a fascinating area of research from the perspective of emotion (2006, 2). Those are not individual emotional reactions, she argues, but have to be understood in the light of specific temporality of the system change: in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of socialism, the dominant emotions were joy, hope, desire, enthusiasm, and euphoria, mixed with fear, hatred, and sorrow (2006, 9). Soon after, when people faced the broken promises of "democratic transition," their (emotional) lives were structured by nostalgia, anger, and outrage.

While Svašek's claim that emotions have been produced, felt, objectified, and politicized in specific ways in the post-socialist contexts (2006, 3) is valuable, it implicitly reproduces the teleological paradigm about the "old world that is falling apart and a new world coming into being." Such an approach is deeply ingrained into the western-liberal transitional paradigm about the post-socialist societies as taking a "path" from the authoritarian past to a democratic future, which dominated scholarly production about the region. Like

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many others who offer a critical examination of the narrative of transition and totalitarian paradigm,[9] we refuse the teleological view and employ affect to get an insight into the mechanisms of social lives that can not be easily subsumed under the narrative of the radical socio-political break.

The chapters in this book demonstrate how the fall of socialism and the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, while they entailed an array of profound societal transformations, cannot be reduced to the old/new world narratives. Old practices were not simply replaced with new ones; the processual and unpredictable dynamics of social lives testify how rupture and break coexisted with continuations and prolongations. As Martin Pogačar shows in his chapter, already in the 1980s, some pop-cultural genres successfully nurtured the intense feelings of "national re-connecting," which would be utilized by the official ethno-nationalist politics at the beginning of the 1990s.

While emphasizing continuities, we fully acknowledge Yugoslavia's bloody breakup in its extreme affectivity. The expressions used to operationalize such an extreme event, usually through the categories of craziness or wildness, indicate the "irrational" state of accumulated feelings and intensive affective dynamics that (re)constituted everyday lives and social formations across the region. How people feel and affectively engage with the social condition of distress, violence, loss, and instability has been of particular interest to scholars who, in the last decade, have engaged with the certain types of affect and emotion not as simply individual(ized) reactions to the historical moments of rupture but as a way people position themselves in the world of ethno-nationalism, war, displacement, impoverishment, and dispossession. Although it does not directly build on the theoretical vocabulary of affect theory, we can follow the long-standing scholarly interest in hope and its specific affective modalities in the region.[10] Hope, as a future-oriented

9 For a recent discussion of the totalitarian paradigm and its application in the post-Yugoslav context, see Petrović 2012, Bailyn, Jelača, and Lugarić 2018, and Kirn (2019, 4–5).

10 See Greenberg 2010; Jansen 2015; 2016; Razsa 2015; Jovanović 2018; Kurtović and Sargsyan 2019.

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affect or disposition (Jansen 2015), helps people to navigate the uncertainty of lives and the intense feelings of disappointment (Greenberg 2010; 2014; Greenberg and Muir 2022), abandonment, and (spatiotemporal) entrapment (Jansen 2015). Those are the result of losing a sense of normal life, a "peaceful, secure, comfortable, relaxed and predictably improving trajectories gridded in a state-ensured system," as Stef Jansen writes about his interlocutors in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019).

A loss of the sense of future derives from "the actually existing and lived experience of the death of utopia" (Greenberg 2016, 25), which resulted in the fact that the chaos/normality binary dominated the narratives of not only the people living in the region but also the ones who left the country, as in the case of Serbia, writes Marko Živković (2000) and as Marina Simić reflects upon in her chapter. Jessica Greenberg, however, observed that the frustration with the political and social worlds in which post-Yugoslavs found themselves does not place hope and disappointment as a binary but instead places the disappointment in the center of the affective structure of democracy (2016, 35). Ivan Rajković similarly engages with a deficit of structural agency of the post-socialist factory workers, which he defines as "demoralization." He reveals how the affective mix of enjoyment and failure, ridicule and shame "became an affective register through which people recognized how larger state shifts have incapacitated them: not simply by devaluing their labor and expelling them from the welfare state, but by still partially encompassing their position and yet rendering it illegitimate, and reminding them of the creative selves they had to abandon" (2018, 49). In a similar vein, Danijela Majstorović recently explored how structural injustice, economic inequality, and struggles for equality are deeply visceral—they were "tattooed on the bodies"—and are constitutive to the process of subjectivization of "peripheral selves" in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021, 7).

Simultaneously, nostalgia, a past-oriented emotion closely related to the affects of loss and longing (Jansen 2005), has had a long-standing interpretative currency in scholarly attempts to explain the relationship to the Yugoslav past and has probably been the most explored affective state in the

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region. Andrew Gilbert points to this disproportionate focus on nostalgia and argues for "a need to go beyond nostalgia in order to identify and analyze a broader range of meaning and action in the creation and deployment of representations of the past" (2019, 295). The critique of nostalgia as an analytical concept has come from other scholars as well: for example, Maja Breznik and Rastko Močnik argue that the heterogeneity of phenomena subsumed under the label of (Yugo)nostalgia "makes it impossible to fix nostalgia as a scientific concept" (2022, 1061), while Reana Senjković (2021) is critical of labeling memories of life and work in socialism as nostalgic because it diminishes the legitimacy of these memories. Senjković's argument points not only to the widespread negative societal but also to scholarly assessments of nostalgia as an unproductive, passive, and paralyzing feeling, a "pining for social safety that never really existed" (Scribner 2003, 11), as the banal commodification of socialist objects and symbols (and, as Nadkarny and Shevchenko lucidly note, as the triumph of capitalism), or proof of dangerous, atavistic cultural attachments (2014, 63), false consciousness (Gille 2010, 283), and malady (Todorova 2010, 2). Such views point to the broader power relations in which "nostalgia talk participates in a civilizational discourse of the *longue durée* that offers the solid lump of Eastern European pastness as the base point from which Western Europe charts its lightness, its futurity, indeed its very "Europeanness" (Boyer 2010, 22; see also Lankauskas 2014). They also point to a class-based affective economy that has to do with the essential question of who can have the power to be affected by nostalgia (Petrović 2020; 2022). In relation to this question, Tanja Petrović offers a reading of Yugonostalgia in this volume that highlights it not only as an affective attachment to particular politics of belonging, but also as a way of regaining an agency through an ability to be affected by the utopian dispositions of socialist past.

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"The Unspeakable Character of Reality" [11]

Chapters in this book tend to deal less with the particular types of unsettling, "ugly feelings" that constitute subjectivities in the context of profound post-socialist political and economic changes. They draw from the assumption that affects are not positive and negative "per se" but rather "neutral" (Gilbert 2004) and that our analytical attempts to give them socio-political meaning depend on the various factors. In other words, while we do not neglect the existence of specific types of affects that mark the post-socialist realities, we are more interested in the continuities that do not easily ally with the accepted temporalizations of pre/post or "old"/"new" realities. The processual, *longue durée* perspective reveals affective attachments as they unfold in historically specific contexts and constantly get new shapes and meanings in different historical moments, contexts, and for different (groups of) people. We, therefore, join a relatively small number of texts that consider affect in its historical modalities.[12]

The hope, disappointment, yearning, and longing, while attached and explored in relation to the particular moment of Yugoslav dissolution, have a much longer presence and have shaped the social lives in the region throughout different historical times. The expressive field proves such a presence and raises the question of the "direct" connections between particular feelings and the socio-political condition when we, as scholars, tend to theorize life intensities that are difficult to grasp or verbalize. Does the analytical reflection of to transformative socio-political moments as imbued by affective intensities allow us to attach particular meanings to the more static categories of "identity," "power," "nation," and "state"?

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11 A quote from Mattijs van de Port's book *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (1998, 202).

12 The volume draws on the works that call for the historicization of affect (see Gray 2013; Hunt 2014; Jansen 2015; 2016; Arunima et al. 2021) and the studies that address the topic of affect/emotion/senses from the perspective of the post-socialist world, primarily, the volumes *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* by Steinberg and Sobol (2011) and *Sensitive Objects: Affect and Material Culture* by Frykman and Povrzanović Frykman (2016).

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This question is particularly relevant in the post-Yugoslav context, where the explorations of the recent past were based on the discourses of division, rupture, and devastation, as we elaborated in the previous section. This also means that affect is employed in understanding the incomprehensible behaviors and social-political state of confusion, dismay, and the ethno-national (and recently ethno-racial) relations, divisions, and hierarchies. While we wholly recognize a necessity to understand the works of affect within the contexts/ factors that "determinate" them (Jansen 2019), we argue for caution when using the situational, fleeting nature of affective dynamics to "prove" the socio-political volatility, instability or fracture or the marginalized and suppressed individuals or groups.

As a starting point for this scholarly endeavor, we revisit a study published 25 years ago that engaged with the issues of ethnicity, race, and affect in the (post-) Yugoslav context, Mattijs van de Port's book *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (1998). We found this book to be one of the first attempts to ethnographically capture how affective regimes, produced by and through music, (re)constitute the Yugoslav region's social realities. This book opens the questions related to affect/senses/body/emotions, which are being raised almost two decades later within the "affective turn." For van de Port, conducting fieldwork in the wake of the Yugoslav wars posed a necessity for dealing with the question of analytical limits when capturing the elusive and incomprehensible aspects of social realities. "Retrospective rationalization" (1998, 12), he writes, does not apply to the "drama" of war-torn societies. It demands going beyond the usual explanatory models and going to the "uncharted territories," which enables understanding the role of affect or what he calls the "unreason" in the dramatic events in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The key question for him is how to articulate such "raw reality" in an academic interpretation, escaping the very explicability (1998, 26), sensing the truth as something beyond reason and beyond verbalization or, in his words, "outside the world of the stories" (1998, 211). "Chaos" that escapes rationalization of classification, in his view, demands embracing "a path of the body" (1998, 208) or a true reality beyond representation (1998, 215). Thus, on the theoretical level, van de Port's

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employment of the vocabulary of precultural, irrational, non-verbal, and formless (1998, 211) offers a unique opportunity for revisiting the conceptual potential of affect and reflecting on the limits of its epistemological employments.

For authors in this volume, van de Port's book serves as a starting point for a critical discussion of the presumptions, logics, and consequences of employing analytical lenses of affect in the concrete (post-)Yugoslav spatiotemporality. It is also one of the first publications to explore the aesthetic experiences (performing and listening to music in Gypsy bars— *kafana*[13]) as a way to understand the broader socio-political context in its affective intensity and elusiveness. At the same time, van de Port's book exposed the limits of the approach that employed affect as tightly bound to ethno-racial identity and linked it to larger, teleological narratives that essentialized the difference of the Balkans vis-à-vis European modernity. For this reason, van de Port's book serves as a good ground for unsettling the presumptions and logics behind the conceptual intersection between affect and the social in the (post-)Yugoslav space. The chapters collected here thus aim to reconnect debates on affect, ethnicity, race, gender, and other identitarian categories in the former Yugoslavia with discrete genealogies of these concepts as they unfold in and about the region itself and in relation to its specific histories, as well as to concrete material, economic, and social conditions marking particular points in time within these histories.

Affect and the Politics of Othering

The focus on ethno-national identities has dominated the scholarly discourses about the region in the last thirty years. The ethnic identification, as shaped in

13 While he refers to *kafana* as a Gypsy bar, we stick with the original term for its contextual notion that is not particularly attached to any ethnic group or identity but denotes a space (a bar, a pub, a tavern) that has historically been a ubiquitous environment for socializing in the eastern part of Yugoslavia that includes drinking, eating, and listening to music. It is also a key space for professional music-making, see Đorđević (2011) and Hofman (2015). We use the term Gypsy when discuss the discourses and imaginations attached to Roma people.

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opposition to an ethnic "Other," was the central preoccupation of the literature engaged with nation-building after the breakup of Yugoslavia, particularly in the Western academia (see Halpern and Kideckel 2000; Wilmer 2002; Kolsto 2009). The fact that the region went through ethnic wars resulted in the scholarly focus on ethnic relations, nationalism, and conflict, which presumably overshadowed the previous politics of brotherhood and unity.

These approaches (re)opened the debate of the imperial legacies and the discourses of Balkanism and Orientalism as (still) being the primary mechanism that constitutes the social formations in the region.[14] The debates concentrated on the ambiguous position of the area of former Yugoslavia, as simultaneously the subject of a European gaze and an entity reproducing that Eurocentric gaze either on internal (Roma, Albanians) or external others (e.g., Africans). Lately, there has been a surge of new interest in (post-)Yugoslav manifestations of ethno-racial inequality, greatly influenced by the globalized discourse of race and the decolonial paradigm.

The voices critical to this rapidly growing scholarship call for historical accuracy and warn that an epistemological operation that takes the current global condition as postcolonial, regardless of the distinct historical and socio-political trajectories, not only obscures the complexities of the construction of Otherness and practices of Othering in their own spatiotemporal specificities but also subjects discrete history of Yugoslavia to teleological narratives and the logic of historical inevitability (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2016). It seems that Yugoslav socialism, its self-management, and the international politics of non-alignment are particularly prone to such subjection; they are primarily observed through the prism of eventual (and inevitable) failure, with a gaze narrowed to recognize

14 According to Todorova, Orient is an unquestionable Other to Europe, while the Balkans is its part and therefore a European internal or semi-Other. Orientalism and Balkanism also presuppose a different level/type of "Othering": since Orient is more distant, it is imagined in elusive terms as a place of freedom and wealth, civilization, and mystical power, while the Balkans is less imaginative, more real, concrete, savage, and deprived of wealth (1997). "Othering," as many studies show, does not simply presume an oppositional but a relational relationship, as Other is always a constitutive part of the "Self."

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racial differences, pervasive colonial styles and conventions, and tropes of white dominance, ignorance, and profit extraction'[15] while rendering invisible the future-oriented imaginaries and promises, as well as past decolonial practices that were intrinsic to the history of the 20th century alternatives and practices of solidarity (Petrović 2021; Spaskovska 2021).

Another problem with the approaches that place the identity dynamics in (the former) Yugoslavia into global frameworks of racial difference, colonialism, and decoloniality is that they are mainly blind for or uninterested in the internal logic of othering and its political and economic ramifications. Katarina Peović shows how this blind spot is not solely a characteristic of academic discourses: firmly situating her analysis of Croatian anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourses within the context of economic relations, she points to the fact that while Croatian politicians and media perpetuate xenophobic narratives, they persistently omit the economic deprivation of Croatian citizens within the EU context as an important factor shaping these discourses (2022). In other words, analyzing the practices of Othering exclusively at the level of ethno-national and ethno-racial identities, the dominant views often exclude other forms of inequalities, particularly the ones based on economy and class.

Affect, we suggest, is a fruitful terrain for nuanced theorization that reveals the blank spots in the dominant orientation toward ethnicity and race in exploring social relations and inequalities in the region. It reveals how the discourses of Balkanism/Orientalism, when attached to the contemporary explanatory frameworks of the politics of difference, focusing on subordination, exclusion, and marginalization, are less invested in exploring the solidarities, commonalities, and connections. Simultaneously, the affect-oriented view we offer challenges an exclusive focus on "identity" (ethno-national, racial) when discussing the social inequalities and hierarchies that diminish the broader mechanisms of political economy and structures of inequality based on profit and capital.

15 See Sretenovic 2004; Krstić 2010; Kilibarda 2010; Vučetić 2017; Baker 2018; Subotic and Vucetic 2019 and Rexhepi 2022.

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Sevdah and Other Instances of the Irrational

Sevdah, *merak, dert*, or *čaga*—explored in several chapters in this book—are terms that have been used to describe the contextually specific and highly ambiguous affective dynamics, predominantly but not exclusively through music listening and performing.[16] As categories used to denote contextually-specific affects, and affective states, they are proof of the long-lasting existence of local vocabulary used to capture non-verbal, embodied, and sensorial dimensions of social worlds.

While writing about people's evocation of the "normal lives" in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stef Jansen made an essential distinction between "hoping for normal lives" and longing to hope for them (2019), examining the latter through the affect of yearning (*čežnja*). He writes: "As a disposition or affect, yearning has much in common with hope. But the term emphasizes duration: yearning is more persistent, continuous, prolonged" (2019). For him, yearning resonates with *sevdah*, a profoundly ambiguous affect mostly associated with the particular musical genre and experience deriving from it (Jansen 2019).

Sevdah and its music counterpart *sevdalinka*[17] testify how the work of affect has been historically ingrained in the processes of identification, politics of belonging, and political projects in the region. Those categories and affective dispositions attached to them are proof of the subtle historical mechanisms of constructing the Other and the struggles over self-positioning and political belonging in the East and West, Europe, Balkan, and Orient.[18] The continuous inscription of different layers of meaning over those terms, which are highly

16 In contrast to *sevdah*, which also denotes the particular musical genre, other terms are used to denote mixed feelings of longing, yearning, pain, and pleasure—a direct realization of affect in its messy experiential notion.

17 Both terms may refer to the musical genre, but *sevdalinka* is exclusively attached to the musical genre, a song. For a more detailed overview of the history of the genre, see Imamović (2016).

18 In the words of Iva Nenić, those terms are highly relational and changeable but "successfully combine and alter the idioms of 'Oriental,' 'Occidental' and 'ours' in different sociocultural formations" (2015, 266).

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relational and changeable, is well documented by the number of scholars who explored *sevdalinka* in the light of complex historical processes in the region. With its particular association with the Ottoman legacy, *sevdalinka* is the terrain for both inscribing and destabilizing the dominance of the European notion of modernity or civilization. In its messy affective disposition, sentimentalism, joy, melancholia, *sevdah* can be felt by the people culturally equipped to experience it but is not out of the reach of others since it produces a universal feeling (Kozorog and Bartulović 2016, 172) that you "fall into" or "it inhabits you," beyond "straightforward willful human intervention" (Jansen 2019). For this reason, it has been simultaneously instrumentalized for nation-building projects (the Muslim identity and ethnic belonging) and the transnational solidarities and connections in the region.

Our examination of *sevdah*, *merak*, *dert*, or *čaga* opens a perspective on how the very (in)capacity to affect and be affected has been used in the contingent reconstituting of the social relations, which cannot be reduced to discourses of Balkanism/Orientalism. The chapters' engagement with the work of affect complicates the processes of identification based on ethnic-national-racial differences. By offering a close reading of the work of philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković, the opening chapter by Alenka Bartulović shows that *sevdah*, as "the politics of soul," played an important role in constituting the foundation for common Yugoslav identity in the first Yugoslavia. Soulfulness—as an ability to experience and express "raw" emotion—has not been simply attached to the stereotypical/Western-centric view of the Balkan's Otherness but was crucial for building a sense of a new national community by transgressing the internal division based on separate (Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) imperial legacies. Affectivity attached to performing and listening to *sevdalinka*, primarily expressed as melancholy that makes Yugoslavs "different" from their "more European" neighbors, Bartulović further examines, in the course of the dissolution of Yugoslavia gained another layer of interpretation. *Sevdalinka* performances by Bosnian refugees in the post-Yugoslav Slovenia, contrary to expectations, were not "ethnically marked" but recalled the new sense of shared post-Yugoslav vulnerability, defined by the loss of the common cultural space.

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The interaction between refugee music groups and the Slovenian audience fostered social bonding as a collective sense of "home-making" that transcended newly-established national and cultural boundaries and could not be "fully colonized" by the mainstream discourses of nationalism and separation.

Such unexpected affective attunements bring more nuances to the existent interpretations of the social atmosphere of Yugoslav dissolution in its highly affective intensity. Almost exclusively, the work of affect has been used to explain/rationalize the ethnic wars through the prism of "passionate" nation-building. The presumed irrationality of this historical moment is also prominent in van de Port's book, for whom a willful surrender to irrationality in the space of *kafana* has a concrete socio-political analogy in the irrationality of war. The hidden and unexpected connection between the two worlds of experience—war and *kafana* is in the capacity to violate the rules, civilized behavior, and taboos (1998, 16). The ability of people to invest their affective attachments of listening to Gypsy musicians to "transgress" civilized behavior is, in his view, proof of a more "general" ability to transgress into uncivilized behavior in everyday life, which opens a possibility for war. However, the celebration of wildness, van de Port asserts, is not some "naturalized behavior" but is a result of embracing the Balkanist discourses of "civilized" Europe. In other words, Serbs take an active role in the processes of Othering and willingly accept the Balkan barbarism and wildness, the role assigned to them by the European center.

Such an interpretation makes a clear connection between affect and irrationality and grants agency to the "Balkan" subject only if positioned "on the other side" of the "rational politics" and the universal values of humanism, civilization, and reason (van de Port 1998, 18). To surrender to affect means to act and be placed beyond a "rational and reflexive democratic subject," which does not just reproduce the civilized Europe and wild Balkans binary, but also denies the work of affect as essential to politics, ideologies, and institutions, more generally, perpetuating a long-standing liberal understanding of politics as distinctively rational.

In their chapters, Martin Pogačar and Tanja Petrović question the binaries of reason/political and sentiment/apolitical, joining the number of affect

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theory scholars who claim that, for too long, affect was relegated to the margins of political theory because the rational reflection was seen as the driving force of political action (Papacharissi 2014, 10). They also explore how affect's ability to transcend the boundaries between personal and interpersonal has been strategically used, dismissed, nurtured, or suppressed by the actors in power. Pogačar sheds light on the affective constellations of Slovenian nationalism in the 1980s and shows how not all people embraced nationalism through the "passionate" ethno-national mythologies but that nationalism instead felt "ordinary." Nationalist sentiment was channeled through pop songs' "banal" content about ordinariness, nature, and everyday consumption patterns. It drove on the shared affective attachments to the ironic referencing of ethno-oddities, drinking, love of nature, and firefighters, which were used in supporting the independence project. Petrović, on the other hand, insists in her chapter on the political character of joy that results from immersing into untrue/non-factual narratives of the socialist past. She argues that this politicality of joy can only be fully understood if one considers the limitations set by the post-socialist condition in which sentiments towards the Yugoslav past are interpreted almost exclusively as an unproductive nostalgia that makes post-socialist subjects' naive, ideologically blind, or unable to separate the truth from the fake. Such interpretations deny these subjects the agency and power to be affected, a power that would make them capable of questioning the givenness of the present-day conjuncture of ethno-nationalism and predatory capitalism.

Affect, Class, and Labor

To offer an historicized and contextualized view, chapters in this volume question the very recognition/legitimization of affect: whose feelings are legitimized, and how do we privilege or politicize the work of affect? In responding to this question, several chapters engage with the prominence of the figure of Gypsy and the position of Roma, particularly Romani musicians, in the constituting and unsettling of the (post-)Yugoslav social lives. Marina Simić shows that ethno-national

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becomings are not singular processes and highlights how affect is the productive ground for exposing an uncritical usage of Balkanist/Orientalist discourses. She calls for "taking seriously" the experience of *kafana* as an affective transformation that embodies social and power relations but that "may also be prone to failure and impossibility of transformation due to that very embodiment." For Simić, carousing (*šenlučenje*) with Gypsy musicians in its affective relationality brings together various "Others" ("white Vojvodinians," Western others, Vojvodina Roma), who cannot be reduced to any particular ethnicity.

As the chapter by Dijana Jelača shows, the complexity of the processes of Othering, however, does not subvert the reality of inequality based on racialization. In the internationally acclaimed (post-)Yugoslav films, authors portray the affective "excess"—in particular through uncontrolled emotions channelized and expressed through music—stereotypically attached to Roma, what she sees as an exercise of self-Balkanism, where Roma are a stand-in for the entirety of the Balkans for the Western gaze. She argues that affective expressions of Roma are used for the "affective *jouissance* or catharsis of and for the dominant group, one which simultaneously systematically continues to otherwise discriminate against the Roma population" (Jelača, this volume).

In that sense, the affective dispositions attached to the figure of Gypsy remain unquestioned, deeply ingrained in the historical image of Romani musicians as associated with emotion (Silverman 2011; Lie 2020). Van de Port writes that *lumpovanje* (carousing) in *kafana* (1998, 8) makes all people involved closer "to the basic form of Being" (1998, 203). In other words, for certain groups of people (like Romani musicians), wider socio-political changes, breaks, and ruptures hardly bring any change in power relations and, even more important, in their everyday realities.

Affect, in our view, adds a perspective that reveals the cracks in analyzing Romani marginalization as the result of the dominant Eurocentric gaze and brings to the fore the reality of the everyday struggles of Roma people. To put it differently, it exposes that for *kafana* musicians, the affective encounter with bare life is not some metaphorical or intellectual category, as to affect and be affected is not simply a matter of identification but that of economic survival.

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Mattijs van de Port also acknowledged (albeit not developed) how Romani musicians supply a music product that is recognized as "Gypsy" and "that enables the audience to identify with the 'Gypsy spirit'" (1998, 182). The musically-imbued affective encounters in the peculiar context of *kafana* that are perceived "as an excess" reveal exoticized (intellectual) readings that tend to ignore the everyday reality of people for whom everyday survival is deeply delimited by an ability to affect and be affected. In other words, in interpreting the *kafana* experience as a "festive event," the work of affect is explored only as shaping the social encounters among different ethno-racial groups, while *kafana* as a place of labor is neglected. Reduced to their ethnicity, Gypsy musicians are denied agency as workers, and more generally, class and other social inequalities (and possible solidarities) get obscured.

Attention to this obscuration helps reveal another aspect of the class-defined work of affect, informed by the high-culture-centered gaze on the "less-cultured" (Simić in this chapter) and "low" entertainment of the *kafana* experience. The dominance of such a gaze does not allow for "serious" engagement with the musicians' everyday and labor struggles in their historical trajectories. As Mišo Kapetanović in his chapter asserts, "the region's working class and working-class cultures remained hidden in interaction with other parts of the society, and they were adopted to fit the general post-Yugoslav and post-socialist paradigms." Going against that grain, in exploring affective regimes of the interaction of the post-Yugoslav labor migrants in the *gastarbajteri* buses, he challenges the potential biases coming from the class position of researchers in understanding new post-Yugoslav realities. While the Yugoslav wars and ethnonationalism burden labor migrants' interactions, the everyday life and labor struggles they share go beyond divisions based on ethnicity.

In response, the authors in this volume engage with the political economy and class as the key categories to understand social dynamics and the shared forms of inequalities during and after Yugoslavia.[19] We argue that the domain

19 See Archer et al. 2016; Petrović and Hofman 2017; Musić 2021.

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of artistic expression helps track the productive encounter between affect, labor, and the material conditions that challenge the focus on power hierarchies exclusively based on ethnic-national-racial differences. Jelača in her chapter explains that the affective "excess" of Romani female singers is commodified for the gaze of the international audience, the men's visual and aural pleasure. A *kafana* singer on the screen is not performing for her own affect, but for patrons or viewers and their *merak*, which circulates as the social good. In his historical review of how class relations constitute particular affective attachments, Rajko Muršič shows how popular music's affectivity—*čaga* is attached to the rise of the new Yugoslav working class after World War II. He reflects on the political economy of the musical genres (in particular pop-folk) and how class self-awareness shaped the listening practices among Yugoslavs and post-Yugoslavs. The attention to the historical and genre-based aspects of the development of popular music in socialist Yugoslavia, he argues, reveals a noticeable correspondence between the consumption of particular music genres and social stratification.

The turn to affect, as Ben Anderson claims, is "timely as it provides a way of understanding and engaging with a set of broader changes in societal (re) production in the context of mutations in capitalism" (2010, 165). The class view on affective dispositions in the region is widened in this volume to encompass what shapes the social worlds of post-Yugoslavs in the contemporary socioeconomic context: the shared patterns of exploitation (low salaries, unemployment, precarity, see Kapetanović) and commodification in all aspects of life (see Hofman and Kovačič). These chapters acknowledge the work of affect not as detached from capitalist accumulation but quite the opposite; their authors explore how the realm of intimate, embodied, and sensorial circulates as the commodified good. Hofman and Kovačič discuss how unequal power relations based on racialized logic cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the financial logic that has entirely overtaken the governance of post-Yugoslav lives after the collapse of socialism. Exploring the working patterns of brass band musicians, they show how these performers are caught in selling *čaga* as an object for commodity exchange and a tool for channeling the audience's desires

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and aspirations. Their chapter acknowledges the affective dispositions of the market economy and expansion of financialization to every aspect of life, which has also been explored by the affect theorists who focus on the affective regimes of contemporary global neoliberalism.[20]

To conclude, affect is a fertile ground to raise more general questions about the social relations and production of difference. We show in this volume that what is lost with the uncritical application of affect and race as transhistorical categories are more discrete, contextualized, and situated inequalities that in the region of former Yugoslavia have had specific configurations related to the historical experience of state-socialism, the subsequent ethnic wars and the aggressive restoration of capitalism. Moreover, the focus on the production of ethno-racial differences as a part of decolonization discourses undermines other inequalities that are too quickly subsumed under the discourses of racialization. The chapters in this volume point to the necessity to adhere to epistemic practices, which do not reduce class to another category of identity but see it as the basic mechanisms of capitalist exploitation. As Reed (2020) and Michaels (2020) argue, the project of privileging marginalized differences completely overlooks the question of class inequalities at the core of capitalist production. Therefore, even when the analysis of racial relations is presented as a counter-response to the capitalist production of inequalities, it remains separated from political economy and class questions (Reed 2020). In the ongoing crisis of global neoliberalism, affect does not provide insight into subtle, intimate dynamics of social relations in their "micro" forms. Quite the opposite: it helps us demask the mechanisms that link micro and macro socio-political and economic forces and understand their powerful impact on our social lives.

20 See the work on political economy and affect by Patricia Clough (2008).

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