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Transformations of gender, sexuality and citizenship in South East Europe



Introduction

This collection of essays was conceived gradually and in many phases, between Scotland and different parts of the former Yugoslavia, during the course of 2012 and 2013. The bulk of the work has been carried out within the research project “The Europeanisation of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia” (CITSEE) at the University of Edinburgh. This ERC-funded project led by Professor Jo Shaw and Dr. Igor Štiks has been established to explore changes in citizenship regimes which occurred after the break-up of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, with special attention being paid to the influences of the EU accession process on the new states of South East Europe. The editors of this special issue – Oliwia Berdak, Chiara Bonfiglioli, Katja Kahlina and Adriana Zaharijević – were members of a cluster of researchers focused on issues of gender and sexuality within the project, which had the aim of investigating transformations in gender and citizenship regimes from a comparative perspective. We wanted to shed light on the different ways in which the categories of gender and sexuality at the same time inform and draw on larger socio-political processes. The processes of democratisation, post-conflict reconstruction, and transformation from socialist to capitalist political economy, which have influenced shifting notions of citizenship in the post-Yugoslav space, were especially under scrutiny.

Our different and multiple inter-disciplinary backgrounds, as well as our different personal locations and engagements, have led to various understandings and perspectives on gendered and sexual citizenship in Yugoslavia and its successor states. On many occasions we had the opportunity to discuss the interconnectedness, but also the differences between our approaches. Rather than trying to define a common framework of analysis, we decided to open up a platform of discussion, and to test to what extent the framework of citizenship can be productive in understanding post-Yugoslav gender and sexuality regimes. In order to strengthen our contributions, we organised a preparatory workshop at the University of Edinburgh in June 2013 as part of the annual CITSEE conference, which brought together all the contributors to this special issue. We have presented our work at two further panels on transformations of gender, sexuality and citizenship in post-Yugoslav space (Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) conference, April 2013;

Conference of Europeanists (CES), June 2013). The public presentations of the earlier drafts of the special issues contributions enabled us to receive constructive comments on our work in progress from the discussants and the audience alike, many of which are reflected in the articles comprising the issue.

Revisiting feminist debates on gender and sexuality in South East Europe

Feminist scholars have early sought to introduce the categories of gender and sexuality into the wider debates on the social changes related to the emerging nationalisms and armed conflicts associated with the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. Many studies discussed the ways in which gender relations were reshaped by nationalist politics and war, repositioning women in relation to the state as mothers of soldiers and national heroes, homemakers rather than equal participants in social and political life, or appropriating women's bodies as markers of the nation through gendered and ethnic violence (Allen, 1996; Batinić, 2001; Engle, 2005; Iveković, 1993; Iveković & Mostov, 2002; Kesić, 2001; Mostov, 1995; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; Papić, 1994, 1999; Salecl, 1992; Stiglmeier, 1994; Žarkov 1995, 2001, 2007). However, with the notable exception of an anthology on *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans* (Ramet, 1997), the concept of citizenship has been largely left out of these discussions. Rather, it has been addressed only implicitly through the more general concept of inequality, emphasising the changing position of women within the new nation-states. In the more recent comparative thematizations of gendered citizenship in post-socialist Europe, the former Yugoslavia is generally incorporated within analyses of citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe without an in-depth analysis of its specificities (Einhorn, 2010; Gal & Kligman, 2000; Lukić, Regulska, & Zavišek, 2006; Regulska & Smith, 2012; Wingfield & Bucur, 2006). Often, edited volumes include case studies based on one single post-Yugoslav state (Blagojević, 2006; Bokovoy, 2012; Duhaček, 2006; Lukić, 2000; Mršević, 2000; Zavišek, 2006), making it difficult to assess common historical legacies and interconnections – but also variations – between different post-Yugoslav states. In this way, many important issues arising from the complex relationship between gender, sexuality, and newly emerging citizenship regimes in this region

were left unaddressed. This void in the existing literature has fuelled the impetus and inspiration for this issue.

Transnational influences are another important aspect that has been largely overlooked in existing studies of gender and sexuality in the region. Gender regimes in South East Europe have been deeply affected by transnational flows and transformations related to economic and political globalisation, including the process of European enlargement in post-socialist Europe. Thus we believe that important new insights could be gained by considering the increased political and economic impact of global processes stemming from EU enlargement and global neoliberal restructuring. By bringing together the notions of citizenship and globalisation as important theoretical and analytical tools, we wanted to elucidate the particularity of this post-conflict and post-socialist context, and also to account for possible similarities with the developments taking place in the wider European and global context.

Finally, what we also aspire through the concept of citizenship, is to break out from the essentialist image of “the Balkans” and of “gender” in the Balkans (Kersten-Pejanić, Rajilić, & Voß, 2012). Way too often, in Western popular culture as well as in the media, the region of South East Europe has been subject to Orientalisation, linked especially with Balkanisation (Naimark & Case, 2003; Todorova, 1997). Gender relations in the region, notably since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, have often been read through naturalising Orientalist lenses, which tend to reinforce essentialist conceptions of masculinity and femininity that had been fostered by gendered and ethnicised warfare. A victimized image of Balkan femininity and a violent image of Balkan masculinity were conveyed through these Orientalist/Balkanist discourses (Engle, 2005; Helms, 2013; Žarkov, 2007). Building upon existing critical assessments of gender and ethnicity in the region, all contributions strive to go beyond essentialist representations, stressing the complexity of ongoing post-socialist and post-conflict transformations.

All contributions in this special issue deal with key questions such as citizens' relation to the state, individual and collective agency, and gender and sexuality as normative mechanisms through which citizenship is constructed, managed and reproduced. All contributions tend to address this by highlighting the interrelation of local, national, European and global processes. Nevertheless, they also stress the fragmented and differential access to resources and rights experienced by citizens in South Eastern European states, by underlining the similarities and the differences between post-Yugoslav states (and Greece), when it comes to, for instance, social citizenship (i.e. the position of women workers and war veterans) or sexual citizenship (the status of sexual minorities). In so doing, the papers address intersecting patterns of social inequality and privilege through the axis of gender, sexuality, class, nationality and ethnicity within the specifically post-socialist and post-conflict citizenship regimes.

In view of recent social and political transformations, the concept of citizenship also allows us to consider the common legacy of socialism and of the multi-ethnic Yugoslav federation, which continue to create a cultural and linguistic space of commonality and interdependence between different post-Yugoslav states. By considering the Yugoslav legacy, we attempt to make sense of the changing relations between citizens and the state(s), and of the ways in which political, historical, social and economic transformations affected different groups of

citizens in different post-Yugoslav states. The comparative approach of the series provides us with tools to assess both the common Yugoslav legacy and the process of differentiation, fragmentation and individualisation occurring in the last twenty years, looking not only at changes in economic conditions and social rights, but also at transformations in identity and belonging.

Citizenship in South East Europe: promises and paradoxes

The concept of citizenship which consists of political, economic, and social dimensions, as defined by T.H. Marshall in the late 1940s and taken as the point of departure in the subsequent discussions on citizenship, has generally been used in relation to capitalist democracies, rather than in relation to socialist and post-socialist countries. This absence of citizenship framework was largely surmounted by the use of the prevailing approach to the changing social and political relations caused by the dissolution of Yugoslavia, that of ethnicity and nationalism. “Top-down” political and historical analyses of nationalism have also generally been disconnected from ethnographic accounts of everyday life in the region (Bougarel, Helms, & Duijzings, 2007; Jansen, 2013). However, if we assume nationalism to be the main, or at times, the only interpretative framework for the socio-political processes in the South-Eastern European states, we run the risk of obscuring different complexities, such as the non-coincidence between state borders and ethno-national identities, the importance of other social factors of differentiation such as class and gender, or the impact of the transnational economic and political processes mentioned earlier. The role of “ordinary people” in processes of nationalisation also risks to be silenced (Jansen, 2013).

As noted above, feminist studies of the region have also been largely concerned with the issues of war and nationalism. This is to a great extent due to the fact that anti-war and anti-nationalist activism has been a prominent factor of mobilisation among local feminists and LGBT activists, becoming at a certain point even its distinctive feature. It was also a field of transnational activist intervention, notably when it came to mobilisations around war rapes in Bosnia–Herzegovina and Croatia (Engle, 2005; Hansen, 2001; Mladjenovic, 2001; Žarkov, 2007). The wealth of literature available on the post-Yugoslav space has been recently complemented by new research relating to women's grassroots mobilisation through feminist groups and NGOs across the former Yugoslavia (Cockburn, 2013; Deiana, 2013; Helms, 2013; Miškovska Kajevska, 2014), showing that scholarly and activist debates on gender, nationalism and ethnic identities are still relevant, and need renewed critical examination.

This special issue represents the first comparative assessment of the transformations in gender relations taking place in the last twenty years that would encompass different post-Yugoslav states. The only comprehensive anthology on the subject to date, *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, dates from 1997 (Ramet, 1997). As the contributions in this special issue make clear, much has changed since then, and new empirical data is needed to make sense of the wide-ranging processes of globalisation and Europeanisation that have affected the region, transforming it into a “semi-periphery”, as Blagojević (2009) has defined it. Other authors have stressed how the former Yugoslavia underwent a process of re-peripheralisation (Schierup, 1992) and

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