

ARTICLE

Making and Remaking a Social Science: Croatian Sociology from Socialism to Post-Socialism

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Abstract

In this paper, I give an account of the history of Croatian sociology under socialism and I explore how the discipline underwent the transition to post-socialism, attempting to shed light on some of the effects that the Yugoslav breakup had on its institutions and its practitioners. Drawing on written and oral sources, also relying on data about authors who were active in the main sociological journal of the country, I argue that in the early 1990s Croatian sociology underwent a process of “republicanization/nationalization” and became detached from developments in other former Yugoslav republics. I also show that the nationalist and conservative political turn in the country translated into the decline of research institutions that the new authorities saw as representatives of the Communist era.

Keywords

history of sociology, Croatia, Yugoslavia, socialism, post-socialism

INTRODUCTION

During the early 1990s, following the fall of the Communist regime, the breakup of the Yugoslav federation and the onset of war, Croatia became the site of manifold political, economic, and social transformations. The impact of such changes was inevitably felt in social sciences, among others, in the field of sociology. A discipline that had come of age and acquired its modern shape in socialist times, with a strong institutional fabric in Croatia but also in constant dialogue with developments in other Yugoslav republics, sociology was affected by the dissolution of all-Yugoslav bonds of cooperation following the end of the common state. Political and ideological changes taking place in Croatia in the first years of the post-socialist period also translated into difficulties for certain institutions and individuals that the new authorities identified as agents of the *ancien régime*, while new educational and research institutions were created and promoted in what could be seen as a form of political meddling in the social sciences.

In this paper, I give an account of the history of Croatian sociology under socialism and explore how the discipline underwent the transition to post-socialism. The article does not revolve around questions of conceptual and methodological change in the discipline, a subject to which I have devoted previous works (Cosovschi 2022; 2018). Instead, it focuses primarily on networks of

institutions and authors, and their transformations over the years, showing that the Yugoslav breakup had an impact on how the practitioners of Croatian sociology were organized as a scientific community. By doing so, I aim to make a contribution to the recent literature that deals with the history of social sciences in Central and Eastern Europe during socialism and after (Gouarné and Kirtchik 2022; Hîncu 2022; 2021; Karády 2021; Hîncu and Karády 2018), and more particularly to the scholarship on the history of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav sociology (Spasić, Pešić, and Babović 2022; Krbec 2008; Trajanovski 2024).

My analysis draws on diverse sources and methods. I primarily rely on written testimonies and reflections by Croatian sociologists, a limited number of archival sources, and more than twenty personal interviews with social scientists who were active in Croatia during the 1990s. The subjects were identified and selected through what could broadly be termed “snowball sampling,” in other words on the basis of contacts and personal recommendations across diverse research institutions in Croatia, also attempting to keep a measure of generational diversity and gender balance. Interviews covered a wide range of topics, but the primary focus were the personal trajectories and professional experiences of researchers throughout the socialist and post-socialist period. Following principles more akin to oral history than to sociological research, and with full awareness of the extreme caution required when using oral sources in historical analysis, I used these interviews not as hard data, but rather as hints, and I did not accept any statement at face value without collating information with other sources.

Moreover, to examine changes in the fabric of Croatian sociology I also rely on structured data. My primary source is a relational database of more than two-hundred authors who published in the journal *Revija za sociologiju*, the official publication of the Croatian Association of Sociology, during the period 1986-1996.¹ The production of Croatian sociology went certainly beyond what can be seen through this journal. Yet, analyzing and visualizing changes in the authors and institutions involved in what was effectively the most important sociological publication of the country gives meaningful hints about the changing composition of the discipline during this period. Mindful of the limits of data derived from historical sources that are not exhaustive nor without bias, I interpret such hints in light of other written and oral sources.²

The article is divided into two sections. In the first part, I examine the history of Croatian, and by extension, Yugoslav sociology, during the socialist period and through the late 1980s. I especially stress that the development of Croatian sociology relied to a great extent on networks and endeavours involving scholars from all Yugoslav republics, and I show how this inter-republican fabric persisted until the very end of socialist times. The second part of the article examines developments in Croatian sociology in the early 1990s against the background of the Yugoslav breakup and war. I especially underline how the end of the common state and the onset of military conflict translated into the dissolution of cooperation between Croatian scholars and scholars from other former Yugoslav republics, leading to the discipline becoming “republicanized/nationalized.” I also show how political shifts taking place in the country during the first years of the post-socialist period had an impact on the institutional fabric of sociology at the expense of institutions that the new authorities saw as representatives of the *ancien régime*.

¹ The database was developed on the basis of information available on *Hrčak*, website and electronic database of the major scientific journals in Croatia.

² For a discussion of the uses and limits of network analysis as a tool for historical research, see Lemercier (2005) and Ahnert et al. (2020).

SOCIOLOGY DURING SOCIALIST TIMES

The history of sociology in the Croatian lands dates back at least to the early 20th century, with the establishment of the first Chair of Sociology at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb under Ernest Miler in 1906. Following World War I and in the context of the first Yugoslav state, the discipline continued its expansion thanks to the work of Sociological Association in Zagreb, an organization that promoted sociological thinking, publication, and teaching. The spread of sociological theory among Croatian scholars, the multiplication of sociological courses at the university level, and the creation of a new Chair in Sociology and Statistics in 1934, ensured that sociological thinking had acquired solid roots in Croatian soil before the second World War. These first steps in the institutionalization of the discipline notwithstanding, the postwar years brought significant setbacks to the practice of sociology. In the new, socialist Yugoslavia established by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ), comprising six republics in a federal and multinational arrangement under the central government in Belgrade and following in many respects the guidelines of Soviet socialism, orthodox Marxist thought became the predominant matrix for social analysis. In the late 1940s, historical materialism was reinforced in universities; translations of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin into Serbo-Croatian were promoted; and Yugoslav philosophers such as Dušan Nedeljković and Boris Žiherl waged a war against the intellectual traditions of previous years (now seen as bourgeois and reactionary). All of this had an impact on the practice of sociology, which lost the theoretical diversity of previous years and became subsumed in a broader field of philosophical and social studies ruled primarily by the principles of historical materialism (Голенкова 2022: 51-52; Batina 2008; Županov and Šporer 1984).

The turn of the decade, however, brought about a new turn in the history of sociology, which would rapidly recover its vitality and receive significant institutional endorsement. The driver was Yugoslavia's split with the Soviet Union in June 1948, which pushed the Yugoslav leadership to embark upon an unprecedented path of reform and liberalization. The introduction of mechanisms of workers' democracy in factories under the banner of "socialist self-management," the decentralization of the Yugoslav federation, and the relaxation of censorship and ideological control paved the way for a process of intellectual and artistic reawakening (Miller 2007; Cosovschi 2015; Gabrič 1995). Changes were also drastic in foreign policy, with Yugoslavia establishing economic and military cooperation with the West and increasing its exchange of goods, people and ideas with the United States and Western Europe, while simultaneously establishing relations with the rising Third World (Rajak 2017). By the late 1950s, by virtue of its officially neutral position in the Cold War, enjoying financial support of the West and having also resumed trade with the Eastern bloc following the normalization of relations with the Soviets, Yugoslavia entered a period of remarkable stability, notable economic expansion, and social modernization. By the turn of the decade, the country could boast remarkably high growth rates, with expanding industrialization and urbanization, as well as what could be characterized as a process of cultural Westernization (Vučetić 2012; Lampe 2000: 274-75).

Sociology was much invigorated by these developments, which Croatian sociologists Josip Županov and Željka Šporer referred to decades later as the time when sociology became "a discipline in itself" and "was granted its right to citizenship" (Županov and Šporer 1984: 15). Following the break with the Soviets and in a general atmosphere of more open and critical Marxist thinking, the discipline underwent a phase of institutional expansion. In 1956, the Yugoslav Association of Philosophy and Sociology was created in Novi Sad, Serbia, and the first major journal of Yugoslav sociology came out

three years later under the name *Sociologija*. In 1960, Yugoslav sociologists acquired their own and separate organization at the federal level with the creation of the Yugoslav Sociological Association. Institutions were also created at the level of the republics: the Sociological Association of Croatia was established in 1959 under the presidency of Juraj Hrženjak and gathered approximately fifty members, while a Department of Sociology was created at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb in 1963.³ In the following decade, sociological courses started to be taught in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Zagreb, while major centers of sociological research were founded in Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia: namely, the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (*Institut društvenih nauka*, IDN), the Institute for Sociology and Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana (*Inštitut za sociologijo in filozofijo pri Univerzi v Ljubljani*, ISF), and the Institute of Social Research of the University of Zagreb (*Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, IDIS) (Bogdanović 1990; Mirković 1976).

Although the practice of sociology was still under the influence of diverse varieties of Marxist thought, Yugoslavia's singular foreign policy resulted in sociologists coming into contact with other theories, concepts and methods. Belgrade's tilt to the West facilitated academic exchange with Western Europe and the United States, while its non-aligned position also paved the way for limited, but still significant exchange with African, Asian and Latin American countries, as well as with the Communist countries of Eastern Europe. Funding from the Ford Foundation, together with the work of the Fulbright Commission for Yugoslavia (the first one to be established in a Communist country, and the second largest in Europe after West Germany), led to significant academic exchange with the United States. During the first five years of the Fulbright program, 254 Yugoslav citizens were given funding to conduct study and research stays in the United States, most coming from universities in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. Networks connecting Yugoslav scholars with Western European states, particularly with universities in France and West Germany, were also meaningful and had a significant impact on the development of local social sciences (Perišić 2008; Konta 2020: 130-131; Lampe 2000: 292-293).

Sociology reaped the benefits of these emerging global academic networks. As stated by Croatian sociologist Rudi Supek decades later, "Yugoslav sociologists had the possibility to participate in a broad exchange of scientific experiences and have personal discussions with sociologists of the most developed scientific communities, since the scientific policy of the country at the time sought to transfer the experience of developed countries to ours" (Supek 1989: 7). During the 1960s and 1970s, several generations of Yugoslav sociologists, primarily from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, would get some form of training in universities or research centers in the United States. Among them was Josip Županov, often considered the father of modern Croatian sociology, but also younger scholars like Silva Mežnarić, Vjeran Katunarić and Vesna Pusić (Cosovschi 2018). The Yugoslav case was not unique, and similar trends developed in other Eastern European socialist countries, increasingly aware of the advantages of securing training for their sociologists abroad (Hîncu 2021; Karády 2021).

The internationalization of Yugoslav sociology was perhaps clearest in the case of the group that gathered around the journal *Praxis*. Inspired by Marxist humanist ideas, the journal became a major node for modern social theory in Yugoslavia, capable of attracting leading scholars and students from the East and the West through their summer schools on the Adriatic island of Korčula and thanks to their leading role in the international events of the Yugoslav Association of Sociology (Blagojević

³ From here on, I translate the term *filozofski fakultet*, common in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian as a label for faculties teaching a broad set of human and social sciences, as "Faculty of Arts."

2022; Sher 1977; Stefanov 2013). *Praxis* was a symbol of Yugoslavia's integration into global academic networks, but also of the multinational character of the country's cultural and intellectual fabric. The composition of the journal's editorial team and its intellectual core were revealing of the inter-republican bonds that made up the fabric of Yugoslav sociology, joining authors from Croatia such as Predrag Vranicki, Gajo Petrović and Rudi Supek with others from Belgrade such as Mihailo Marković, Zagorka Goluković and Svetozar Stojanović, and also involving scholars from Ljubljana as in the case of sociologist Veljko Rus.

The review's strong Yugoslav penchant was also expressed in the ideas of its members, who were openly critical of all forms of nationalism and who often found themselves condemned by more nationally oriented colleagues in their respective republics. This became especially meaningful in the late 1960s, as nationalist demands gained ground in Yugoslavia, often fueled by the Communist leaders of the respective republics, who sought to instrumentalize nationalist mobilization to increase their power of negotiation at the federal level. Croatia was to become the main site of such nationalist waves, epitomized by the mass movement called Maspok (contraction of *masovni pokret*, i.e. "mass movement"). The movement demanded increased autonomy for Croatia vis-à-vis the federal government in Belgrade, and it gradually took over the republic in the turn of the 1960s with the tacit approval of the Croatian communist leadership. The Zagreb members of *Praxis* such as Rudi Supek, Milan Kangrga and Danko Grlić remained critical of the Maspok, which led to their often being labelled anti-Croatian by their detractors and criticized for having adopted such positions even decades after the events (Jakšić 2011). In 1971, the leaders in Belgrade responded to the Maspok by intervening in Croatia, purging the Croatian communist party, and substituting its leadership for a more loyal one, while also ordering the incarceration of numerous members of the nationalist movement.

The remainder of the 1970s brought a tidal change to Yugoslavia, with increased repression on intellectuals, academics and artists. The journal *Praxis* was closed down. As Belgrade had been the center of student revolt in the late 1960s, the Belgrade members of the group were expelled from the University. In Slovenia, sociologist Veljko Rus was ousted from the University on account of his political position. Croatia also felt the weight of ideological rigour, being named "the silent republic" by the Yugoslav media due to the loyalty of its new leaders (Čuvalo 1990: 206-207). Croatian communist leaders insisted on ideological purity, with sociologist Stipe Šušvar, as Minister of Education of the republic in 1974, carrying out reforms aimed at reinforcing the values of the working class, which many saw as a strategy to reduce the influence of critical intellectuals (Bacevic 2014). The introduction of general courses on social theory in high schools and universities such as "Theory and Practice of Self-Management Socialism," which to a certain extent sidelined traditional courses in sociology and aimed to reinforce Marxist thinking, was perceived by some researchers as constraining the discipline's independent development (Županov and Šporer 1984). Yet, sociology was overall relatively spared from repression: the Zagreb members of *Praxis* were not targeted by the government to the same extent as their Belgrade colleagues, the journal *Revija za sociologiju* kept publishing throughout the decade without any major intrusion from the authorities, and new departments of sociology were established in other Croatian universities (for example, Zadar in 1977), contributing to the expansion of the discipline to other regions outside the capital.

In the 1980s, the death of Tito and the advent of an economic recession shaped a new context of crisis. However, despite mounting nationalism and increased tensions between the respective leaderships of the Yugoslav republics, sociologists across the country still endeavoured to maintain unity and cooperation. The Yugoslav Sociological Association played a major role in this trend, with

Croatian sociologist Rudi Supek as its president regularly addressing letters to authorities to denounce the repression of colleagues from Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia and Croatia.⁴

In Zagreb, the old members of *Praxis* gathered with critical intellectuals from other republics in a group discussion called “The Man and the System.” Moreover, even in the politically and economically hard context of the late 1980s, and after more than a decade of economic stagnation, Yugoslav sociologists managed to secure one of the most ambitious projects in the history of the local social sciences: a broad empirical study on the structure of Yugoslav society led by Serbian sociologist Mladen Lazić, working then at the IDIS in Zagreb, and by Croatian sociologist Duško Sekulić. Labeled “Social Structure and Quality of Life in the SFRJ [Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia],” this endeavour was primarily supported by federal funds and carried out in 1989 by a consortium of more than twenty institutes of social sciences from all Yugoslav republics.⁵

Overall, in spite of the existence of vigorous sociological communities that functioned at the level of the republics, especially in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, much of the life of Yugoslav sociology by the end of the 1980s was conducted through inter-republican and multinational institutions. The inter-republican fabric of sociology in Yugoslavia was also noticeable in publications in the respective republics. A look at the institutional affiliation of authors publishing in the late 1980s in *Revija za sociologiju*, the official publication of the Sociological Association of Croatia, shows a clear primacy of Zagreb as the origin of its publications, but with Ljubljana and Belgrade ranking high, and even higher than other Croatian sites outside the capital. This information is displayed in Figure 1.

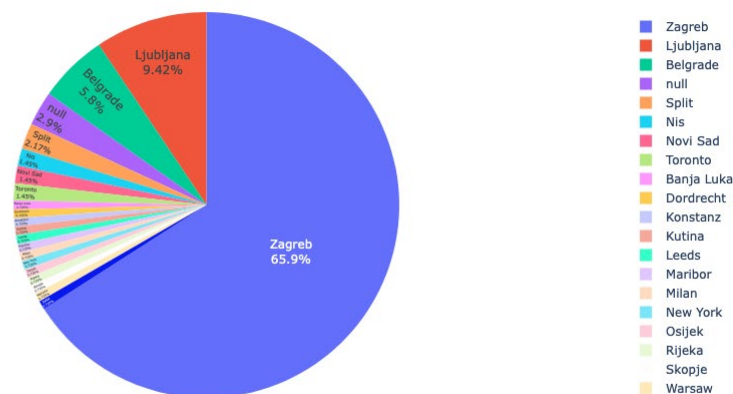


Figure 1: Location of authors publishing in *Revija za sociologiju*, 1986-1991. “Null” stands for authors with no reported location.

⁴ Among others, see: “Letter to the Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs of the SFRJ for the case of Laslo Sekelj, 31 December 1983,” Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond 668, fascicule 2 I-6, “Odbor za profesionalna pitanja” ; « Letter to the Presidency of the SFRJ and to the Socialist Republic of Serbia,” 31 January 1984, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond 668, fascicule 2, I-6, “Odbor za profesionalna pitanja”; and “Letter to the Presidency of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia,” 19 June 1984, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond 668, fascicule 2 I-6, “Odbor za profesionalna pitanja.”

⁵ More on this project in Hodžić (1991).

Moreover, a visualization of the network of authors participating in *Revija za sociologiju* in the late 1980s gives an idea of what the fabric of Croatian sociology was in those years. Figure 2 was developed on the basis of data about the articles published in the journal during the period 1986–1991, with their respective authors and corresponding institutional affiliation. This projection of the network shows authors connected to their respective institutions, and also connected to other authors by relations of co-authorship. While institutional affiliation is represented through simple edges, co-authorship is instead represented by edges that vary according to the number of publications shared by authors, allowing us to recognize intellectual partnerships and cliques.

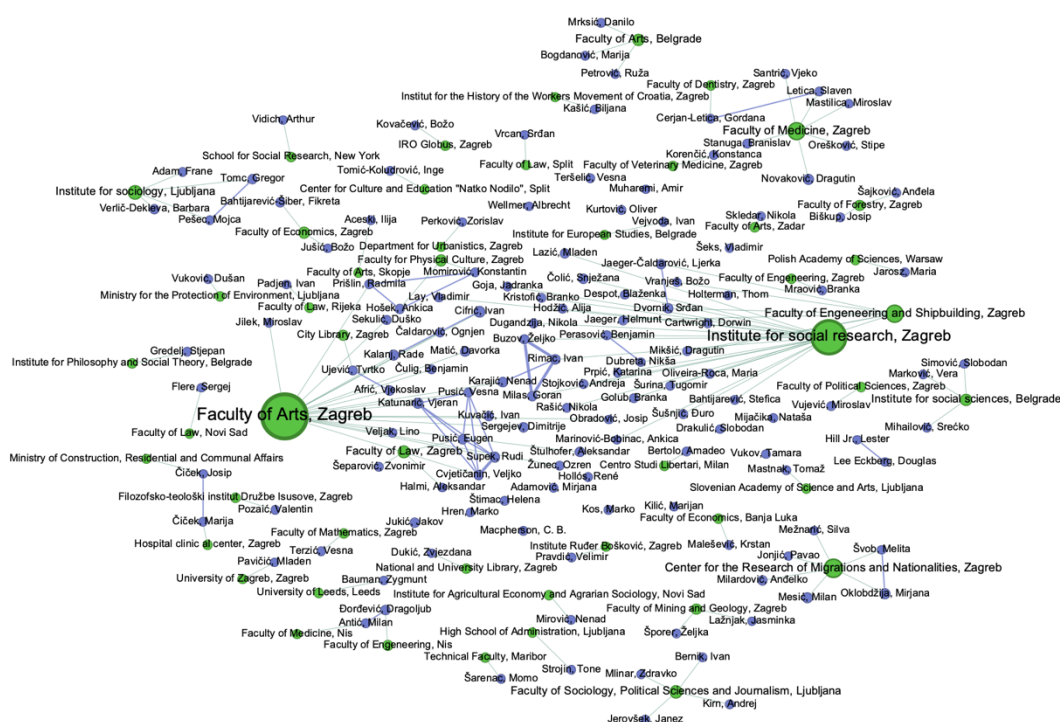


Figure 2: Authors (purple) in *Revija za sociologiju*, 1986–1991, and their respective institutions (green). Graph created by the author with Gephi.

The image also gives an idea of the relative importance of various institutions in the network. Institutions are sized by Eigenvector centrality, a specific measure of influence that assesses the importance of a node according to the importance of its neighbouring nodes. Hence, we can assess the influence of an institution as primarily determined by the importance of its affiliated authors. The Faculty of Arts and the IDIS clearly stand out as the main nodes of the network, with the former having a centrality score of 1 and the latter having a score of 0.7. In other words, authors from the IDIS and the Faculty of Arts participated extensively in the journal, and they were also the ones most connected to authors from other institutions through co-authorship. These were institutions that had been shaped since the 1960s by the policies of the Communist regime, and which were also important nodes of all-Yugoslav cooperation. As shown in the graph, the two were followed by smaller ones such as the Center for the Research of Migration and Nationalities, a young research unit established in 1984 which shows here a centrality score of 0.27, and subsequently by other

faculties and institutes in Croatia and in other republics which played a considerably lesser role in the network.

All in all, by the late 1980s, Croatian sociology was significantly integrated with developments taking place in other Yugoslav republics. As underlined by other scholars, the high level of inter-republican integration of Yugoslav sociology was a result of its historical dependence on the policies of the Communist regime, and it had the effect of creating “a rather high degree of cohesion and solidarity within the professional community, making sociology more integrated across republic boundaries than many other areas of Yugoslav culture” (Spasić, Pešić and Babović 2022: 36). This was a remarkable feature of the discipline in Yugoslavia: sociologists from one republic regularly took part in developments in neighboring republics and several would often circulate between the main sociological centers in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade throughout their careers, as in the known cases of Serbian sociologist Mladen Lazić in Zagreb and Slovenian sociologist Sergej Flere in Novi Sad, shaping developments in multiple republics at the same time. Moreover, the IDIS and the Faculty of Arts, one of the most notable research centers in the country and the most important institution for higher education in the republic, held a certain primacy over sociological production. This would, however, change rapidly in the 1990s following the collapse of the Communist regime and the advent of war.

CROATIAN SOCIOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR

The last phases of the Yugoslav crisis brought meaningful changes to the academic world, and their impact was felt in the field of Croatian sociology. After the dissolution of the Communist party in 1990, the first multiparty elections brought nationalist parties to power in almost all Yugoslav republics, and also in Croatia, where the nationalist, conservative and anticommunist Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ) came to power under the leadership of Franjo Tuđman. A year of failed negotiations between the republics with the aim to find a new compromise for the Yugoslav union ended with the secession of both Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991, a decision that triggered an immediate response by the Yugoslav army and marked the onset of war in the country. Croatia found itself invaded by what had once been its own army; a major military power that aligned with Slobodan Milošević’s authoritarian and nationalist regime in Belgrade and which also relied on the paramilitary forces of the Croatian Serbs, seeking to stop Zagreb from attaining independence. Hostilities in Croatia endured throughout four years until 1995, leaving a trail of destruction and tens of thousands of refugees (Calić 2009). As a result of the breakup of the Yugoslav common market and the war effort, Croatia’s economy sunk into crisis, while economic reform and privatizations favored the concentration of property into few hands and the decline of the middle classes (Cohen 1997; Stojčić 2012).

Predictably, these developments had an impact on Croatian scientific production. As stated by Croatian sociologist Siniša Zrinščak, then a young researcher working in Zagreb, the hardship of war imposed considerable limitations to sociological research:

Contrary to other post-Communist countries in which the transformation was intense and ultimately aimed at membership in the European Union, Croatia was in a kind of semi-isolation in the 1990s, with no developmental perspective. Isolation, coupled with the lack of money, affected scientific development. Empirical research was very scarce until the very end of the 1990s. Participation in international scientific life (conferences, comparative research...) was not an easy endeavor (2015).

Assessing the general state of Croatian sociology during the years of war, nevertheless, is not an easy task. Rajko Igić (2002) noted that, although war in Croatia did not directly affect the urban areas that were the main centers of scientific production, it did have an overall negative impact on Croatian scientific development in terms of publications when compared to the trends of the previous period. However, in the case of the social sciences, the number of publications does not suggest any significant changes taking place in the years of transition from socialism to post-socialism. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the number of works published in the social sciences between 1986 and 1996 following the registers of Croatia's statistical yearbook, and also the number of articles published in *Revija za sociologiju* during that same period, indicate that the year 1990 marked a peak followed by a drastic reduction, but in fact the overall volume of production of the war years is not significantly different from that of the 1980s.

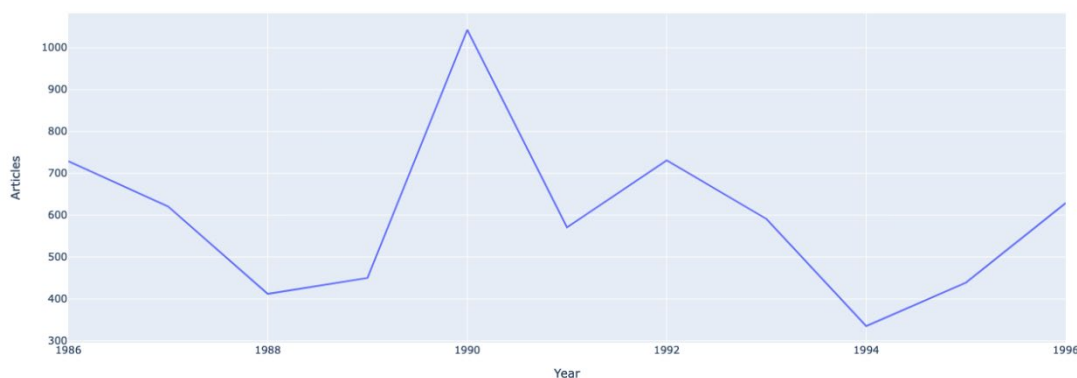


Figure 3: Number of articles published by year in the areas of social sciences in Croatia, 1986-1996. Source: Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske, DZSRH, Zagreb (1988-1996).

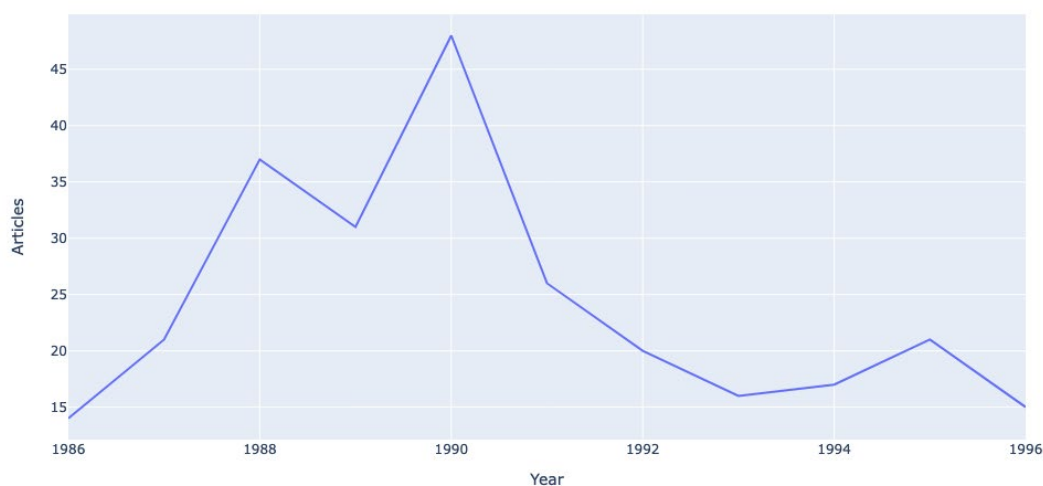


Figure 4: Number of articles published by year in *Revija za sociologiju*, 1986-1996.

All things considered, the number of publications does not seem to be a reliable indicator of the general state of the discipline.⁶ One reason is the instability of such figures, often affected by the politics of institutions and by incidental factors that can be independent from the political and social context. A second reason is that, as stressed by some of our interviewees, the lack of funding for empirical research in Croatia was often compensated for with an increased dedication to theoretical work.⁷ All of this makes the total number of articles a rather opaque indicator of the general state of social sciences in those years.

Conversely, although the volume of production does not reveal much about the transformations of Croatian sociology in the transition from socialism to post-socialism, available sources suggest at least two processes that to a certain extent did restructure the discipline along new lines: a trend toward republicanization/nationalization, and a number of political shifts at the expense of actors who the new authorities considered ideologically unfit.

a. The Republicanization/Nationalization of Croatian Sociology

Besides isolation and a lack of funding, during the years of war Croatian sociology had to deal with what could broadly be termed “the dissolution of the Yugoslav academic community” (Cosovschi 2022: 109-111). The connections of Croatian sociologists with Slovenian colleagues naturally suffered as a result of the independence of their respective republics and the disappearance of common institutions. Yet, it was the relation with Serbia that deteriorated the most. Telephone and other forms of communication between both republics were interrupted due to the ongoing hostilities, and the war naturally rendered any form of mobility across the borders extremely difficult, or outright impossible. Moreover, Croatian authorities implemented on their own soil the UN sanctions that were applied to Serbia following Belgrade’s involvement in the war in Bosnia, banning any form of academic and scientific cooperation with citizens from the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (that is, Serbia and Montenegro).⁸ All of this was especially fateful for a discipline such as sociology, which, as we have seen, had been shaped since the early years of socialism by networks of cooperation and mobility that cut across the Yugoslav republics and which relied on inter-republican endeavours, especially connecting sociologists from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

Some of the oral testimonies I have gathered suggest the impact of these developments. For instance, after several years in Zagreb, Serbian sociologist Mladen Lazić resettled in Belgrade just before the onset of war. According to Lazić’s testimony, his departure from Croatia made it difficult to coordinate the work to process the data resulting from the macro-project conducted some years earlier by the Yugoslav consortium of sociological institutes. At the same time, Lazić stated that he could perceive the emerging obstacles to common work with Croatian colleagues in the fact that many of them asked to withdraw articles submitted recently to Serbian journals out of fear of being sanctioned by the Croatian government.⁹ Other testimonies have also pointed to difficulties in keeping up with inter-republican endeavours, and have stressed how it became necessary to organize

⁶ For our count of articles in *Revija za sociologiju*, all research and theoretical articles have been included, except for texts such as bibliographies, chronologies or institutional announcements. Conversely, there is no indication of what was considered a “work” by the Croatian Statistical Yearbook.

⁷ Silva Mežnarić, personal interview, Zagreb, February 2017.

⁸ Naredba za provođenje Rezolucije broj 757 (1992) Vijeća sigurnosti Ujedinjenih naroda u području znanosti, tehnologije i informatike, 3.6.1992. See: http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1992_06_32_799.html, (accessed on 23 February 2024).

⁹ Mladen Lazić, interview in Belgrade, April 2017.

meetings with colleagues from former Yugoslav republics in third countries such as Hungary, or in Italy.¹⁰

A view at the landscape of authors publishing in *Revija za sociologiju* during the war years supports the notion that Croatian sociology lost touch with developments in other Yugoslav republics, including not only Serbia, but also neighbouring Slovenia. Compared to the period before 1991, the period 1992-1996 saw a major decrease in the presence of authors from former Yugoslav republics, leading to what can generally be seen as a “republicanization” or “nationalization” of Croatian sociology during the years of the breakup.¹¹ Moreover, it is worth noticing that the waning presence of such authors was not countered by a meaningful increase in foreign authors, which grew rather marginally and often due to translations of original pieces in English. Last, it is interesting to note that, at least in the main sociological journal of the country, these changes did not translate into a decentralization of sociological production. Zagreb remained the undisputed center of the journal, with authors from the Croatian capital even increasing their overall participation. This disparity is displayed in Figure 5.

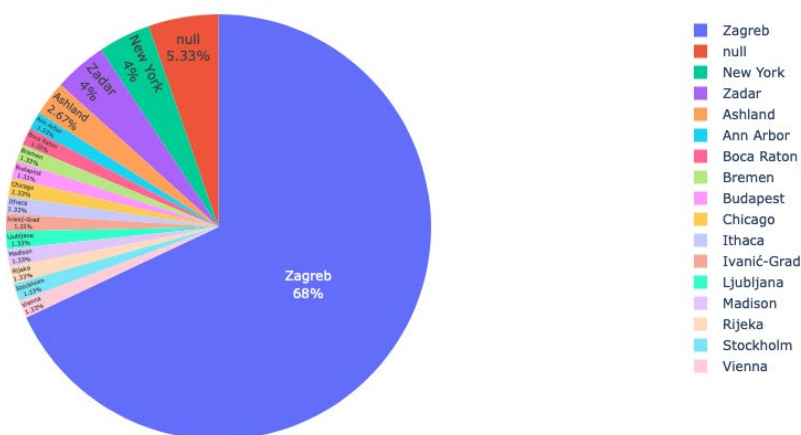


Figure 5: Location of authors publishing in *Revija za sociologiju*, 1992-1996. “Null” stands for authors with no reported location.

All in all, these sources suggest that Croatian sociology was more insular than previously, severed from networks of authors who had played a meaningful role in its development in previous years. During the 1990s, it effectively made a transition from being part of the field of Yugoslav sociology to becoming an autonomous and nationalized discipline. This was also expressed institutionally, with the Croatian Sociological Association joining the International Sociological Association as a new

¹⁰ ¹⁰ Silva Mežnarić, personal interview, Zagreb, February 2017.

¹¹ Considering a normal time lag for academic publishing (that is, the fact that publications from one year are normally the result of research and work done in prior years), I analyze Croatian sociological production from the war years not through articles published in 1991-1995, but in 1992-1996.

and independent member in 1992. Yet, many years were still needed for Croatian sociology to become fully integrated into other, alternative academic networks. After Yugoslavia, the discipline would have to define and negotiate its new position in the global academic community. Two decades after the end of the common state, such process would still be subject to debate, with some authors scolding Croatian sociologists' "parochialism" and their insufficient presence in international publications (2010), and others stressing the dangers of academic imperialism and warning of the risk of researchers going global but losing touch with local realities (Petrić 2011).

b. Institutional Shifts in Croatian Sociology

The Yugoslav breakup and the ongoing war on Croatian soil had a meaningful impact on the general political and intellectual atmosphere of the country, reinforcing what Lenard Cohen once described as a "siege mentality."¹² The Yugoslav army's offensive against Croatia was interpreted by many as an existential threat, and bolstered national solidarity in the country, often at the cost of political and ideological pluralism. As stated by sociologist Srđan Dvornik: "Even those who did not support Tuđman and his party considered that it was not time for public criticism of the government, and even less for any form of civil disobedience, not even a symbolic one (2009: 206)". Several of my interviewees characterized the political atmosphere of those years as having deteriorated with the rise of nationalism and the authoritarian proclivities of the new authorities, and some even declared having received anonymous, hostile telephone calls. This is not dissimilar to the broadly known cases of intellectuals who were targeted as traitors to national unity, as in the case of Jewish Croatian intellectual Žarko Puhovski (Pilić 2016: 84) or the highly publicized case of the Croatian feminist intellectuals Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković, Vesna Kesić, Dubravka Ugrešić and Jelena Lovrić, denounced by the weekly *Globus* in an article secretly written by sociologist Slaven Letica. As a consequence, they were compelled to leave the country.¹³

Although these cases suggest a general deterioration of the intellectual atmosphere, explicit censorship was rare. Yet, there were other, less direct ways in which political authorities could intervene in the academic world; not by outlawing publications, but rather by weakening certain institutions and reinforcing others in what can generally be seen as a scheme to swing the ideological balance within the field of social sciences.

One of the main strategies to refashion the academic world in line with the new, rather conservative and nationalist ideological coordinates of the time, was what Dolenec, Doolan and Žitko have labeled "institutional parallelism": that is, the establishment of new institutions, analogous to existing ones, in order to encourage ideological competition and broaden an academic market that was seen as being monopolized by left-wing and "Yugoslav" institutions (2015). In higher education, this was especially notorious in the growing influence of the Catholic Church. In 1991, the Theological Faculty was reinstated as part of the University of Zagreb, after almost forty years of its exclusion by the Communist regime. The Church also played a pivotal role in the development of "Croatian Studies," a catch-all field that was established at the University of Zagreb in the early 1990s, which rapidly went from being a one-year programme to a four-year degree, and which offered training in social and cultural studies focused on Croatian culture and nationalist intellectual traditions in parallel with the study programmes taught at the Faculty of Arts.

¹² Cohen, "Embattled Democracy: Postcommunist Croatia in Transition," 84.

¹³ "Hrvatske feministice siluju Hrvatsku!", *Globus*, 11.12.1992.

Endeavors to change the institutional landscape of sociological research were perhaps best epitomized by official attempts to weaken research centers that the HDZ authorities saw as ideologically suspect. One of these was the Center of Socio-Religious Research created by sociologist Srđan Vrcan in Split in the late 1980s. This was closed in 1992 due to lack of financing (Zrinščak 2015), a decision that a former collaborator of the center described to me as politically motivated.¹⁴ The clearest example of this trend, however, is the campaign that the new authorities launched against the IDIS.

As noted above, the IDIS was perhaps the most important center for sociological research in Croatia. Its history and ascendancy were closely tied to the policies of the socialist regime, and its activities were much related to scholarly endeavours in other Yugoslav republics, being among other things the main coordinator of the wide project on the structure of Yugoslav society that kicked off in the late 1980s under the direction of Mladen Lazić. In the early 1990s, however, the institute became the target of a destruction campaign by the new authorities, which Lazić himself described to me as a *coup*.¹⁵ As reported by Antun Petak, researcher at the institute since the 1970s, the government implemented a dramatic reduction in funds for the IDIS, which forced the institute to downsize from forty employees in 1989 to a working staff of twenty-three in 1994 (Petak 2014: 47-48). The Scientific Committee of the institute addressed an Open Letter of protest to the government, with no effect.

Such actions by the government should be seen in tandem with the parallel decision to create a new institute for social sciences in 1991 that was to a great extent a competitor for the IDIS. Initially called Institut for Applied Social Research and later rebaptized “Ivo Pilar” in honour of a renowned Croatian nationalist intellectual from the interwar period who had been president of the Sociological Association of Zagreb in the 1930s; the new institute launched its own sociological journal titled *Društvena istraživanja*, and managed to recruit researchers working originally at the IDIS, such as Drago Čengić and Siniša Zrinščak. Many researchers saw these moves as political, and understood them as part of a wider scheme to weaken institutions that the new authorities identified as progenies of the Communist regime and to shift the ideological balance within the field of sociology (Zrinščak 2015; Bahtijarević 1994).

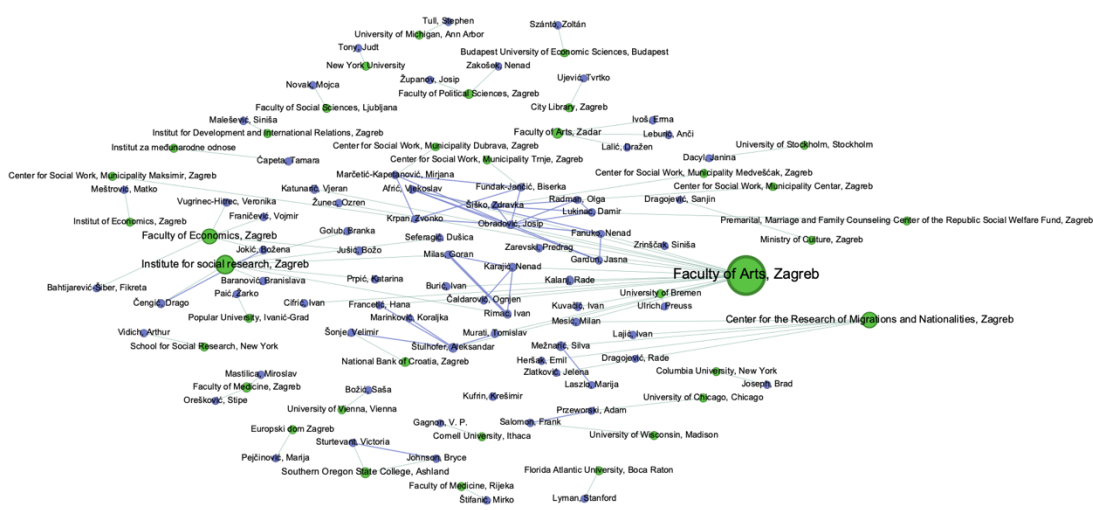
In fact, there are very few reasons to believe that the campaign against the IDIS was not politically motivated, the first one being that state officers in charge of managing scientific funding during those years openly expressed their scorn for the ideological orientation of researchers working at the institute. When in 1993 researchers Ivan Kuvačić, Vladimir Lay, Alija Hodžić and Branimir Krištofić, associated with the IDIS and the Faculty of Arts, applied for funding for a project to study the post-communist socio-economic transition, the respective officials at the Ministry of Science rejected their application with the following justification:

The subject and goal of the research defined in this way seem to us to be insufficiently clear. The specific problem of the disintegration of the communist ideology and the socialist social system and their replacement by different values and socio-economic relations in the process of formation and consolidation of new democratic regimes in Eastern Europe, and especially in Croatia, is not seen enough. Research into material status, quality of life, relations in the sphere of work and the like are certainly not without interest. But it seems that these questions are posed more from perspective of the system of socialist values, than from the current need to

¹⁴ Dražen Lalić, interview in Zagreb, February 2017

¹⁵ Mladen Lazić, interview in Belgrade, April 2017.

The IDIS was identified by the new authorities as an agent of the *ancien régime* and consequently starved of resources. The institute's crisis perhaps explains (along with the general economic hardship and with the breakup of all-Yugoslav cooperation), part of the drop in the number of publications in *Revija za sociologiju* in the early 1990s. What is certain is that the institute's crisis translated into a significant decrease in its contribution to the journal during the years of war, as seen in Figure 6.



After being a close second to the Faculty of Arts in previous years, the IDIS was now relegated to a conspicuously lower status. Its centrality score of 0.37 places it closer to the Center for the Research of Migration and Nationalities and to the Faculty of Economics, an institution that considerably enhanced its presence in the network during those years.

Overall, many of the changes and shifts taking place in Croatian sociology during the years of transition could potentially be explained on account of fortuitous factors, personal reasons, or uncalculated circumstances. The evidence, however, suggests that the decline of the IDIS was rather the anticipated result of a deliberate policy.

In this paper, I have set out to reconstruct the history of Croatian sociology under socialism and explore how the discipline underwent the transition to post-socialism. I examined the history of Croatian sociology in the wider framework of Yugoslav sociology, underlining its manifold

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connections to scholarly developments in other republics, especially Serbia and Slovenia, and its reliance on networks cutting across republican borders. Moreover, I have shed light on some of the effects of the Yugoslav breakup on the institutions and the practitioners of Croatian sociology by stressing two phenomena: first, the trend toward the republicanization/nationalization of the discipline by which it became detached from developments in former Yugoslav republics, and second, a series of shifts stemming from the policies of the Croatian nationalist and conservative government, which resulted in the waning of institutions associated with the Communist regime, in particular the Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb.

Modern Croatian sociology was to a great extent an offspring of Yugoslav socialism, having been fashioned over several decades by policies and institutions that relied considerably on all-Yugoslav networks of cooperation. By showing that the end of socialism and the common state translated into novel, and oftentimes reverse trends for the discipline and its practitioners, I have primarily sought to show the impact of political, economic, and social change on the life of a scientific community and to make a contribution to the literature on the history of the social sciences in Central and Eastern Europe during socialism and after. Incidentally, and in consideration of present attacks on academic freedom in countries as disparate as Hungary, Russia and Argentina, this paper might also contribute to a wider debate beyond the singularities of the region, stirring reflection on the many dangers that the social sciences incur when governments identify their practitioners as actors in the political arena.

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