

Format de citation

Antulov, Sandra: review of: Bojan Bilić / Marija Radoman (eds.), Lesbian Activism in the (Post-)Yugoslav Space. Sisterhood and Unity, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018, in: Comparative Southeast European Studies, 67 (2019), 4, p. 557-559, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/08eee20d249e4afc965d3953c5acb6f6>



copyright

Cet article peut être téléchargé et/ou imprimé à des fins privées. Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, intégrale ou substantielle de son contenu, doit faire l'objet d'une autorisation (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

to contemporary migration studies that point out the unique position as well as the outstanding excellence that the editors combined in this volume.

While, except for the introduction, references to theory are definitely the weakest point of the volume, its bibliography with plentiful links to predominantly regional issues is a stronghold. The volume includes about thirty pages of references at the end, and a bulk of endnotes after every chapter. There are only a few illustrations; some contributions include photos or maps (for example, Pichler, Schmidinger, and Anghel/Coşciug) which aptly assist the reader in understanding the framing or context. The photo chosen for the front cover comes as a curiosity for me, not only because the building does not fit its location at all, along a road in inner Albania, but also because there is no chapter included in the volume that addresses this region. All in all, the book offers fascinating insights to a broad bundle of facets of migration and transition in postsocialist Europe and comes as a must-read for everybody who is involved in that region and/or research on return migration.

Daniel Göler (Bamberg)

Bojan Bilić/Marija Radoman, eds, *Lesbian Activism in the (Post-)Yugoslav Space. Sisterhood and Unity*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 239 pp., ISBN 978-3-319-77753-5/ISBN 978-3-319-77754-2 (eBook), € 96.29

The collection under review is the fourth in a quartet of collective volumes on activism in the post-Yugoslav space, all of which have been edited by Bojan Bilić, or Bilić and associates. The first three collections deal with antiwar organisation

in former Yugoslavia, LGBT activism and European integration in the region, and LGBT activism and multiple oppression in Serbia and Croatia. This volume brings together contributions from scholars/activists interested in feminist and L(BT) topics in the region of former Yugoslavia.

The structure of the volume is intriguing, as its six chapters (not counting the editors' introduction, conclusion and epilogue) seem to echo the number of constituent units of former Yugoslavia. Yet, while four of the former socialist republics, today's independent states of Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia, are represented by a chapter of their own, one chapter deals with the first pride marches in Belgrade and Zagreb, thus combining Croatia and Serbia. This pairing is reminiscent of the linguistic situation in former Yugoslavia, where the Serbian and Croatian languages were officially joined and called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian (depending on which of the two republics one happened to find oneself in). Such a structure opens up the space for the sixth chapter, which is about transnational cooperation in lesbian activism, both within and outside the region. The other four chapters describe the history of autonomous lesbian organisations in Slovenia, lesbian activism in North Macedonia, non-heterosexual women's activism in Montenegro and the PitchWise Festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The book hinges on three key notions, the most prominent of which is 'sisterhood and unity', featuring in the subtitle and opposed to the patriarchal notion of brotherhood and unity, a notion of great importance in socialist Yugoslavia. The brotherhood dissolved together with the Yugoslav experiment; yet the ties between like-minded people were not severed. The

to contemporary migration studies that point out the unique position as well as the outstanding excellence that the editors combined in this volume.

While, except for the introduction, references to theory are definitely the weakest point of the volume, its bibliography with plentiful links to predominantly regional issues is a stronghold. The volume includes about thirty pages of references at the end, and a bulk of endnotes after every chapter. There are only a few illustrations; some contributions include photos or maps (for example, Pichler, Schmidinger, and Anghel/Coşciug) which aptly assist the reader in understanding the framing or context. The photo chosen for the front cover comes as a curiosity for me, not only because the building does not fit its location at all, along a road in inner Albania, but also because there is no chapter included in the volume that addresses this region. All in all, the book offers fascinating insights to a broad bundle of facets of migration and transition in postsocialist Europe and comes as a must-read for everybody who is involved in that region and/or research on return migration.

Daniel Göler (Bamberg)

Bojan Bilić/Marija Radoman, eds, *Lesbian Activism in the (Post-)Yugoslav Space. Sisterhood and Unity*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 239 pp., ISBN 978-3-319-77753-5/ISBN 978-3-319-77754-2 (eBook), € 96.29

The collection under review is the fourth in a quartet of collective volumes on activism in the post-Yugoslav space, all of which have been edited by Bojan Bilić, or Bilić and associates. The first three collections deal with antiwar organisation

in former Yugoslavia, LGBT activism and European integration in the region, and LGBT activism and multiple oppression in Serbia and Croatia. This volume brings together contributions from scholars/activists interested in feminist and L(BT) topics in the region of former Yugoslavia.

The structure of the volume is intriguing, as its six chapters (not counting the editors' introduction, conclusion and epilogue) seem to echo the number of constituent units of former Yugoslavia. Yet, while four of the former socialist republics, today's independent states of Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia, are represented by a chapter of their own, one chapter deals with the first pride marches in Belgrade and Zagreb, thus combining Croatia and Serbia. This pairing is reminiscent of the linguistic situation in former Yugoslavia, where the Serbian and Croatian languages were officially joined and called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian (depending on which of the two republics one happened to find oneself in). Such a structure opens up the space for the sixth chapter, which is about transnational cooperation in lesbian activism, both within and outside the region. The other four chapters describe the history of autonomous lesbian organisations in Slovenia, lesbian activism in North Macedonia, non-heterosexual women's activism in Montenegro and the PitchWise Festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The book hinges on three key notions, the most prominent of which is 'sisterhood and unity', featuring in the subtitle and opposed to the patriarchal notion of brotherhood and unity, a notion of great importance in socialist Yugoslavia. The brotherhood dissolved together with the Yugoslav experiment; yet the ties between like-minded people were not severed. The

concept of 'brotherhood and unity' might have disappeared, but the 'unity of sisterhood' between feminists/lesbians/women persevered. Closeness and solidarity have been felt, and help and support offered, to 'sisters' across the (both mental and physical) borders forged by war and destruction. Along with maintaining old connections, new ties have developed during different encounters, festivals and pride marches, enabling cooperation and the dissemination of knowledge.

This sense of unity, however, does not mean that there are no differences between the constituent parts of the once united country: evident are the different time periods when activism started to form, the different ways in which they were started and then developed, and the different concerns the activists have had. There are also varying views on whether feminism was part of lesbian activism (and vice versa), although the editors' contention is that, in general, feminism in this region has always had a strong (although not readily visible) lesbian presence, and that, conversely, lesbian activism is, in essence, feminist activism; the two are (and should be) inseparable. With this in mind, this research collection reads like a feminist overview of lesbian activism in the successor states of Yugoslavia.

Another recurrent topic is the notion of 'space', present on several levels of meaning: the physical and mental space of the post-Yugoslav region (and beyond); the geographical space divided by borders that are to be crossed (or transgressed, if they are virtual) in order to maintain ties with each other; the public space needed to achieve visibility, reclaimed in pride marches, festivals or sporadic actions; the space of 'one's own', needed to be able to speak freely and express oneself safely; and, finally, space as a place of belonging.

(Physical) space is viewed as a prerequisite for finding one's voice, for being able to 'speak up', to become visible. Lesbian voices have been silenced not only as women's voices but also in feminist and LGBT activism, as patriarchy has found its way into all, even non-heterosexual, spaces. The lesbian past has been a history of invisibility, and not being visible is equal to non-existence; it is a 'form of violence' (193). Lesbian spaces are seen as 'sustained by understanding, solidarity, and mutually recognised fragility' (3), which are the qualities that might help do away with misogyny, toxic masculinity and patriarchy.

The third common thread is 'knowledge' and its dissemination: learning about feminism and gender studies, learning about the history of activism, becoming familiar with (the process of obtaining) legal protection, knowing about different forms of parenting and partnerships, and, finally, finding out about other people who are in a similar situation—these are all forms of knowledge needed by an activist/lesbian in order to go about her activist business and conduct her personal life. Needless to say, this transfer of knowledge can only be maintained if there are ties among different people, different generations, and different regions.

Other important issues addressed and/or explored at some length are the concerns commonly found in LGBT activism: coming out, fear and violence, empowerment, gender roles, naming and labelling, gender identities, inclusion/exclusion of trans women and multiple forms of oppression, to name but a few.

The tasks set before the authors were twofold: one was to explore how the social 'conditions for speaking up' (6) have been created in the region in the past forty years. These conditions are found in

both the mental/emotional and the physical spaces mentioned above, which have been created and/or appropriated by the activists themselves. The other task was to take stock 'of the achievements, tensions, contradictions, and emotionally laden processes of post-Yugoslav lesbian activists' (2); in other words, to build an archive of lesbian lives and lesbian activism in the region. Since activists are not (and cannot be) concerned with documenting the things they do, this collection tries to fill the gap, to create a memory that will help fight 'against erasure and disappearance' (10), by combining the historical account of the development of activism with activists' oral histories. Archives, however, do not only offer a glimpse of the past—which is in this collection viewed through nostalgic glasses at times—but are also seen as a way of healing the wounds inflicted by war.

On a meta-level, the mentioned three key notions of 'sisterhood', 'space' and 'knowledge' are to be found in every text of the collection. The 'sisterhood' is visible not only in several co-authored chapters, but in the mutual care and concern evident in the authors' reflections on their (processes of) writing, which they were asked to share with the editors. In addition to documenting how conditions for speaking up have been created, this collection also creates these conditions itself, precisely by offering a space to lesbian voices. And since it forms a part of the archives that document the past, it is in itself a form of (creating) 'knowledge'. The glue tying the meta-world of the volume together with the world 'out there' are the authors' ethnographical ego-statements about their personal involvement in activism.

To conclude, this volume is a valuable and much needed contribution to the re-

cent history (or *herstory*) of (feminist) lesbian organising in the successor states of Yugoslavia, showing the similarities and differences existing in this multinational, multilingual, and multiconfessional region. In addition, it amounts to a call to form ever tighter and firmer ties within the regional, transnational community of women (feminists, lesbians and trans women), a call to collaborate more closely and form networks in order to share knowledge and experiences. This is in line with the intention of the editors to 'align this volume with the tradition of lesbian theoretical and activist interventions' (10), in other words, to make it both scholarly and activist, a task that they have successfully accomplished.

Sandra Antulov (Rijeka)

Adam Fagan/Indraneel Sircar, eds,
Activist Citizenship in Southeast Europe, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge
2018. 166 pp. ISBN 978-1-138--60489-6,
£ 115.00

The volume *Activist Citizenship in Southeast Europe* gathers seven excellent case studies of practices that expand the notion of political action beyond the institutions of liberal democracy. The introduction, written by the editors Adam Fagan and Indraneel Sircar, discusses three important contributions that the volume makes. First, despite the fact that the countries of Southeastern Europe are commonly characterised as having 'weak' civil societies, various forms of activism do take place there. Second, by delving into the history of some of the case studies, the authors show that the forms of activism they study did not develop within the core and then disseminated to South-