

Chapter 7

A Radical New Regional Geography:

Notes on a Revolution

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In a world hypnotised by the raptures of the neoliberal moment, the very idea of revolution has, in the global North at least, not just fallen out of fashion but removed itself to the infinite horizon of never-never land.

(Smith, 2010: 51)

The Revolutionary Imperative

Here it is reported that formerly Yugoslav citizens feeling former in the present – a definition of trauma – are currently suffering through the devastating consequences of a twenty-year-old experiment in political, social, and economic engineering – after the collapse of a socialist Yugoslavia – known as ‘transition’ (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; Horvat and Štikš, 2015; see also Fontana, 2013). Yet, as this chapter goes on to describe, perhaps no other post-socialist region in the world can claim to be in such a period of revolution and resistance to the ‘transition’ period post-1989 than the post-socialist Balkan states. In 2014 to openly question the ‘transition’ to capitalism

became commonplace in Yugoslavia's new states. Resistance sprang from Zagreb to Ljubljana, from Skopje to Sarajevo, as popular movements across the region responded to two common enemies, rapacious neoliberal capitalism and the post-democratic governance of repeatedly corrupt and continually divisive elites (see Arsenijević, 2014; Horvat and Štikš, 2015; see also Fontana, 2013).

Citizen-activists in the post-socialist Yugoslav successor states, as such, undertook a multicultural and multi-ethnic resistance (see Bourdieu, 1998), treading a path towards a future of justice and democracy beyond national borders and territorial disputes (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). Entangled within their emancipatory struggle citizen-activists saw a present Yugoslavia, which was bit by bit disappearing. And they sought to retain what remains there were of that older and apparently discredited socialist state, and to reclaim a socialist space in a space of post-socialism. Most of all they sought to rescue the commons, the factories, the museums, the public spaces, indeed everything that the post-socialist 'transition' era had in their eyes diminished (see Fontana, 2013). Occupying space, mobile citizen-activists took to the streets and established self-governed assemblies, and resolved to embed new radically democratic or horizontal forms of governance (see Brookchin, 2014). The most radical of these experiments in non-institutional politics found across the Balkans since the collapse of Yugoslavia is *The Plenum Movement*, the focus of this chapter (see Arsenijević, 2014; Horvat and Štikš, 2015; Kraft, 2015).

Here the cultural raw materials used to open radical spaces, construct new civic discourses, and organise critical citizen-led dialogues are described, in order to give over a sense of from where and how *The Plenum Movement* emerged in the desert of post-socialism (see Horvat and Štikš, 2015). The movement began with a revolutionary event, which as Henri Lefebvre (2003: 19) notes,

‘generally take place in the street’, and then as is often the case the movement crystallised around specific spaces in cities – and in some small towns – across Bosnia-Herzegovina. The event – significant protests after the closure of symbolic factories in the northern Bosnian city of Tuzla – sparked a mass citizen-led mobilisation, with the right to use public space as a site of dissent becoming the initial goal of the movement. Certain objectives were subsequently created, and the uprising coalesced around the formation of citizen-led assemblies or Plenum. The methods through which the movement attempted to force a revolution were at times violent – including the burning of the presidency building in the capital Sarajevo (see Figure 7.1) – though *The Plenum Movement* is largely a force through what it represents symbolically.



In this particular post-socialist, post-conflict region, the movement offers what could be seen as an ‘alternative transition’ or a ‘counter transition’ to the ‘transition’ to capitalism after Yugoslavia – or more specifically, an alternative to a toxic nexus of neoliberal capitalism and ethno-nationalist politics, after the collapse of a socialist Yugoslavia (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; see also Bieber, 2006). And the multi-local movement deconstructs the overbearing regional schema within which it finds itself without ever arguing for constitutional reform and a tearing up of the Dayton Agreement, signed in 1995 as a territorial peace deal (see Murtagh, 2016). Indeed today Dayton is perhaps the only thing holding the country Bosnia-Herzegovina together, whilst simultaneously separating it into distinct entities (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Belloni, 2009; Bieber, 2006; Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011; see also Gordy, 2015). As such *The Plenum Movement* instead, in an attempt to bypass the entrenched territorial politics of the region, produced radical openings from where neoliberalism is challenged, and created vital multi-ethnic spaces beyond yet within the fixed identitarian and ethno-nationalist regional entities present (see Bieber, 2006; Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). The movement primarily was about individuals freeing themselves from a toxic nexus of nationalism and neoliberalism, as the revolt enabled citizens to become citizens again and to form bonds and ties beyond their ethnicities, in order to then reimagine society together (see Arsenijević, 2014; see also Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Campbell, 1998; Nancy, 2000).

The Plenum Movement is an ideology in its public denial of ethno-nationalism – accepted by the international community for over two decades (see Kennedy and Riga, 2013) – and an imagined future also in its openness to all citizens as individuals not flattened ethnic-identities (see Touquet, 2015; see also Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Campbell, 1998; Nancy, 2000). The movement – transferrable, malleable, and importantly transparent – encouraged citizen-activists to shuttle between mass protests and street mobilisations (see Figure 7.2), blockades, sit-ins and direct action

taking and occupying public space, manifestos and demands delivered to parliament, remembrance and therapy in order to collectively mourn a traumatic past, and citizens' assemblies where a reimagined socialism was solidified (see Arsenijević, 2014; Kraft, 2015). *The Plenum Movement* was and is, as such, in its horizontal form, in its overall goal to create an alternative to the post-socialist neoliberal 'transition' era, and in its deconstructing of ethno-nationalist divides post-conflict (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996), a radical *new regional geographies* in the state within which it finds itself and also in grand scope a simultaneous opening-on-to and distancing-from the new Europe (see Jeffrey, 2008).



This chapter and the socio-political movement itself are committed to the region out of which they emerged, though the uprising in February 2014 – widely reported as the Bosnian Spring – and the describing of it here extends to and parallels with movements across Europe and the Middle East. After the global financial crisis and the failure of capitalism, there has been a marked upsurge in citizen-led activism across the globe, the Occupy movements and the Arab Spring, the protests in Gezi Park in Istanbul and in the Maidan in Kiev. Such events encompassed the Balkans, from the Aganaktismenoi in Greece to the formation of Plenum in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The scale of dissent in the Balkans was unprecedented in the post-socialist neoliberal ‘transition’ era. It was a revolutionary moment in a region where a world that isn’t capitalist could be imagined, or more specifically could be re-imagined (see Harvey and Haraway, 1995: 519). In the few years since Neil Smith (2010) penned *The Revolutionary Imperative*, a proliferation of revolt has occurred meaning that revolution is now seemingly less absurd. The story of this attempted heist on capitalism is told in what follows perhaps surprisingly not through the guise of a post-structuralist, Marxist, anarchist, or radical geography, it is instead as the geographer William Bunge (2011: 240) writes, written as ‘a call to action, not merely an exercise in abstraction’, a study of the regional social and material conditions out of which a revolution could emerge. A never-never land (Smith, 2010: 51).

Deconstructing Territorial Ethno-Politics

The war in Bosnia was eventually brought to an end in December 1995, when the Dayton Agreement was signed. A ‘peace’ time has lasted to this day, although the framework agreement, which divided the country in roughly half along ethnic lines, has prevented Bosnia-Herzegovina from developing entirely beyond wartime divisions (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Belloni, 2009; Bieber, 2006; Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). Preceded by an agreement between Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats signed in Washington in 1994, the country was separated

into two political entities: the predominantly Bosnian Serb, Republika Srpska, and the mainly Bosniak and Bosnian Croat, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, sometimes informally referred to as the Bosniak-Croat Federation. Locally, the country is further separated out, as the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has 10 autonomous cantons with their own governments. Each canton is known as majority Bosnian Croat, majority Bosniak, or 'mixed' (see Nancy, 2000). Within the cantons are municipalities and homogenous enclaves, which further define the individuals living there (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Campbell, 1998; Nancy, 2000). And while Republika Srpska is lead more centrally from the de facto capital Banja Luka, there are still observable geographical divisions between the northern portion and southern portion of 'the state within a state', which is often said to be under threat of being wiped off the map, acting in-place as a nationalising of civic discourse nullifying post-ethnic activism (see Touquet, 2012, 2015).

This cartographic representational idiosyncrasy or more precisely 'apartheid cartography' enforces a nationalist overhaul of space upon individuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the wider Yugoslavia (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996). Cartography has arguably enabled a post-socialist era of never-ending 'transition', diminished democracy, and the continuation of nationalist governance that it was hoped would fade away (see Gordy, 2015). Resembling Berlin after World War II, Sarajevo itself is a meeting point of the different lines that were drawn across Bosnia-Herzegovina and is partly in Republika Srpska and partly in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The de jure capital of Republika Srpska is Sarajevo, the de facto capital of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is Sarajevo, and Sarajevo is the capital of the country Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a weak central government also resides. It is no surprise therefore that protests erupted here, bypassing and dissolving the divisions on the map. Sarajevo is a place that was for Jean-Luc Nancy (2000), a *mêlée*, due to its long history of multiculturalism in a real and not prescribed sense (see

also Rieff, 1995). It was a historical regional focus as bridge between East and West and the old power blocs. Sarajevo is, as such, a non-aligned space, a place where a profoundly anti-capitalist and radically democratic vision of society could form (see Arsenijević, 2014; Horvat and Štikš, 2015; see also Harvey, 2012).

Vitally, as such, this chapter does not seek to simply return to a static, territorial, or mapped regional geography (see e.g., Vidal de La Blache, 1926; Hartshorne, 1939; Sauer, 1925), rather it uses the grounded political intentions of the now old-fashioned regional study to deconstruct the fixed borders of regions from below, speaking back to a relational multi-scalar interconnected new regional geography in radical ambition (see e.g., Agnew, 2013; Elden, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2013; Jonas, 2012; Jones, 2009; Jones and MacLeod, 2001, 2004, 2007; Murphy, 2013; Paasi, 1991, 1999, 2002, 2003; Painter, 2010). The re-writing of regions from below is a vitally important counter-narrative in regions defined and fixed by their traumatic pasts; or indeed regions that seem as if they can only ever be analysed via the gaze of an elevated, distanced, geopolitical eye (see Toal, 1996). As is conveyed in what follows, through a grounded geographical practice it is possible to offer a critically-oriented and intentionally disruptive perspective, documenting the rhythms and affective atmospheres of a social and political movement (see Lefebvre, 2004). And through this practice an attempt is made to re-define and under-cut the stubborn regional schema associated with the implicit identitarian and ethnic territorial geopolitics of this particular region of the world. A region of the world where a simplistic tracing between state and territory, and politics and governance, undergirds the processes involved in the making and unmaking of political subjects and the attachments and detachments of space, politics, and citizens (see Agnew, 2016; Brenner and Elden, 2009; Elden, 2013; Latour, 2007).

Specifically here it is suggested that ‘going back to a regional geography’ can be a way of tracing the growth of a nascent social and political movement built by citizens previously written out of an orthodox political history (see Thrift, 1994: 200; see also Agnew, 2013). Going back to a grounded, specific, individual, human, regional geography here is particularly worthwhile as it enables a regional writing of the embodied political subjectivities of individuals involved in direct action, and in so doing, importantly, it retains the voice of the individual in a region where it is common to collectivise the individual voice. Meaning a reconstituted regional geography here represents and is of a movement that seeks to deconstruct a fixed identitarian politics, and remove from below and within ethno-nationalist regional borders (see Thrift, 1983; see also Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Murtagh, 2016). In the process ‘going back to a regional geography’ is, in this chapter argued as such, to be a way of charting an emancipatory struggle, where citizens feel as if they are enabled to become individual political beings again, citizens again (see Thrift, 1994: 200; see also Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Nancy, 2000).

As in *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution*, a definitive regional study undertaken by the geographer William Bunge (1971), I will write a regional geography here which considers the view from below, or the view of social groups marginalised in orthodox political history (see Agnew, 2013). It is precisely through studying regions and writing at a regional scale – which unlike the national scale does not represent a privileging of institutions associated with the interests and outlooks of political elites (see Agnew, 2013) – that an emancipatory struggle was once placed and explored geographically in one square mile of Detroit, in a community known as Fitzgerald (see Bunge, 1971).

To write of a revolution as it emerges amidst the streets and squares of cities – where in which freshly political citizens are reclaiming and repairing public space – the chapter embraces the

embedded regional geography approach associated with William Bunge (1971), yet updates it and animates it, borrowing from recent geographic work which documents the rhythms of the subject in landscape as it lingers, waits, detours, and ruminates (see Wylie, 2007; Matless, 2014). As such, the experiential narrative produced is reminiscent of a form of non-representational (see Thrift, 2008), embodied, landscape geography, which has emerged in the past decade and a half dealing with performance, affect, and aesthetics in-place, yet it relocates this work to a region of the world where in which it perhaps seems to some to be out-of-place (see e.g., Daniels, 2006, 2012; DeSilvey, 2007, 2010, 2012; Dubow, 2001, 2011; Edensor, 2005, 2008; Lorimer, 2003, 2006, 2012; Lorimer and Wylie, 2010; Matless, 2008, 2010, 2014; Pearson, 2006; Riding, 2015a, 2016; Rose, 2012; Wylie, 2002, 2005). This embodied research obliquely refers back to an older form of regional geography, and the on-the-ground regional study, and could be used to refocus a writing of regions, reasserting a view from below (see Riding, 2015b; see also Agnew, 2013).

In the appendix of an article entitled, *On the determination of social action in space and time*, Nigel Thrift (1983) – a driving force behind the non-representational landscape turn in human geography (see Thrift, 2008; see also Wylie, 2007) – offers a similar methodology for a reconstituted regional geography to the one outlined in this chapter. Yet the methodology provided in 1983 was never deployed. Within the appendix Thrift (1983) notes a rich vein to be tapped and reworked, that is the use of autobiographies and diaries, in addition to more typical compositional approaches.

Autobiographies and diaries can be used effectively to approach contextual regional issues, and they are ‘a useful adjunct to give depth to conventional compositional accounts’, while ‘even one diary can provide a multitude of information’, and can be used ‘as a means of posing a series of contextual questions’ (Thrift, 1983: 57). Here a life history approach is taken once more to reformulate the regional geography of William Bunge (1971), as oral history is used to investigate

in-place, as Thrift (1983: 57) calls it, 'the exact content of sociability', recording how 'personality grows up in a particular region'.

Presently a reconstituted regional geography is perhaps jarringly transported to the region with which this chapter is concerned, as it is common to construct a certain geopolitical narrative in order to write of the former Yugoslavia. Work draws on either ethnographic data collected to explore state-building and post-conflict reconstruction (see e.g., Jeffrey, 2006), or, through a form of discourse analysis work interrogates the loss or dispossession of identity, deconstructing the internal skirmishes of ethnic and identitarian debate (see e.g., Campbell, 1998). Reanimating a regional geography – borrowing from a non-representational, embodied, landscape geography, and channelling the critical methodology and grounded field-work of William Bunge (1971) – this chapter drifts somewhat against the more established geopolitical discourses associated with research on the collapse of Yugoslavia (see e.g., Campbell, 1998; Glenny, 1992; Little and Silber, 1996; Rieff, 1995; Thompson, 1992), the post-socialist transition era after Yugoslavia (see e.g., Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011), and the Balkans more widely (see e.g., Glenny, 1999; Goldsworthy, 1998; Mazower, 2002; Todorova, 1997; Žižek, 2000). And in so doing this first-hand account of a political uprising witnessed over three months, follows instead the trail of another, more grounded, descriptive, everyday version of the geopolitical (see de Certeau, 1984; see also Bunge, 1971; Toal, 1996).

Clearly the reconstituted regional geography outlined so far seems to be far removed from the radical geography often associated with social and political movements. Defining what sort of a geography must be used to chart and describe a nascent socio-political movement, or indeed what it must look like, what it must represent, what it must build upon, is a constant theme in human geography. In effect David Harvey (2015) and Simon Springer (2014) recently delineated not only

what a radical geography must be – anarchist or Marxist, or indeed both, as when closely inspected the distinction drawn somewhat falls apart – but also what kind of geography can be viewed as radical, and used to write of a revolution, of political struggle. Referring to their polemic pieces here is to ask whether an alternative geographical writing of nascent socio-political movements is possible, which considers regions and their everyday processes and affects and the embodied practice of citizen-activists in regional landscapes. Through this reconstituted regional landscape geography an emancipatory struggle is physically placed in the region from which it emerged and a radical fracturing of space is represented on-the-ground. Claiming, occupying, and repairing public space, embedding new spatial links between citizens, and inspiring newly political beings, *The Plenum Movement* is a regional performing of space (see Arsenijević, 2014), a realising of radical regions, as such it has a regional geography.

The Revolutionary Event

On a television screen are the ice-skaters Torvill and Dean, describing thirty years later their gold medal performance at the Sarajevo 1984 *Winter Olympic Games*. The channel is changed. Flaming buildings and lines of riot police are visible, protesters, Molotov cocktails, rocks, rubber bullets and tear gas. Some of the buildings on the screen look familiar. “Where are these riots happening?” “Sarajevo, hell has come to Sarajevo.”

The uprising began on February 4 2014 in the northern Bosnian city of Tuzla, peacefully to begin with (see Figure 7.3). Many protesters were former workers at recently closed factories, including DITA, Polihem, Guming, and Konjuh. Initially protesters gathered outside the Tuzla cantonal government building, holding the state responsible for the collapse of factories in the region since 2000, when they were covertly privatised. Over the ensuing days the protests spread to other Bosnian towns and cities, including Bihać, Mostar, Zenica, and Sarajevo. The brutality of the police

response to the initial protests in Tuzla lead to thousands marching on the streets, heading towards the presidency building in the capital Sarajevo. And the protest in Tuzla grew to 10,000 people. Protests in turn spread to the wider region as a reawakening of radical politics on the Balkan Peninsula occurred, almost seventy years after a socialist Yugoslavia was first formed. Protests were held on February 12 in Belgrade, Serbia and on February 13 in Zagreb, Croatia, in support of the political struggle in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And there were also reports of anti-government protests in Montenegro and Kosovo.



Tuzla, the main city in the centre of the northeast of Bosnia was the beating heart of Yugoslav industry (see Singleton, 1985). Indeed Tuzla is named after the extensive salt reserves found underneath the city. The name Tuzla, an important Ottoman garrison, derives from the Turkish for salt mine. Large coal deposits, thermo-electric plants, socialist smokestacks, clouds rolling across

concrete cooling towers, endless pipelines, vast grey boxes, produce energy for the rest of the country. The coal mines dotted around the city power the Tuzla Power Station, the largest in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The region is an industrial machine. In the past decade five former state-owned companies, including an industrial detergent factory called DITA, were sold to private owners who sold assets, stopped paying workers, and then filed for bankruptcy.

DITA is an industrial detergent factory on the edge of Tuzla. Lorries stand empty in the forecourt, not a soul is about, trees whisper in the wind above the silent machinery, no gravel being crunched by feet, or engines whirring into action, a taxi rank has zero cabs, cavernous peaked hangers contain stopped conveyors, giant domes lay dormant, offices echo without the sound of humans, and lampposts provide light for stray dogs only. The plant has been left to the elements, copper has been stripped, assembly has ceased, pipes, valves, metres, scales, destroyed, costing huge amounts to fix, just jumbles of stuff now, matter without purpose, corrugated metal art forms. "Nothing is happening here, absolutely nothing, the workers are at home," Emina a former worker at DITA explains. Ministers said production would begin again in 2013. It did not begin.

In a clandestine way, without the workers knowing, factories, such as DITA, were privatised by the cantonal government and sold to new owners (see Arsenijević, 2014). The new owners almost immediately reduced the quality of the product sold, failed to maintain and properly inspect the machinery, and deciding the factory was not profitable enough began to pay the workers less, some not at all, and started to lay off experienced staff. The workers felt they had to do something about it, as they had a stake in the factory, and the city of Tuzla had a stake in the factory. Despite some workers being owed months of wages they continued to show up for work and attempted to keep the factory properly functioning. There were workers who had been working at DITA since the 1970s and saw it as a symbol of a prospering socialist Yugoslavia. So they turned up for work each

day, for weeks and months without pay. Until one morning the owners padlocked the gates and refused the workers entry. Backed into a corner and fearing the owners would strip the factory of assets, such as the copper wire, the workers at DITA blockaded the entrance to the factory. Occupying a space around the factory, the workers protested for production to continue, in the hope that they could themselves reopen it. Each day they worried that the machines were slowly decaying, yet they remained hopeful. The protests took various forms, even hunger strikes. The public stood behind the DITA workers, and the small protest outside the factory spread to Tuzla, and other towns and cities across Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Out of this desert of post-socialism, where all remnants of a socialist society were being systematically eroded, *The Plenum Movement* emerged (see Horvat and Štikš, 2015). It is a radical experiment in horizontal democracy. Organised autonomously, citizens' assemblies, or Plenum, articulate socialism beyond the state and Plenum are not aligned to a single political party. Plenum are – as public gatherings open to anyone in spaces outside of the traditional governmental and elite spirals and circles – post-nationalist in a region that remains heavily influenced by nationalist politics during the post-conflict, post-socialist, 'transition' era (see Horvat and Štikš, 2015). Yet their existence required an event – a symbolic moment – to politicise anger, hunger, and frustration, and that is what the closing of DITA, and the other factories, provided. The political potential of space within a post-socialist country was taken up by those first protesters remembering an old Yugoslavia in the present. In so doing bodies were made political and people were given the opportunity to discuss politics beyond nationalism, beyond the municipality, the canton, the entity; beyond yet within the lines that the Dayton Agreement drew across the country (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Belloni, 2009; Bieber, 2006; Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011).

A DITA worker stands and defines what her struggle is at the Plenum of Citizens of Tuzla. She connects the collapse of Yugoslavia, the collapse of socialism, to her struggle, the production of a new type of labourer, a wage labourer mercenary. She describes how many young men from Tuzla went to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight in a war. That was the only thing that they could hope for. There is no production that you can do here anymore. “Bosnia is a testing ground for a new type of labour, a nexus between capitalism and mass atrocity,” Damir, a member of the Plenum of Citizens of Tuzla tells me. He continues to describe how the raw materials of *The Plenum Movement* began with the workers at DITA organising and occupying, and how the movement itself began here in Tuzla:

“That is the marvelous politics in all of this, the workers invented the protest as a new way of protesting for production, rather than going on strike to cease production, they actually protested to keep the commons, that is the most important thing. It took various ways of trying to get the government to listen. It all congealed when everybody stood behind the workers of those five factories.”

The Plenum Movement

The main locus of the uprising switched to the direct democratic Plenum emerging across Bosnia-Herzegovina. The following towns and cities have their own Plenum: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar, Travnik, Brčko, Goražde, Konjic, Cazin, Donji Vakuf, Fojnica, Orašje and Bugojno. The demands of the Plenum of Citizens of Sarajevo were distributed widely on social media and were passed around in hard copy. They demonstrate the switching of the movement from street violence to formalised political action. Importantly the demands do not enter *The Plenum Movement* into the usual ethno-nationalist politics of the region, via arguing for constitutional reform and a rewriting of the Dayton Agreement (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Belloni, 2009; Bieber, 2006;

Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). Instead each local Plenum created located and concrete social and economic demands for each canton, which sought to open further spaces for dialogue across space, as other cantons reported back with similar socio-economic problems.

In the crucial present redrawing the map was not the aim (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). Creating spaces amenable to an alternative politics, within the fixed cantons, municipalities and entities of the Dayton Agreement was the overall goal of *The Plenum Movement*. The political engagement this provided citizens with is not to be downplayed (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; Gilbert and Mujanović, 2015; Gordy, 2015; Helms, 2013; Horvat and Štikš, 2015; Hromadžić, 2015; Jansen, 2015; Kurtović, 2015; Kraft, 2015; Majstorović, Vučkovac and Pepić, 2015; Mujkić, 2015; Murtagh, 2016; Touquet, 2015). There was, up until the creation of Plenum, no way to voice your own personal political opinion (see Arsenijević, 2011). Through the complicated, corrupt and divisive political system, which encourages a flattening of the self, an individual was forced to first represent their ethnic identity (see Anderson 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Campbell, 1998; Nancy, 2000). This lack of breathing space, the lack of an ability to speak as an individual voice, is what allowed *The Plenum Movement* to gain a grip over the regional consciousness. It allowed Plenum to become a popular citizen movement without a single institution, non-governmental organisation, international body, or political party on board (see Kraft, 2015).

Citizens felt for the first time as if they had a political voice beyond their ethnicity, and that Plenum was unambiguously, transparently, a forum, an assembly for citizens, a group meeting for all first and foremost. Plenum enabled citizens to become citizens again, and not framed, or flattened ethnic identities (see Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Nancy, 2000). This is what gave the movement power, the fact that it represented everyone, and was not interested in working with existing

institutions, but rather it sought to demand publically in public space, at Plenum, and through social media as a citizen voice. It demanded action from those who had forced citizens to participate in public life as a Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, or Bosnian Serb. If indeed the movement did eventually slip into the spirals, webs, and spheres of party politics and political structures its power as a citizen voice would be diminished and its force, through ongoing cooperation and in opening dialogue, would be weakened (see Mujkić and Hulsey, 2010; Stojarova and Emerson, 2010). It would lead to the movement losing the very thing which made it different from all of the other political initiatives which seek to re-write the Dayton Agreement for a perceived ethno-political gain. The conquest of state power would be a misguided strategy (see Holloway, 2005). For this reason *The Plenum Movement* remained anti-political, beyond the usual territorial, ethnic, nationalist geopolitics of the state.

Vignette 1. *The Plenum helps to abolish the multicultural apartheid, and how does it do that, it does that by saying there is one person, there is one vote, so I don't actually participate in the Plenum as a white middle-aged man, or a Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, or Bosnian Serb, but I participate as a political being. The political parties set up the division of public space. This is pretty much about space, and that is why it is important to think about the street and the protest in terms of space. Why is space important and why are people in motion important? That is a strategy. That is a political action. If the political parties divided up the public space, Plenum erased this separation and opened up a proper public space. That is the first thing, and if you enable that, you get an onrush of people who had fled into their private space and were not able to participate in public life.*

Plenum are a *Eulogy for the Mêlée*, they are small eulogies for a Yugoslavia, a Bosnia, a Sarajevo of the certain past, before ethnic cleansing (see Nancy, 2000). They are in a phenomenological sense the spirit of what Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) calls, being singular plural. Plenum claim existence is co-existence, they are part of an emancipatory struggle, and they are a vital being-with, which the delineation of a formerly socialist space into nationalist segregation has denied for 20 years or more (see Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011).

Documenting the morphology of regions and the fracturing of states, reveals here a nationalist overhaul of space, which manifests itself locally in the street, the city, the municipality, the canton, the entity, and indeed in the individual (see Elden, 2013; see also Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002; Campbell, 1998; Nancy, 2000).

Vignette 2. Plenum is here to stay because increasingly there are Plenum being created in every little town in Bosnia. We are sitting together and thinking about how we can solidify this in order to make it into a movement. Then we will address all of the levels simultaneously. The canton is the key, the canton has all the power, all the power is derogated to the canton. That is why it is key. The municipality is not the key because the municipality is the garbage, waste disposal, the parks, but they are also important after you claim the space. This is not about occupying, I think it is about claiming and I think there is the difference, it is about taking it and re-taking. You can't perceive this as some kind of interregnum. The space is opened up. The only way is for the industries to be taken out of privatisation and become a public asset again. The whole labour law is the key. We cannot collectively accept to become the slaves again, under a different name. That is going to be the next battle.

There are core Plenum principles, which translate as openness, transparency, and non-corruption. Plenum opened a space, a possibility into which people can jump. Almost everybody spoke at the Plenum of Citizens of Sarajevo, as the space enabled a kind of collective therapy (see Arsenijević, 2011). Certain performances were demanded from those who attended: no one voice is greater than another and no individual voice is perceived as animal howl. It is, as such, a space for speech beyond prohibition, enabling a disjointed society to collectively mourn a traumatic past and its enduring traces. In the desert of post-socialism, at Plenum, those present, imagine a forgotten future, a socialist future beyond the ethno-nationalist divisions of the transition era (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; Gilbert and Mujanović, 2015; Gordy, 2015; Helms, 2013; Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Hromadžić, 2015; Jansen, 2015; Kurtović, 2015; Kraft, 2015; Majstorović, Vučkovic and Pepić, 2015; Mujkić, 2015; Murtagh, 2016; Touquet, 2015).

Vignette 3. The Dayton Agreement set in place a government that is impossible, unwieldy, but actually there is an internal paradox within Dayton. Dayton enabled Plenum. Plenum is the logical contradiction of Dayton taken to the final step. That would be a very productive way of looking at it. Dayton is not the problem, the entities are not a problem, the cantons are not a problem, that is a technical question, it is a political question that it functions, but the question is how do you push the system to its logical conclusion, how you identify the internal paradox within it, so that you can push it. If you want, psychoanalytically speaking, how do you find the symptom, and focus on the symptom.

In the weeks after the initial uprising politicians resigned, including whole cantonal governments, while many protesters were charged with public disorder, fined, and arrested. Class solidarity was enabled again because people still have a living memory of socialism. Galleries and museums

became spaces where working groups of the Plenum are held, a public space for thinking about politics. They got reactivated, empty husks, closed to the public, got reused and reclaimed because of Plenum. The threat of protest continues to give legitimacy to the Plenum. And the abolition of the so called 'white bread' happened as a result of pressure from Plenum. Other very specific demands continue to be made. For example, the Plenum of Citizens of Sarajevo calls for a public inquiry into the process of how formerly publically owned factories were privatised, and how that privatisation happened.

Welcome back to the End of History

It was called *The Plenum of all Plenums*, a symbolic gathering staged in Sarajevo. And it was envisaged that this Plenum of all Plenums would include Plenum participants from across the region. As participants made their way from Mostar, Tuzla, Zenica, and other towns and cities by bus to the capital, they foresaw a pivotal moment in the history of the movement. In an attempt to strengthen and solidify *The Plenum Movement*, Plenum of various places came together to voice a common language of struggle through set demands. Working groups of Plenum had by this time reduced in size, they consisted of citizens sat indoors working through a manifesto, which they hoped could now be joined into a single document and delivered to parliament. The date was April 9 2014, over two months after the initial uprising, though here they were in Sarajevo, citizens from different Plenum together, to present a list of concrete demands to the government(s). As they made their way to the meeting site, Plenum realised to their surprise that it was strangely quiet, and a small crowd of activists stood where there should have been active citizenry. It was too late seemingly, the rage had deceased, and the affective atmosphere of the initial uprising was apparently lost. The revolution is over, long live the revolution.

Everything changed on that day in February 2014. February 7 2014 saw a population unite against perhaps the most complex and contradictory political system in the world, as well as its corrupt leadership. *The Plenum Movement* was brief, but it highlighted the potential of local movements to enact positive change within deeply divided societies. Though it struggled to maintain its initial momentum as a non-institutional alternative to institutional politics, Plenum is unmoved as a mechanism through which citizens can act publically as political beings again beyond playing out an ethno-nationalism. Plenum was never envisaged as a way in to formal politics anyway. Looking back now at those hopeful three months, where power briefly resided with citizens, it is difficult to work out specifically and precisely what did indeed change, and what was achieved. Contradictions become apparent, the street or the Plenum, the street is the Plenum and the Plenum is the street, concrete demands or a plea for a common language of struggle, an institution in itself or a tool for change. Yet this is perhaps to miss the enduring influence of Plenum. It was a movement which altered a public consciousness, discourse, and thinking, and indeed it removed some of the internal borders between citizens. As such, to think of Plenum as a success or a failure is to miss its revolutionary agenda. For a brief moment, people stood together, in cities, on streets, in squares, at Plenum, and that will not be quickly forgotten. Here, in Sarajevo, February 7 has been marked each year since.

With an uncertain future after a period of hope where the region goes from here is unclear. Experimenting with assemblies as a tool of revolt is not over (see Brookchin, 2014; Wainwright, 2003; Webber, 2011). And a trial with direct democracy is not over, as it can now be reanimated at any time. From Macedonia to Slovenia, Kosovo to Montenegro, we are seeing weekly rumblings of discontent and hopeful voices railing against their political situation (see Horvat and Štiks, 2015). *The Plenum Movement* provided a pivotal shift in political discourse, created spaces of dissent within an overbearing political structure, and enabled a traumatised society to collectively mourn

what was lost as Yugoslavia collapsed (see Murtagh, 2016; see also Campbell, 1999; Crampton, 1996; see also Jeffrey, 2012; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). It offers possibilities for future popular movements that seek to change entrenched social structures without seeking constitutional reform, and it provided a transitory hope for citizens feeling former in the present, who could briefly contemplate a forgotten socialist future (see Arsenijević, 2010).

The Plenum Movement was a clear opportunity to engage and develop locally driven solutions to a difficult and complicated regional situation, as it gave a voice to citizens previously unheard and ignored (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; Gilbert and Mujanović, 2015; Gordy, 2015; Helms, 2013; Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Hromadžić, 2015; Jansen, 2015; Kurtović, 2015; Kraft, 2015; Majstorović, Vučković and Pepić, 2015; Mujkić, 2015; Murtagh, 2016; Touquet, 2015). Its power derived from its multi-local nature, chipping away at regional structures, cantons, entities, municipalities – without ever reverting back to a territorial spatial demand and a rewriting of a peace agreement based on ethnic division (see Murtagh, 2016) – and its power was perhaps lost when the movement arrived at a single point in time and space. *The Plenum of all Plenums* reduced a diversity of voices to a small number of demands and in a sense brought about the end of the movement before it had even begun. *The Plenum Movement* melted away in the shadow of the institutional capital as a single, pure, entity in itself, no longer radically diverse and disparate, no longer an anti-apartheid ideology, no longer a hopeful enigma, no longer an opposition to a divisive elite, it instead appeared as a political party, another level or apparatus of government.

Despite the short-lived hope *The Plenum Movement* provided, as this chapter demonstrates, instead of division and fragmentation – the common language of Balkanist literature – the region is in a new era of collective resistance after a recent rebirth of radical politics, as individuals forge a trajectory towards a democratic future (see Arsenijević, 2011, 2014; Gilbert and Mujanović, 2015;

Gordy, 2015; Helms, 2013; Horvat and Štiks, 2015; Hromadžić, 2015; Jansen, 2015; Kurtović, 2015; Kraft, 2015; Majstorović, Vučković and Pepić, 2015; Mujkić, 2015; Murtagh, 2016; Touquet, 2015). There is, as this chapter contends, now a region of the European continent, that part of the continent that has for so long been defined by its radical politics, which is rebelling against the core. Embraced, subsumed and made dependently peripheral within the ‘new’ liberal global economy (see Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010), there are now new reasons to engender a radical politics in this region for a post-Cold-War generation.

Beyond the capitalist anarchism associated with certain popular movements – such as Occupy – of recent times, the main charge of this emerging resistance across the Balkans seeks to deconstruct borders and openly questions the new Europe that emerged post-1989 (see Elden, 2013; Snel, 2014). This emerging resistance strives for a revolution (see Smith, 2010). Indeed the new radical politics in the old Yugoslavia – a country which made up a large part of the Balkan Peninsula – aims to reanimate a form of socialism in the desert of post-socialism and states the need for a new radically democratic European project (see Horvat and Štiks, 2015). Decades after a forgotten socialist geographer, Fred Singleton (1985), spoke of a Balkan Federation of Socialist States as a response to Yugoslavia’s fracturing, this formerly socialist region, which has exhausted the radical in many guises, once again provides a similarly radical manifesto for a radically democratic future. In order to write what revolution could now mean, after it was rendered ideologically absurd for so long (see Žižek, 1994), we must acknowledge the unique position of *the bastards of utopia* (see Rasza, 2015) – those citizens left adrift after the collapse of Yugoslavia – living radical politics after socialism.

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