

THE LOCAL WORKFORCE OF INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: 'PRECARIAT' OR 'PROJECTARIAT'?

Dr Catherine Baker (University of Hull)

'Precariat' and 'projectariat'

- 'Precariat'
 - ▣ From Guy Standing's *The Precariat* (2010)
 - ▣ A group defined by its experiences of insecurity
- 'Projectariat'
 - ▣ Is this a privileged group?
- Focus: the local workforce of international intervention

Social roles derived from the war

- Compared to veterans/refugees etc, local employees of international organisations do not have
 - ▣ An institutionalised role in society
 - ▣ Associations that claim to represent them
 - ▣ Representation as protagonists in popular culture (?)
- Are they another post-conflict/post-socialist social group or class?
- Where are they in the 'peacekeeping economy'?

Local staff and precarity

- 'Precariousness' and the desire to overcome it (Jansen)
- Are there common experiences that help to constitute this workforce as a social group?
- Where is this in the political economy literature on BiH/Kosovo where sector has been largest?

Advantages: as agents of reconciliation and change?

- More agency in promoting reconciliation or taking social action because of skills/experience gained through the work?
 - ▣ 'The first to cross the lines' narrative
 - ▣ Economic as well as activist reasons
- Potential to develop anti-nationalist/post-ethnic orientation?
 - ▣ Or only if someone was already predisposed to

Advantages: a socially distinct elite?

- NGO sector as part of ‘a new globalized professional middle class’ (Stubbs)
 - ▣ Continuity with existing Yugoslav urban middle class...
 - ▣ ...and all that that entails
- Not a new class, but reproducing an old one?
 - ▣ Access to pre-requisites for jobs was socially stratified
 - ▣ But still reproducing itself in novel ways due to the new context

Advantages: power as intermediaries?

- Gatekeepers of knowledge have power during radical change
 - 'Local guide' figures (Scott)
 - Agency of translators/interpreters in Translation Studies
- How could local staff gain from knowledge they acquired, and from power in framing it to others?
- What advantages did these posts have in the informal economy?

Questions of identification

- 'A new Bosnian [etc] social class'? (Barakat and Kapisazović)
- Yet employing organisations still thought the group would disappear...
- But even this raises questions
 - How far have similar experiences and conditions of work created a group identity?
 - Do those to whom this identity refers derive meaning from it, or is it being analytically imposed?
 - Is there even one term for everyone involved? (lokalci?)

Questions of identification

- Or is there too much difference for this to be one group?
 - ▣ Multiple organisational practices and cultures
 - ▣ Some jobs provide more resources/strategies for negotiating precarity than others
 - ▣ Differences in backgrounds before entering sector
 - ▣ Levels of identification with symbolic practices of resistance to nationalism
 - ▣ Chronological and geographical variations
 - ▣ Impact of post-2008 global financial crisis
- Evidence base needs to be improved

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