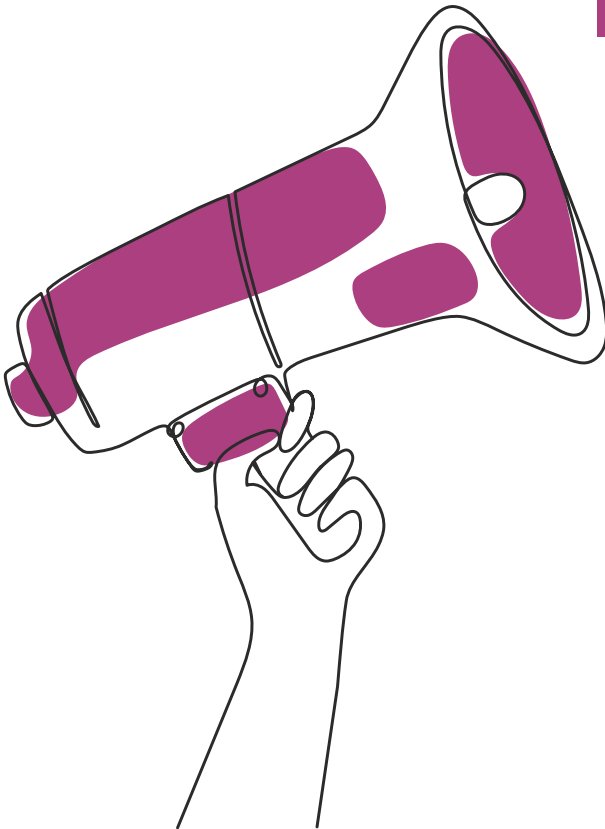




CONFERENCE:

***New Divisions, Struggles,
and Solidarities in South East Europe***

13-14 June 2025



Conference

**New Divisions, Struggles, and Solidarities
in South East Europe**

Belgrade, 13–14 June 2025

Publisher

Sociological Scientific Society of Serbia
Studentski trg 1
Belgrade 11000, Serbia
www.snds.rs

For publisher

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University of Belgrade

Pre-press and printing

Dosije studio, Belgrade

Print run

100

ISBN 978-86-905444-1-7

This book of abstracts was financially supported by the
Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation
of the Republic of Serbia.

<https://doi.org/10.46793/NewDivisions25>



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The conference was held on June 13 and 14
at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory

Sociological Scientific Society of Serbia

Conference

**New Divisions, Struggles, and
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Periphery in Movement: Organizing Against Rio Tinto in Serbia

This paper initiates a conversation on how contemporary Eastern European peripheralization and the hegemony of the energy extractivist model impact civil action, introducing the concept of Periphery in Movement. Periphery in Movement seeks to expand beyond traditional civil society and social movement studies by addressing forms of organizing that build an incomplete and often tenuous territorial resistance. Through contested convergences and alliances among diverse civil actors, it aims to bring material disruptions to extractivist projects. We combine approaches from political economy, civil society studies, and social movement studies to establish this concept through three core specificities. The first specificity is the power imbalance, which we identify as the defining characteristic of Periphery in Movement, positioning it in opposition to corporate interests, the European Union, and national elites. The second specificity is the conflictual convergence of actors, spanning a diverse spectrum of civil actors who have undergone significant ideological and practical transformations from the Yugoslav Wars to the present. The third specificity focuses on the “how” of Periphery in Movement, examining the new repertoire of actions it employs. We develop this theoretical framework by analyzing Serbia’s ecological movement against the mining corporation Rio Tinto in the context of resistance to lithium extraction, bringing environmental pollution and loss of territories. The concept of Periphery in Movement is inspired by attempts to describe movements in Latin America that have emerged against the extractivist model as a form of “Society in Movement.” Unlike the Latin American concept of Societies in Movement, which often offer prefigurative elements in their organization against extractivism, movements in Eastern Europe bear a burden of past (and present) developments of civil society, including neo-colonial transitional “democratization” through civil society, its soft and hard repressions by both international funders and national state, and its peripheral geopolitical position in Europe in territorial resistance.

CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

323.1(4-12)“19/20”(048)

316.4(4-12)(048)

305(4-12)(048)

316.34(4-12)(048)

CONFERENCE New divisions, struggles, and solidarities in
South East Europe (2025 ; Beograd)

Conference New divisions, struggles, and solidarities
in South East Europe, Belgrade, 13–14 June 2025 / [editors
Milica Vesković Anđelković, Milan Urošević]. – Belgrade
: Sociological scientific society of Serbia, 2025 (Belgrade :
Dosije studio). – 73 str. ; 20 cm

Tiraž 100.

ISBN 978-86-905444-1-7

1. Vesković Anđelković, Milica, 1982– [urednik]

a) Национализам -- Југоисточна Европа -- 20в–21в --
Апстракти

b) Друштвени покрети -- Југоисточна Европа --
Апстракти

v) Студије рода -- Југоисточна Европа -- Апстракти

g) Социјална неједнакост -- Југоисточна Европа --
Апстракти

COBISS.SR-ID 169952265