

In the sixth chapter, *Media Infrastructure*, Tena Perišin presents the findings of the analysis of infrastructural capacity sufficient to support independent and pluralistic media. As for the technical capacity, Croatian commercial and public televisions with national level concessions are on a very high level (which is not the case with local and regional televisions). The fast and efficient process of digitalization contributes to these standards. Coherent government ICT policies and strategies aim to improve informational capacities in marginalized communities. ICT technologies are widely used among different media platforms, and all the traditional media are converging with the new media. However, the legal framework poorly defines the area of new media and the content production on multiple media platforms.

In the conclusion, the authors state that the Croatian media system has been significantly improved since the 1990s, although some areas need to be additionally scrutinized and improved, namely pluralism and diversity, transparency, autonomy and professionalism. In the light of these analyses, they pose a question on the future of the Croatian media landscape, especially considering the approaching accession to the European Union. How will the Croatian media system react to these great changes? Recent events have shown that private and particular interests often outweigh public interests. Will these practices be common in the future? This depends primarily on media laws and policies that should regulate the media system to ensure diversity and pluralism, which are reduced under the fast concentration of media industries.

The authors have submitted a number of arguments and recommendations for im-

provement in the Croatian media system. Their efforts should contribute to greater understanding of both positive and negative aspects of the current system. This should serve as an effective basis for an encouraging public dialogue and for informed rethinking and reevaluation of media policies that ought to be adequate for emerging challenges in the future.

Dina Vozab

Review

Dag Strpić

**Karl Marx i politička ekonomija
Moderne (Karl Marx and The
Political Economy of Modernity)**

Nacionalna zajednica Crnogoraca Hrvatske/
Disput, Zagreb, 2010, 239 pp.

What is the real nature of the contemporary crisis? What is to be done to prevent its continuous disastrous impacts in regard of disabling or slowing down and blocking the social, economic and political development? Why is cycle analysis still important? And, finally, what does it all have to do with classical political scientists such as Hobbes, Hume, Smith, Hegel, and Marx?

In his latest book *Karl Marx and The Political Economy of Modernity*, Dag Strpić, eminent Croatian political scientist and political economist, seeks to answer the above-mentioned questions (and many more). To this purpose, he outlines the methodological framework which en-

ables us to reflect on and understand the crisis and ourselves heavily under its fork in a profound and (almost mysteriously) rarely undertaken way. The book consists of nine scientific works published in the period 1982-2010. Strpić carefully chooses and masterfully combines his scientific works from his doctoral thesis onwards, as his primary fields of scientific interest are closely related with crisis, political-economic cycles and the structural understanding of development. The author applies an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach while connecting theory and concrete, prospective, practical political and economic activity. The book represents a scientific research venture, and a rethinking and reinvention of the widely forgotten holistic perspective and much needed access points to the crisis. In an unusual and (almost inexplicably) infrequent way, it dynamizes the architectonic and static analysis, turning it into a prospective developmental one. The main thesis suggests the necessity for theoretical and public-policy paradigm change/alternation as inevitable in view of solving the contemporary (*societal*) crisis. In doing so, it calls for *the actuality of return to inquiries of classical modern political science*.

The book consists of three parts, which must not necessarily be read in the order chosen by the author. Following this inverted logic, it might be advisable to start with *Liberty, power and identities in societal cycles* (part three). The key thesis explicates that the efficacy of the way out of the crisis depends on its diagnosis. The author outlines a broad range of existent different solutions to the crisis which occur in response to different analyses of its depth and form, and suggests a radical the-

sis that the actual crisis might be a crisis of Modernity or a civilisation crisis which occurs every 300-400 years. In other words, Strpić identifies the contemporary crisis as the possible societal crisis of Modernity itself! Complex situations, like the one we deal with, need complex tools of analysis. If so, the most frequent *bubble burst* theory perception of the contemporary crisis as a temporary economic fluctuation/dysfunction in certain sectors (such as estate market) is wrong in its diagnosis, and that is why the treatment does not help or cure. The spontaneous *take-off* just isn't going to happen!

For Strpić, this is a cycle (and structural) crisis. He shows that development is not linear and holds the non-mainstream¹ position that development occurs in the form of cycles with interchangeably altering phases of conjectures and crisis.

The author refers to Schumpeter and his well-known voluminous masterwork *Political Cycles*, in which he explicates that economic factors are not the only or even the most important determinants/causes of business cycles.² In other words, busi-

¹ The mainstream position is the neoliberal one, which seeks to entirely dismiss the cycle theory (and empirical evidence?) due to its ideology. Development is seen as linear and achievable through spontaneous market forces and actions. Paradoxically, it implies deregulatory directed interventionism, although interventionism is dismissed on an ideological basis.

² Interestingly, even though Schumpeter is a moderate conservative (or moderate liberal in European terms), he has been ignored by mainstream (neoliberal) economists because of his cycle theories. Cycles mean the possibility of prediction, and so, in the bottom line,

ness cycles are not exclusively economic in nature. They are complex and caused mainly by other (non-economical) causative agents – e.g., political, cultural, social, climate, health or military. Although their impacts are mainly readable in the form of economic indicators, Strpić considers the cycles much wider than “usual” economic cycles and calls for the analysis of *societal/political-economic/political cycles*. They operate in the broad scope of Parsons’ *societal community*.

Who is responsible for repetitive occurrences of (*societal*) cycles? The author suggests that the inner structure of modern *societal* community itself, multilateral and permanent exchanges (sales and purchases) on the markets of all types form a structure which inevitably produces cycles. It is typical of the influential and fundamental Hobbes’ perspective that exchanges of different powers, not necessarily just economic or just political shares, are the ones which continuously form the modern political-economic community. These exchanges glue modern individualistic societies as they bind their individualistic base together and make the existence of modern society possible. Strpić’s main thesis emphasizes that exchange in general, in the broad area of the entire societal community, is the space where cycles are caused and produced. Long-term system changes (*societal* cycles) conduct the system towards a new balance. Stability of the system has to be understood dynamically. It inevitably changes through time.

this implies some kind of planning which is refused on ideological terms as (almost) some kind of blasphemy.

Such a theory of cycles leads Strpić to his hypothesis on the (*normal*) *structure of Modernity*. Carried out like this, in one place, the analytic model represents an innovation, although it is developed from a broad scope of existent and accessible theoretical and historical-empirical knowledge. The model represents contours of modern society and distinguishes it from all other traditional and pre-modern forms of political space. The *modern normal* consists of two points of principles: the political (power, freedom, communication) and the personal/individual (physical individual and legal persons), which operate in the dual and interconnected space of nation-state (state/society) and nation-state plurality: the world system. Strpić shows that the area of equilibriums of each four points in the middle of the space called the *modern normal* represents fields of *good policies and good governings, with well balanced growth and development*. The system is based on dynamic cycle movements, so that its permanent restructuring forms a dynamic structure of different *modern normals/equilibriums*, which indicate dynamic tendencies and movements towards a *normal state*. In bringing down the *modern normal* in its equilibrium state, Strpić refers especially to Braudel and Arighi and the *longue durée* and real historical/empirical processes, arguing that the dynamic continuities in the deepest structures of society are central to development.

Disequilibrium of the points results in different types of cycle instabilities/crises. Divergent types of imbalances and radical changes in equilibrium, in Strpić’s categorical apparatus, mean different kinds of totalitarianism. In the context of

contemporary structural crisis of (*matrix*) capitalism, analyses indicate *corporative totalitarianism* as corporations eventually enclosed within themselves form a kind of privileged ghetto. Long before the crisis, the corporations' behaviour slipped away from the modern normal and its rules, principles and space, which, basically, shows that they have been unsuccessful themselves. Moreover, weren't the corporations (paradoxically) affected the most by the crisis?

Matrix-capitalism as a result of the process of de-normalisation is a metaphor of virtual capitalism whose inner logic is not capable of balancing towards the *normal space*. It is clearly balancing in the opposite (*half-totalitarian*) direction.

Equilibriums and disequilibriums of the *modern normal* have different impacts on the efficacy of public policy results. Strpić uses the criterion of efficacy as reference point in estimating the comparative success of the modern normal and its de-normalization with regard to (primarily) producing sustainable growth/development. Usage of this key criterion and developed sense for modern political space (with the help of the *modern normal*) enables us to enrich the analyses of the crisis.

This kind of structural analysis enables us to use the *modern normal* as a neutral tool, completely independent of ideological frameworks, and to analyse the crisis in a more profound way as an indicative orientation of the most unenviable, present situation. In the same time, it enables researchers to project the alteration of the present situation through development policies understood as *harmonised development strategy of all segments of public policy in their political-economic context*. Within

this political economic framework and its dynamic changes, it is possible to develop certain strategies and concrete policies as a successful way out of the crisis.

The first two (much shorter, but very important) parts of the book deal with Karl Marx and comprise scientific articles published in the period 1982-1989, which are narrowly elaborated in the author's unpublished doctoral thesis.

In the conditions of structural *societal* changes and the need for modifications of the dominant (neo)liberal capitalism, Marx's spirit suddenly floats above us. But what parts of Marx's theory are relevant today? The author aims to show the relevance of the revival of Marx's project of the critique of political economy and the scientific overturn based on its roots in the field of *general theory in political sciences*. Marx and his theory are not directly in the background of the structure of the *modern normal*, although Marx is relevant in another sense, in accordance with the reach of his knowledge and comprehension of classical modern political and political-economic thought. The established linkage between the (classical) foundation of modern societal community and its realistic/historic/empirical functioning through time and through the entire societal community and its development, makes Marx our irreplaceable collocutor. His mediatory theoretical role in understanding the foundation of Modernity through Hobbes, Petty, Hume, Smith, J. Mill, J. S. Mill and Ricardo is precious in the context of the crisis of Modernity itself.

Strpić is interested in *The Capital* as Marx's master scientific work. He holds that Marx's megalomaniac critique of political economy is essential for the comple-

tion/finalization of Modernity itself, but it has not been recognised by Marxists like other (more politically interesting) parts of his theory. In the important text *Marx who is missing*, published as an afterword in the Croatian edition of Bidet's *General Theory of Modernity* (2008), the author seeks to show that it is not possible to understand the applicability of Marx's work without taking into account its methodology. Appropriate understanding of the (methodological) starting point of the Critique is essential for recognition of Marx's analysis and its intention(s). The Critique is not completed, as it begins on the level of *capital in general* and has to be brought to the (only indicated) concrete level of competition between particular real capitals: the developed (in the bottom line, the world's competitive) market. *Fixing* political economic theory is just a part of Marx's project of *successful theory of politics and society which is possible only through derivation from the classical fundament*. Political, social and juridical analytic layers must/can be developed from Marx's groundwork. Especially (critical) political theory of regulation, because of a high degree of monopolisation on the level of real functioning of markets (pp. 31-32). Strpić shows that it is important to keep Marx's unaccomplished project alive, since a completion/finalisation of the project will enable us to project, predict and understand changes in the modern world/structure: of its functioning, but also of its constitutive elements.

Generally speaking, the theory regarding (some aspects of) this topic has only relatively recently achieved the author's level and points of analysis (especially Barbrook 1995, 1998; and Ehrbar 2002, 2007). The

special value of the author's scientific innovations in reading Marx and possibilities of Marx's today's applicability is derived from a critical dialogue with Marx. Recognition of the importance of thought of the Hobbes-Smith-Marx trio in a dynamic perspective enables us to act efficiently in the contemporary crisis inside a de-normalised but still modern political space.

Strpić's book *Karl Marx and the Political Economy of Modernity* represents the most valuable path towards a profound and complex understanding of the current crisis. Thinking in a complex way keeps us closely related to reality. In his attempt at a proper analysis of the crisis, Strpić succeeds in interacting different intellectual (classical) patterns of thought and practical and concrete historical development with indicative prospective analysis of modes of getting out of the crisis through developmental policies. Complex problems require an approach which connects integral political science with the whole of social sciences and humanities. Accordingly, the book represents a rare example of much needed interaction between inside sciences in successful resolving of complex phenomena. In the sense of the right approach to the complex problems, the necessary union of social sciences and humanities is recognised and renewed. Isn't it true that political science itself has been most successful when immersed in the context of political and cameral sciences bound together, as it has been for many centuries? Economics, unfortunately, does not have the right tools to understand and resolve the crisis. The collective blindness of economists and the (proved) inability to recognise the nascence of the crisis is an alert to us all. But is this fact really sur-

prising, knowing that the economics consciously (but wrongly?!) became enclosed in itself? Economic “theories” of achieving automatic equilibrium(s) of the market system were a *fatal* simplification. Such abstractions represent a veil of economic ideology which generally prevents a look beneath the surface.

At the same time, the book is a counterpoint to the (mainly) missing crisis contributions of political scientists, and represents a bright (professional) example to follow.

Strpić does not find himself trapped in an ideological frame advocating interventionism, knowing that *bad times are times of state-oriented ideas*, but taking into account that *good times of conjuncture are more market-oriented* (pp. 166, 190). He formulates it as “Commons’ rule” following the famous 19th/20th century American political scientist and institutionalist John Commons. Different times necessarily mean different ideas/modes of thinking. *Mega costs in money and societal energy* provoked by the crisis cannot be completely avoided, but they can and should be restrained. Moreover, precisely periods of rapid economic growth can be quickened up, while the consequences of periods of decline can be diminished.

The wrong (mainly economic)³ perception does not change the real nature of the Crisis, and it can only strengthen its catastrophic impacts. By revealing this fact, the book provides an extremely valuable analysis and equips the reader with frequently missing tools. The book can be rated most highly as an occasional ray of sun which helps us to bright up hidden ways of structural and complex understanding of modern political-economic community(ies). It stays in line with the very best, and deserves the scientific attention as a framework that indicates the direction for resolving contemporary crisis problems and for the quickest possible sustainable growth achievement. The book fosters further research in the fields of political science and economics, providing terrain and example for the establishment of difficult and rare linkage between theory and practical action.

The author’s critical, analytic and innovative theoretical-methodological facing with the major problems of Modernity has to be evaluated most highly. It is nonetheless expected that the bright, gainful thesis and the innovative ideas put forward in the book will be developed more concretely and explicitly in Strpić’s succeeding works.

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³ Surprisingly, it is the economists, whose abstract models detached from reality brought us in this situation, who are paradoxically expected to resolve the (short-term sector fluctuation?) crisis?!