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Andrija Filipović

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Three bugs in the city: urban ecology and multispecies relationality in postsocialist Belgrade

Andrija Filipović

Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the intersection and interaction of insects, humans, urban infrastructure, the postsocialist condition and the Anthropocene in the urban ecology of Belgrade. The mutually conditioned materialisation of these phenomena is marked by biopolitical and zoopolitical technologies, reflected in production of biofear through media and unmediated management of human and non-human bodies. Broader context of these technologies is the transition towards a (neo)liberal economy (precarisation, privatisation, financialisation); this is the postsocialist condition, marked by investment urbanism and the state of city infrastructure. The other, more broader context is planetary anthropogenic climate and ecological change (the Anthropocene), which enables novel movement of living and nonliving beings, as well as new kinds of relationality between them. The challenge is to create new forms of multispecies relationality in the face of the local, regional and global changes of the twenty-first century.

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Introduction

The long, hot, humid summer of 2018 in Serbia, and particularly in Belgrade, was full of news about common mosquitoes (*Culex pipiens*). The autumn news cycle of the same year was marked by the ‘invasion’ of brown marmorated stink bugs (*Alydus sp.*), originally native to East Asia. Surprisingly, harlequin ladybirds (*Harmonia axyridis*), referred to as ‘Azijske bubamare’, i.e. ‘Asian ladybirds’, in Serbian, were absent from the media, although in previous years’ news, they were reported as often as stink bugs. Perhaps, in 2018, they had a bad year in Serbia, although according to some Serbian media the British were faced with swarms of ladybirds infected with sexually transmitted disease (Srbija Danas, 2018a). Whatever happened with ladybirds in Serbia, it can certainly be said that the year 2018 was the mosquito’s year, as, the latest report from the Institute of Public Health of Serbia stated that 34 people died from West Nile virus and over 300 were infected; the virus is transmitted to humans via mosquito bites. As a local public health agency writes on its website, the appearance of this kind of disease in continental, moderate climate areas is due to climate change and the ensuing disturbance in quantity and dispersal of precipitation, as well as patterns in air movement, which all lead to the change of local, regional and continental ecosystems (ZJKV, 2018).

The Anthropocene, as a phenomenon of planetary anthropogenic climate and ecological change (Zalasiewicz et al., 2018), enables novel movement of living and non-living forms. This movement has changed the status of mosquitoes (which become carriers of viruses), and their activity in turn changes humans (infecting them). At the same time, the relatively long duration of the postsocialist condition in Serbia, where different (non)-human (in)activities become apparent, changes the infrastructure of the city, which then affects the (in)activity of humans and other (non)living forms. A thick fabric of mutually conditioned and formative relations is created, where clear causes and consequences are lost, and strong boundaries between the actors and those acted upon become porous. Hence, I am writing about knots of material-semiotic flows, which entangle spatially, encompassing the whole planet down to regions and cities, neighbourhoods, individuals and infraindividual levels. I follow Donna Haraway (2007) in her definition of material-semiotic, according to which processes of materialisation and signification are not exclusive, but co-constitutive and simultaneous. According to Haraway, there is no separate discursive sphere which produces the objects of knowledge through technoscientific and other social practices, but materialisation and discursivisation of bodies and other phenomena are performed at the same time without there being a radical ontological difference between the two. There is only an ontic difference between nature and culture, while on the ontological level these two plateaus are on the same plane of immanence. These knots also entangle temporally, from relatively long historical durations as the postsocialist condition, which is both past and present for the city of Belgrade, and all pluritemporal and multimaterial phenomena in it, to the short lives of individual insects, each a relative instantaneity in relation to other temporalities, and to the incomprehensibly long future of the Anthropocene.

Material-semiotic flows of the Anthropocene, the postsocialist condition, zoopolitics, biopolitics, insects and humans entangle intra-actively (Barad, 2007) materialising what some theoreticians call prismatic ecologies (Cohen, 2013), and I would add prismatic *urban* ecologies. Within this new materialist ontological framework, I will analyse the urban ecology of Belgrade through the concepts of postsocialism and the Anthropocene as conditions for materialisation, while zoopolitics and biopolitics are understood as technologies of materialisation. The postsocialist condition is defined by the (neo)liberalisation of the economy at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which introduced movements of transnational capital, market deregulation, privatisation of public property, and precarisation of the workforce. Investment urbanism, infrastructurally speaking, is one product of these processes, while superstructurally speaking, an affective atmosphere of permanent instability is another. Zoopolitics and biopolitics function on the basis of the Anthropocene and postsocialist condition, creating the material-semiotic entanglements of humans and insects, and at the same time material difference between humans and insects functioning as technologies of materialisation. By technologies of materialisation, I understand a set of biopolitical and zoopolitical technologies that form various beings as subjects and objects in their mutually constitutive relationality. It is important to point out the simultaneity and interdependence of biopolitical and zoopolitical technologies at work as their singular 'object' is life, but their outcomes of differentiation distinct: animals on the one hand and humans on the other. Zoopolitics names the particular use and management of material-semiotic bodies of insects, which are thoroughly mediated by online and print media but with a feedback effect to their own precarious existence within the

city. Biopolitics, on the other hand, creates individual human bodies and the collective national body, as well as the differences within the human species itself, and it is performed through the affective politics of biofear. Finally, the interplay of such differences, as well as the difference between living and nonliving beings, is used for extraction of the surplus value in an ever warmer and depleted ecology of postsocialist Belgrade.

Urban postsocialist infrastructure and the zoopolitical materialisation of mosquitoes

The postsocialist condition of Serbia was ushered in by economic reforms and restructuring from 2001 onwards (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007, pp. 320–328), especially privatisation, one of the movements toward (neo)liberalisation which attempted to bring the Serbian economy closer to West European and global models. To the postsocialist condition as historical experience I would also add the infrastructural aspect, that is, the insight that all those historical strata of experience from diverse material practices such as road building, waterways, etc. to those strata in the superstructure such as policies, laws and politics, at least partially define and condition current, contemporary experience and forms of (non)life. As such, this historical infrastructural aspect is of key importance for the materialisation of all those material-semiotic flows already mentioned and the relations between mosquitoes, humans and urban infrastructure in particular.

The post- Second World War period in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was marked by thorough modernisation, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Much of contemporary Serbia's key infrastructure was built at that time. An excellent example of this is Novi Beograd, the central business district of Belgrade, which was constructed after draining the river swamps between the Danube and Sava. It quickly became the symbol of Yugoslav modernity (Normand, 2014, pp. 103–146). Today, it is the largest and the most populous municipality of Belgrade. During the postwar period, many other neighbourhoods and municipalities were built, but it is significant for the postsocialist condition that infrastructure built at this time has not been repaired since: firstly in the 1990s because of war and sanctions, and then in the 2000s because of economic liberalisation and privatisation, when it was left up to the investors and buyers of once common and public property to do as they wished. These circumstances have led to a slow ruination of public infrastructure, also enabling communal – and *multispecies* – life, while private property is raised to the status of the only one worth investing in. The term *multispecies* is emphasised because, when relations between the public and the private spheres are discussed, the conversation often neglects the fact that humans are not the only life shaped by such a division (for various uses of the term *multispecies* see Kirksey, 2014). As Ahuja shows, it is only in relation to non-human beings that something which we might call infrastructure comes into being (2015, pp. 373–375; see also Ahuja, 2016).

It is in these conditions that mosquitoes appear. As can be seen from report for the Institute for Public Health (2018), the largest number of mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus was found in Palilula municipality, an area which includes several neighbourhoods that are not only close to the river, but are also in a worse infrastructural state of repair than other parts of the city. Compared with Palilula and some other municipalities, a much smaller number of infected mosquitoes is found in the downtown municipalities of Savski Venac and Stari Grad (Figure 1).

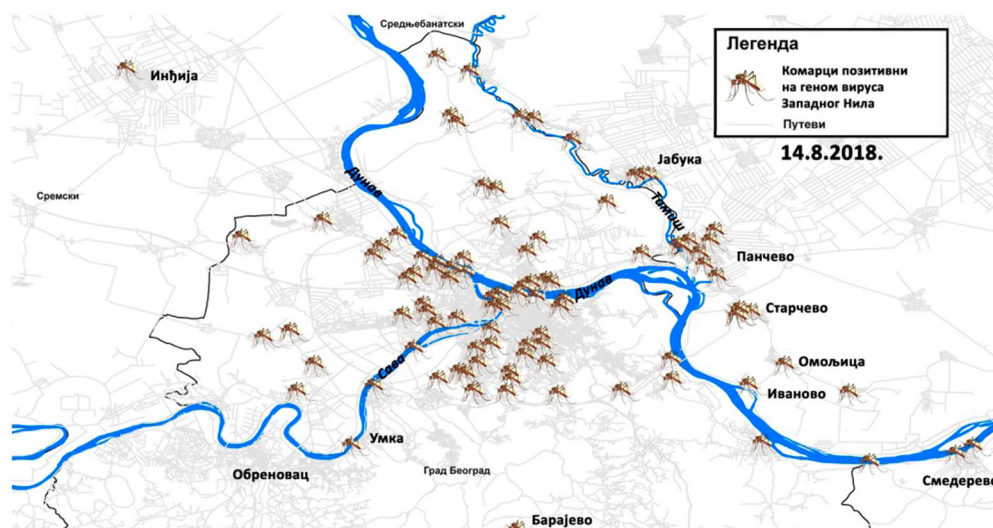


Figure 1. Location of found mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus in Belgrade.

The question of infrastructure is key to the materialisation of mosquitoes. As the Institute recommends, to deter mosquitoes from breeding, standing water should be drained, for example, from ‘flower pots, bowls for food and water for pets, dustbins, barrels and tin cans ... discarded tyres and other objects which can retain water’ (Batut, 2018, p. 23). Leaving aside flowerpots and pets, it could be inferred that the neighbourhoods with the largest number of infected mosquitoes have puddles, canals and other open standing bodies of water, as well as waste management problems, with a prevalence of barrels, bins and improperly discarded tin cans. Such a state of dereliction is, on the one hand, a consequence of the failure to properly maintain infrastructure built under socialism, and on the other of development without holistic urban planning. The latter is almost an essential characteristic of the postsocialist condition some call ‘investment urbanism’, which is marked by lack of control of private capital and inadequate law and policy enforcement. According to Radomir Lazović, investment urbanism is

the kind of city development planning which puts the investor and his profit interests at the centre of decision making ... It is really not hard to imagine what the new buildings will mean, besides being an additional load on the already inadequate infrastructure. (Petrušić, 2018)

I illustrate investment urbanism with [Figure 2](#), which shows an apartment building being constructed in my already cramped neighbourhood of Zvezdara, and which shows exactly what Lazović was talking about, especially the overburdened infrastructure. The scope of investment urbanism is still undocumented and under-researched, but potential consequences can be gleaned from recent government data, stating that there was a sharp rise in apartment building construction permits in 2018 compared to previous years (N1, 2018). Considering that apartment building is the main source of current GDP growth of Serbia according to the same report, it is hard to imagine any legislation to curb the unintended consequences even though investment urbanism clearly affects the everyday life of city inhabitants, both human and non-human.



Figure 2. Investment urbanism.

The mosquito zoopolitically materialises, then, as a material-semiotic entanglement of the multiplicity of historical, economic, urbanistic and other processes and practices, relations and circumstances. It reveals the ways in which certain parts of the city are managed and maintained while others are not: the amount of money invested in both public and private property, what I call the financialisation of environment. In its materialisation, the mosquito reveals discourse and technologies of the financialisation of environment, because the removal or, at least, control, of mosquitoes entails a relationship between public/private land and the management of public/private money. Following Fanon, it can be said that public land that is not maintained and managed becomes a mosquito habitat, and, as mosquitoes are seen as pests and a threat to public health, the public land becomes 'wild' and 'polluted' nature in contrast to well-ordered urban and privately owned land, which is supposedly without mosquitoes. For Fanon 'a hostile, ungovernable, and fundamentally rebellious Nature is in fact synonymous with the colonies and the bush, the mosquitoes, the natives, and disease. Colonisation has succeeded once this untamed nature has been brought under control' (Fanon quoted in Ahuja, 2015, p. 366). In this context, his analysis can be understood as a transposition of the European colonial and imperial material-semiotic framework onto postsocialist society through auto-colonial discourse and technologies of environmental management, that is, the idea of mastery of (urban) nature. In the case of mosquitoes, discourse and technologies of management are performed through various state institutions and private enterprises. According to Serbia's Institute for Biocides and Medical Ecology, management of mosquito numbers

is performed differently depending on larval or pupal stage and environment. Areas with large open and standing bodies of water are treated with particular chemicals and techniques while mosquitoes are in larval stage (ZZBa, 2018), while drier parts of the city are treated for pupal mosquitoes by 'cold fogging' (ZZBb, 2018), that is, application of biocide chemicals through the air. The last time mosquitoes were treated aerially using aircraft in Belgrade was in 2014, after which, in order to conform to European Union policies, the procedure changed to air treatment from the ground.

According to Singh, logic of management and mastery is a colonial logic because 'whether we desire mastery over a slave, an environment, or a body of texts, we are always returning to this primordial fracture – to the partial destruction of the object that the would-be master yearns to govern over completely' (2018, p. 10). The important part of the colonial logic of mastery is objectification through which limitless control over the object is instituted; the object can be human, non-human, living or non-living. Singh furthermore writes that

it is not merely that the subjugation of environments is intimately linked to the subjugation of peoples; rather, it is that the logic that drives the modern world cannot formulate the non-human world as one invested with meaningful, dynamic life. (2018, p. 18)

Because if that happened then it would be impossible to perform objectification and thingification, in a word, exploitation. Postsocialist 'wild' nature becomes an ordered and clean environment as more money is invested in it. In order for the money to be invested, economic, political, and social domains must be reformed to attract the capital. On the other hand, to attract investment and capital, the market needs to be deregulated, public property privatised, the workforce precarised – i.e. it is necessary to (neo)liberalise the economy. It is in this transitional postsocialist framework, in a movement from 'wilderness' to 'clean' and 'unpolluted' environment, to 'ordered' European society and nation-state, that the mosquito zoopolitically materialises as an entanglement of the multiplicity of various material-semiotic flows.

Ladybirds, stink bugs, mosquitoes, and the zoopolitical/biopolitical technologies

As already noted in the introduction, biopolitical and zoopolitical technologies are tightly connected to the Anthropocene and to the postsocialist condition. Ahuja writes that the mosquito carries a certain logic of colonial parasitology (2015, p. 347), which is indelibly tied to liberal intimacy in the form of personal and class reproduction and private property. The mosquito, as zoopolitically materialised in the postsocialist condition, reveals complex relations between (post)socialist heritage and the transition towards a (neo)liberal economy through the discourse and technologies of environmental management and investment urbanism, and when taken together with the Anthropocene aspect of liberal intimacy it reveals itself as 'a lateral spawn of the assemblage of carbon, water, virus, insect, and human within emerging capital-driven ecological transitions' (2015, p. 379). Zoopolitical and biopolitical technologies function at the intersection of these two conditions creating material-semiotic entanglements of humans, insects and infrastructure in urban ecology, and, at the same time, material differences between these three. These insects, besides having their own material bodies materialising within the

material-semiotic flows of Anthropocene and postsocialist condition, and managed through various technologies, including the above-mentioned treatment of mosquito larvae and pupae, also acquire social and cultural meanings through their depiction in various media. The use and management of material-semiotic bodies of these insects thereby intervenes in the materialisation of difference between the various multispecies bodies and multibeing matter in urban ecology, through its relation with biopolitics.

Biopolitics, as a form of governing, appears together with changes in the development of industrial capitalism, which required production and reproduction of workforce. Biopolitics as biopower shapes the individual through anatomo-politics, while on the other hand it shapes population through bio-power, creating the individual organic bodies and the collective biological body. The creation of the idea of the human species was not only a question of science and its paradigm shift, but one with its roots in political and economic changes where the modern concept of man became 'nothing other than a figure of population' (Foucault, 2007, p. 110). Foucault also notes that biopolitics functions in relation to the environment, which

includes the direct effects of the geographical, climatic, or hydrographic environment: the problem, for instance, of swamps, and of epidemics linked to the existence of swamps ... And also the problem of the environment to the extent that it is not a natural environment, that is has been created by the population and therefore has effects on that population. (Foucault, 2003, p. 245)

Zoopolitical management of mosquitoes, ladybirds and stink bugs is linked to biopolitical shaping of the human body/population, and the linking is performed through the production of fear or, as Massumi puts it, of biofear (Massumi, 1993, p. vii). Looking at titles of some articles on popular websites in Serbia, as well as the content of their texts and illustrations (Figures 3 and 4), we can clearly see the ways in which biofear as a tool of anatomo-politics and biopolitics is produced.

The title of Figure 3 – 'West Nile virus sows death across Serbia: 54 infected, six died in just a week' (Telegraf, 2018), serves to provoke fear of death, as does the sinister accompanying composite image, showing an oversized mosquito superimposed on a dead human body. The text within which the illustration is inserted lists European countries with the most infected people concluding that 'the disease is transmitted by infected mosquitoes, and this year the first patients were registered two weeks earlier compared to the previous season, due to climatic conditions'. Another article's title, '61 INFECTED PERSONS, VIRUS AT 76 LOCATIONS: West Nile fever spreads in Belgrade, these are THE MOST THREATENED neighbourhoods' (Blic, 2018) relates the number of people infected by the West Nile virus, as well as locations of the infected mosquitoes, with the addition that the fever is 'spreading across Belgrade' and that these are 'THE MOST THREATENED' neighbourhoods (in capital letters for additional effect). This title's aim is to cause at least some anxiety, and it is certainly far from the ordinary clickbait title. The body of the article goes on to list all the locations where infected mosquitoes have been found, interspersed with videos on the symptoms of the disease and how to protect oneself from the mosquito's bite. Figure 4, which follows this text, shows menacing mosquitoes in close-up, almost like monsters from a horror film, preparing to attack after invading the home from outside ('wilderness'), thus calling into question the supposed autonomy of the subject and its ownership of



Figure 3. 'West Nile virus sows death across Serbia: 54 people infected, six dead in only a week. Disease transmitted by infected mosquitoes, Italy and Greece have most cases in Europe'.



Figure 4. 'Mosquitoes prey on every step'.

private property, the humanity of the human itself (the background contains a blurry human face), as they bring potential to transmit infection and endanger life.

The zoopolitical material-semiotic use of harlequin ladybirds and stink bugs follows a similar pattern. In an article from October 2016 titled 'Invasion of stink bugs in Serbia, some suck blood!', an unknown author writes that these stink bugs are from East Asia, and that climate change caused their migration. The text continues by claiming that 'they are known as a great enemy of fruit and vegetable producers, but now they

“invade” the city too’ (quotation marks used in original) – and it does not stop there. The report concludes that

some of these bugs feed on blood – they are known to hide on the body of the host and with their proboscis, which is found on their thorax, penetrate the skin and suck blood. When the victim notices and tries to forcefully remove it, intense pain is caused. (Mondo, 2016)

The last sentence says ‘Let us remind you, in October of the previous year there was a real invasion of these insects in Serbia too’. In an article from June 2017 titled ‘STINK BUGS FROM CHINA ATTACK The real invasion to follow, and THERE IS NO CURE against them’, the author writes that worse is to come at the end of summer and the beginning of autumn. Figure 5 is an illustration that follows that text. It shows a stink bug on the outside of a window overlooking the city skyline; the bug is huge compared to the buildings, reflecting its species’ supposed threat to their inhabitants. Interviewing a professor from the Faculty of Biology at the University of Belgrade, the text claims that this new species, originally from China, appeared some 10 years ago in Switzerland and that it was probably transported to Serbia in luggage, as ‘they can even crawl into a suitcase, and only one female is enough to start a whole invasion’. They also mark the space with their smell which ‘attracts all stink bugs in the vicinity’ (Blic, 2017). The stink bug news cycle continued in the autumn of 2018, with the text ‘INVASION! There will be even more stink bugs! When you hear what’ll happen in 5 years you won’t feel good!’. Behind this bombastic title we find an interview with the same professor of biology, who is quoted as saying that the new species of stink bugs has no natural predators, hence the huge numbers, and that we will eventually learn how to live with them as they are one of the most benign species (Alo, 2018). This is a case of contradiction for the purposes of reduction of comprehension as I explain in more detail below. The second text is titled ‘STINK BUGS OCCUPIED SERBIA! Invasion KEEPS GETTING WORSE, but you MUSTN’T kill these insects!’ brings bad news about their numbers, which, it



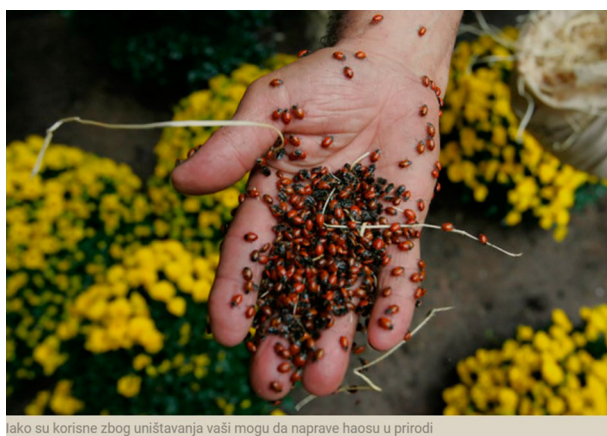
Strpljivo čekaju da ulete u stan

Figure 5. ‘Patiently waiting to fly into an apartment’.

says, will not fall until the first frosts. However, it does not explain why we should not kill them. It says, contrary to the effect created by the title, that there is no danger from them except to crops (Srbija Danas, 2018b).

As noted in the introduction, ladybirds were absent from the news in 2018, with the notable exception of reports about Britain, saying that there were swarms of ladybirds with an STD and that people were afraid. But some previous years, particularly 2010 and 2016, were their years. According to a story from November 2010 'Asian ladybirds occupied Belgrade and Vojvodina'; the insects caused considerable trouble for residents, and it was 'noted that they even bite'. An interviewee told a popular news website that she was woken 'by a sharp pain in the eye and I saw a ladybird on the pillow. It was orange, smaller than ours, with more black spots. I had to take antibiotics because my whole eye was swollen' (Blic, 2010a). A text titled 'Asian ladybirds kill domestic ones' from the same year claims that Asian ladybirds which frightened citizens throughout the country are not dangerous to humans and should not be killed. But they are a threat to the natural balance because they kill domestic ladybirds (Blic, 2010b). Even though the text does not convey the same alarm as the recent reports about stink bugs and mosquitoes, the illustration (Figure 6) does everything it can to reverse the potentially pacifying effect of the facts put forth in writing. The image of a human hand almost completely covered by crawling and swarming ladybirds is anything but calming. (The text underneath the image reads 'Although useful for destruction of lice, they can wreak havoc in nature'). A report from October 2016 works hard to instil fear in its readers. Starting with the title 'THESE LADY-BIRDS ARE DANGEROUS! Their invasion causes ASTHMA in Serbia, you must do this to protect yourself', the text quotes a certain Marija Đ. who says: 'We hadn't had a break from stink bugs when ladybirds infested us in huge numbers. I believe they are not dangerous, but I don't feel comfortable looking at them on the walls and ceiling. Everything's yellow because of them' (Kurir, 2016). According to another medical expert, from the Institute for Biocides and Medical Ecology, they can also cause allergies and asthma through faeces and body parts they leave behind.

On the one hand, we have a number of articles claiming that Asian ladybirds are harmless to humans, while on the other we have a number of articles claiming the opposite.



Iako su korisne zbog uništavanja vaših mogu da naprave haos u prirodi

Figure 6. 'Although they are useful for killing lice, they can wreak havoc in nature'.

Both sets of texts contain either titles or illustrations contradicting the content, with a clear aim to cause distress, and even fear of these insects in their readers.

Fear is an emotion. An emotion is, according to Massumi,

a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically formed professions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. (2002, p. 28)

An emotion is socially codified affect. Affect is a relation between the acting and being acted upon, a pure potentiality. The production of fear, – or more precisely, considering its biopolitical role, of biofear – as socially codified affect is a biopolitical technology which forms individuals and the population through acting on the affective fields of the individual and collective body. Biofear colonises the intraindividual level of individual bodies and the affective atmosphere of the collective body. Massumi defines intraindividual level as ‘intensive elements, in intra-action. They are immediately linked, variations, held in tension, resonating together in immediate proximity’ (2015, p. 8). Next is the level of the individual’s emotions, of social codification of the intraindividually affective intra-acting. The level beyond the individual, the level of the social, picks what has been codified as an emotion and transforms it into a social affective atmosphere through collective event that is distributed across and within the bodies and ‘however different their eventual actions, all will have unfolded from the same suspense’ (2015, p. 109).

The collective event of suspense, the social affective atmosphere in which the bodies and their actions unfold, is the fear of three insects in the city. The biopolitical reasons for the incessant production of fear, besides simple media sensationalism and clickbaiting, lies in the fact that fear on the one hand diminishes the available potentiality for actualisation of affects and thusly possibility for living otherwise, while on the other it naturalises the affective atmosphere of permanent instability. Fear, instability, and the ensuing diminution of affective capacities all presuppose and enable unhindered unfolding of those processes on which the postsocialist condition is based – precarisation, privatisation and financialisation. As Massumi notes, affect produces intensities; intensity is defined as ‘the strength or duration of the image’s effect’ (2002, p. 24). It is directed towards the so-called higher functions, to the depth of the bodies in the form of cognitive processes. In this sense, biofear colonises not only a precognitive level of intraindividual intra-acting, but the cognition as well. It diminishes cognitive capacities, particularly through the use of contradiction in some of the texts where the title of a text says one thing while the content of the text and the illustrations another, as in the article where a biologist claims that stink bugs are benign, while the title and illustrations aim to cause fear and anxiety. The disconnect between various parts of the text and the images destabilises the usual cognitive process, introducing a glitch in comprehension, and leading to reduction of understanding of the actual state of affairs. The affective atmosphere of instability, working on both cognitive and precognitive levels, is instilled as something that defines the whole of existence, which then naturalises the neoliberal framework at work within the postsocialist condition.

Furthermore, while the biopolitical production of biofear, in its use of material-semiotic bodies of insects, destabilises individual human bodies for the purposes of naturalisation of neoliberal processes, it stabilises collective national and species bodies, intervening in urban ecology by differentiating and homogenising the multispecies multitude. The

collective body of a nation is maintained by the introduction of a threat defined as racially and nationally other. Mosquitoes carry a virus from 'warmer regions', a phrase with increasingly ambiguous meaning in the Anthropocene, but in this case from Africa, with a name, West Nile virus, signalling its first known location. The death threat of the virus is easily equated with racially other, especially in the times of the so-called migrant crisis. Ladybirds and stink bugs are marked as Asian in their popular Serbian names, and the subtext in descriptions of swarms of insects points toward the countless multitudes of 'Asian people', (Chinese above all other in the imagination of Serbian society) poised on colonising Europe. This means that, instead of creating the ways in which to 'live and die well with each other in thick present' (Haraway, 2016, p. 1) as a multispecies and multibeing multitude in an ever warmer and depleted ecology, we become biopolitical and zoopolitical subjects/objects through the multiplicity of technologies described above. Insects and humans are formed as zoopolitically and biopolitically shaped beings, pitted against each other in the struggle for survival in the dense urban spaces of Belgrade.

Conclusion

In taking the three insects in the city as case studies, I have shown the ways in which mosquitoes, ladybirds, stink bugs, urban infrastructure, humans and flows of capital intertwine to produce each other, on both local and planetary scale. This intertwining of multispecies and multibeing phenomena is performed through zoopolitical and biopolitical technologies of materialisation that shape entanglements of multiplicity of material-semiotic flows in the forms of mediated production of biofear and unmediated management of human and non-human bodies. Moreover, these technologies are materialising the individual and collective bodies within the urban ecology of Belgrade, defined by the postsocialist condition and the Anthropocene, which further complicate the thick fabric of mutually formative relationality. Much remains to be studied about the urban ecology of Belgrade. Here, I have not explored, for example, the trees whose number diminishes day by day to make room for new buildings, and which serve as nesting places for birds as well as sources of shelter and food for numerous insect species, or waste management in the absence of proper recycling infrastructure and how that affects animal and human life within urban ecology. Finally, the most urgent task, as it appears within the context of this analysis, is to figure out how to live with the effects of both global climate change and transition toward neoliberal economy, and to create new forms of multispecies relationality in the face of the local, regional and global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Andrija Filipović (PhD, University of Belgrade) is an Associate Professor at Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. He is the author of *Conditio Ahumana: Immanence and Ahuman in the Epoch of Anthropocene* (2019), monographs on Gilles Deleuze (2015) and Brian Massumi (2016). He published a number of texts in *Journal of Homosexuality*, *NORMA: International Journal for*

Masculinity Studies, Philosophy and Society, AM: Journal for Art and Media Studies, Kultura. His current research deals with postsocialist studies, Anthropocene, animal studies and queer theory.

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