



We invite you to apply for participation in an exploratory workshop on

Informal practices in Southeast Europe – Examples and Analyses

to take place at the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia (Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije) in Belgrade, on 10–11 April 2022

What is 'informality'? The literature generally agrees that defining informality is difficult, and that there are numerous variations and manifestations. Very often (probably in most of the literature on informality in business or politics), 'informality' denotes a deficient mode of action or state and is equated with corruption and criminality.

In contrast, we would like to start from a more neutral, broad and theoretical, socio- or anthropological understanding. Informality is the complement to formality: these two form an original and dynamic property of every social body or process. Different societies are characterized by different levels of in/formality. Such differences between social entities (countries, groups, companies etc.) are experienced as cultural differences and can be enriching and productive as well as problematic and destructive.

Informality seems particularly prominent in societies in transition or, more generally, where efficient institutional frameworks are lacking. In the absence of legal or administrative rules, people rely on informal networks to make ends meet. This is by no means necessarily criminal – but it can easily lead to illegal action.

We are interested especially in cases that negotiate this delicate balance, and are keen to discuss and analyze examples of informality – contemporary or historical – with their reasons, manifestations and effects. PhD candidates, postdocs and faculty members in the humanities and social sciences, but also lawyers or journalists from Southeast Europe or working on the region can apply. The workshop is intended to explore the available interest and regional expertise in this field with the prospect of developing a targeted research program. The organizers will cover travel expenses, accommodation and meals for the selected participants.

If you wish to present a pertinent research idea or an already fully-fledged proposal, and if you are keen to discuss the topic of informality with interested colleagues, please send your application to informality2022@gmail.com

Applications should include a summary of the project you wish to propose, and a short cv (in one pdf-file!).

Deadline for submitting applications: 12 January 2022.