

Fragments of Memories

of Life and Work at
Inter–University Centre

Dubrovnik

1971 – 2007

Edited by Berta Dragičević & Ørjar Øyen

Inter
University
Centre
Dubrovnik



My Encounters with the IUC: The Unfinished Story

Alan Uzelac

University of Zagreb

The story about my encounters with the IUC has two parts, both of them particularly important for my life. Now, reflecting on the history of events that have connected me with this institution, I have realised that it would in no way be overstated to say that the IUC was among several rare places that have decisively determined my development in the two stages of my life, the stages that are of particular importance for the development of every scholar: the stage of initiation into academic community of teachers and researchers, and the stage when, after a long process of academic maturing, one starts to feel that he might offer something to the international community of scholars and scientists. My many memories from these two periods cannot be compressed into several hundred words. The only thing I can do is to provide a short account of several episodes from these two different periods.

My first encounters with the IUC courses started in fact some time before I first visited Dubrovnik. This was in mid 1980's, during the final years of my undergraduate study at the University of Zagreb, when certain rumours started to circulate among the group of young ambitious students, friends and colleagues – the rumours about a vibrant place to which some of the most advanced students were invited to listen to the topical discussions of the *crème de la crème* of the European and world science, mingle with their professors and enjoy the exceptional environment of the beautiful Dubrovnik in a friendly and co-operative atmosphere. I listened to the reports of the eye-witnesses and envied them. Therefore, it was for me a big and exciting event when late Gajo Petrović, a great philosopher and one of my favourite professors, offered me to attend his course. During the several weeks that I spent at the IUC courses in the period of about four or five years, I have realised that the great stories about the IUC were almost understated. As a student of social

sciences who has only been listening about Habermas or Luhmann, encounters with them at the IUC were incredible, enlightening experience. The interdisciplinary, intercultural and international contacts with other students and professors brought many new insights and new friends. The courses brought new knowledge, and the opportunity to discuss and present my views helped me (and many other young students) to feel less as passive observers, and more as active, almost important participants. The experience of talking and presenting our views before such an audience was for us an indispensable opportunity to train our abilities to conduct a frank, open and dynamic, yet tolerant dialogue with people of other backgrounds and experiences. Last but not least, the environment of the IUC and Dubrovnik in the late 1980's was exhilarating. I remember the debates that extended long into the night, continuing in the corridors and lobbies of the IUC Dormitory; I remember the IUC library with its plenitude of books, many of them offering most recent insights from the topical centres of academic excellence. All this gave me and some of my close friends who had this splendid opportunity to participate in the IUC courses the new incentives and motivation to continue in our academic and professional development.

In the 1990's, as painfully and all too well known, the IUC activities were discontinued and the IUC books and the Dormitory disappeared in the smoke of war. Yet, the memories remained, as well as my wish to return again to the academic Arcadia of the early period of my professional development. This only happened after a hiatus of more than ten years, in the beginning of 2000's when I was again invited to the IUC courses by some colleagues, this time as guest lecturer and participant. I was delighted by the opportunity to refresh the old memories. Yet, the time was different, and so was I. Being an occasional guest did not completely satisfy my wishes to maintain a permanent link with the Centre, and I felt that I owe Dubrovnik and the IUC more of my personal efforts. Thus, it was not very difficult for Viktorija Knežević – my former excellent student and current excellent lawyer from Dubrovnik – to encourage and persuade me to submit a proposal for a new course that I would organise. This is how the Private and Public Justice course was born. I also joined another course – Divided Societies – as a co-director. My link with the IUC was in such a way strengthened, though the challenge continued – the challenge of being a worthy contributor to the academic excellence that the IUC always stood for. Now, after three courses that I have helped putting on track, and after editing

two academic books that have arisen out of these courses, I cannot but be eternally grateful to all of those who helped build, and re-build the IUC. In particular, my gratitude goes to the small, but able team of friendly people in the IUC Secretariat, lead by Berta Dragičević. Organising a course or conference at the IUC is not an easy task; but, the splendid environment of the IUC will always return by the ultimate reward for all the efforts: the opportunity to push yourself to the limits and share the best you can offer with the other members of the global academic community.