In accordance with article 194 of Lisbon Treaty, the European Union ‘...shall ensure the functioning of the energy market...; promote energy efficiency and interconnection of energy networks; ensure security of energy supply...’. All this will be impossible without a comprehensive combination of achievements of energy-related Social Sciences and Humanities (hereinafter-SSH) with traditional Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines. A peer-reviewed book is a complex synergy of analysis of practical experience, conclusions of conducted seminars, results of theoretical studies; experiences in designing and applying different types of models for better understanding of energy systems. As stated in the introduction, this book for ‘...those new to SSH, or those interested in deepening their understanding...’ in each chapter clearly provides an answer to the request: ‘explain to me why energy is a social issue’. And moreover, such answer became real due to the work and research of 50 contributors (pp.7). The first illustrative example of the social nature of energy can be seen through analysis and understanding of energy poverty policy based on concrete lived experiences in three targeted EU countries – the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. The need for the interaction of all social disciplines when it comes to combating energy poverty is aptly depicted by the authors on 22

‘...where a health researcher might explore energy poverty consequences on physical health, a psychologist would focus on mental health, a sociologist would find difference regarding the social roles and power relations inside the household and an activist would be interested in empowering vulnerable people’

The results of the information presented are reflected by the authors in the proposal to facilitate policy design which builds on the lived experiences by five guiding principles for all actors, who encounter and work with energy poor households (24–26).

Another area that requires SSH involvement is SSH research on improvement of Marine Renewable Energy, which is a rather specific and narrow industry as it allows generating electricity from the movement either the waves or tides. In this case, SSH will have and already has a fair value as the key problems in this sphere are: to set and ensure rights and ownership over the marine space; address issues of tidal regions use, design and implementation of work with communities. However, the greatest attraction of the SSH is traced through the application of ‘ecology of approaches’ – to understand the social impacts and relations in MRE’ (40).

In Chapter 4 examined the relation between ordinary citizens to the policies of their countries and the EU as a whole with regard to the use of the environment. At pp. 49–52 we can put ourselves into the position of three completely different women – Alva, Daniela and Ambika, who talk about their perspective on the EU’s Energy Roadmap 2050. The Chapter gives readers a brief description of why the policies set out in the Citizens’ Summary of the Energy Roadmap 2050 in practice, do not correspond to reality – firstly, the establishment of a common policy is detrimental to the specific territories and minorities that live there, and secondly, the problem of understanding how established goals can be achieved in practice, when in reality there is no money for it and the implementation of the problem rests on the citizens themselves.
Going through other chapters of the book we can follow the whole complexity of the energy policy which needs constant improvement – (1) those issues with which the policymakers are faced are not the same as the ordinary consumers of energy are facing; (2) the issue of management of multi-owned building has not only the technical side, but also a lot of legal issues in conjunction with managerial ones (99); (3) importance of Science and Technology Studies and History of Technology can be evident in pointing out that mistakes made in the past need to be avoided in the transition to renewable energy sources, in order for them to be both socially and environmentally sustainable over a long period of time (55); (4) data synergy requires multiplicity of issues affecting both – social and technical data collection (64).

The book contains a large number of additional sources, as well as the number of tables for a deeper understanding of the topic of integration social sciences and humanities into energy policy issues. It is also important to have very practical conclusions and recommendations in almost every section – which allows the ordinary reader after acquaintance with the book to get a complete picture and new knowledge and for specialists in this area – to get the groundwork for reflection and further research and projects.

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A local account of cultural challenges to Balkan modernization – Metropolitan Belgrade: culture & class in interwar Yugoslavia, by Jovana Babovic, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018, 272 pp., £30.54 (paperback), ISBN 9780822965350

Set in Belgrade, in the interwar period wars, Jovana Babovic’s book Metropolitan Belgrade: Culture and Class in Interwar Yugoslavia follows the preferences of the middle-class for socio-cultural entertainment and leisure zones, providing a profound and detailed portrait of cultural life in the metropolitan city. In the book, the social and cultural dynamics in the capital, in particular those driven by the profit interests of the high middle-class, offer a different narrative of life and society in Belgrade. This narrative challenges the dominant traditional history, which specifically addresses the actions of states and state actors to write a unitary, so-called traditional version of history, which deals mainly with ethnic tensions and political conflicts. Middle-class preferences for foreign entertainment and artists are detailed and conceived as an active part of a constitutive process that reveals an evolving and modernizing reality, which is different from the preconceived representations that usually claim that Belgrade life was different, even too different from other European capitals (197–198).

Unlike these narratives, Babovic skillfully tells another story of Belgrade during the 1920s and 1930s. She puts her faith in authentic archival materials and unusual cultural sources such as cabaret programs, films, association records and criminal records, which may have never had so much space, importance, and commitment in traditional history narratives. A careful reading of all these sources allows the author to draw interesting conclusions about the prevailing cultural trends of the time. Babovic observes that the upper middle class has favored foreign performances at the expense of the national arts and has preferred foreign to national artists, a trend that subsequently was shared by society at large. The book describes in detail the experiences of two performers in the interwar Belgrade capital. Josephine Backer is a French cabaret singer and dancer of Afro-American origin, who visited Belgrade in 1929 and performed in the downtown theaters attended mainly by the upper middle class. Dragoljub Aleksic, the so-called strongmen, is a Yugoslav performer that struggled without success to