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EDITORIAL

Dear audiences, readers and sympathizers,

We present to you **the new, eleventh (11th), edition of Sociological Discourse**, a scientific journal in the field of social sciences.

This time, as before, we have edited the scientific papers of domestic and foreign scientists, which we hope will continue the tradition of publishing the results of their research in Sociological Discourse in the future, to expand the boundaries of knowledge about social phenomena in academia and the wider community, locally and globally. The public is concerned with the public use of the mind (Immanuel Kant), so the presentation of the results of scientific research is inevitable without the public and in public. Public insight into the scope of scientific research provides transparency and continuity of (critical) reflection on social reality in the present, past and near future.

We are honored and pleased this time to cooperate, in terms of scientific research, with colleagues from abroad, from **the University 'Paisiy Hilendarski' in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and the University of Bialystok, Poland**, as well as colleagues from Bosnia and Herzegovina. more precisely from **the University of Sarajevo and the University of Banja Luka**. Their papers comprehensively illuminate the features of modern society and its transformation (transition) under the influence of the process of globalization, and in the spirit of the idea that 'a different world is possible' (alter-globalization).

In quality scientific papers by authors of various academic titles and seniority levels, and on current topics and problems, you will have the opportunity to learn and expand knowledge about:

- “challenges and difficulties of experts for working with a socially excluded group of people - migrants” (for more see: **Social work with migrants - Illusion or reality: The example of Sarajevo Canton**);
- “models of the identity of the inhabitants of border areas, as open forms of complex networks of related elements” (for more see: **Models of social identity of border residents from the perspective of theories of complex systems and cultural evolution**);
- “the specifics of the electoral process in a small municipality in Bulgaria, and the shortcomings of local democracy” (for more see: **The electoral process for local authorities in Bulgaria: Patronage-clientelistic relations, kinship networks and imitations of democracy**) and

- “play as dealing with imaginary illusion and a segment of human individual and collective existence” (for more see: **Play as an existential phenomenon**).

Since science, as a supranational activity, implies cross-border forms of research and cooperation and expanding the research circle in order to overcome particularity in favor of universality, it is important to contribute to the realization of the mission of ‘**Science for Society**’ in practice. Join us!

Respectfully,

Editorial Board of the Scientific Journal of Sociological Discourse

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SOCIAL WORK WITH MIGRANTS – ILLUSION OR REALITY: THE CASE OF SARAJEVO CANTON

Abstract

The first decades of the 21st century were marked by crises that brought numerous negative changes. The migrant crisis is just one of many such crises in this period, and it escalated during the so-called coronavirus crisis. The difficult position of the people on the move and the need to engage important actors in the migrant crisis response are just some of the aspects examined in this text. It also theoretically describes potential approaches for experts, particularly regarding social work with migrants. The challenges and difficulties faced by experts in working with this socially excluded group were identified by means of a qualitative analysis.

Keywords: *migrations; crises; social work; professional approach; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Sarajevo Canton*

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Introduction

Today's society is marked by the phenomenon of "new migrations", sparked four decades ago by the globalization process.³ Contemporary sociology is trying to theoretically explain the so-called "current" migrations for the purposes related to work, education or tourism, as well as the "violent migrations" we are now witnessing, which are caused by conflict, war, suffering and socio-economic circumstances.⁴ The most recent migrant crisis and other crises that marked the 21st century (such as the global financial crisis in 2008 and the current health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic) have resulted in complex issues that have not been adequately addressed. Being forced to leave their homes, the uncertain journey and "running away" to a better world (developed Western countries) leaves deep scars on the individuals, women, children, families and groups on the move. In social sciences this raises the question of necessity of interdisciplinary thinking and concrete action by experts who can dampen the negative impacts on the lives of individuals and groups on the move and who happened to be in the given area at the given time.

The "2015 European migrant crisis"⁵ is a result of continuous erosion of relationships between the Middle Eastern countries in the past, of old and new conflicts. Another cause of the migrant crisis are the worrisome levels of poverty in numerous Eastern and African countries, as well as authoritarian, regressive and violent political systems. The most recent migrant crisis was even more complex because it mostly involved attempts to illegally reach wealthy countries (EU member states, in 2015). Unable to reach their target destination, people on the move are forced to stay in transit countries which they have also entered illegally. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina as a transit country with the longest border with Croatia (an EU member state) became an "unwanted waiting room", from which migrants go to the "game" and are violently "pushed back" many times, often severely injured. Many tragic stories of minors and children who have lost their parents, single mothers with small children, families traveling with ill relatives, individuals and groups exposed

3 "More precisely, "new migrations" as Giddens (2003) calls them are linked to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the socialist system, and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc." Valida Repovac Nikšić, *Refugees, Migration and Trafficking in Humans in What is the Gender of Security*, Ždralović Amila & Gavrić Saša & Rožajac-Zulčić Mirela (ed.) (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Center, 2020), p. 202.

4 Milan Mesić, *Globalizacija migracija, Migracijske i etničke teme*, 1: 7–22., 2002.

5 BBC, *Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911> ., 2016.

to hunger and violence, are just some of the problems faced by people on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶ These problems became particularly accentuated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The health crisis has contributed to the complexity of the migrant situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and can potentially have new implications and create various social crises. Even much more developed societies and countries than Bosnia and Herzegovina have struggled with these challenges.

This resulted in the need to modify the existing and create new policies, programmes and measures for overcoming the migrant crisis, most prominently in several cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During a pandemic characterised by social exclusion and inequality, the concept of an appropriate and comprehensive approach in addressing the problems brought on by the migrant crisis remains unrecognized. This is especially the case with regard to improvements in the quality of life in migrant camps, which requires engagement of a greater number of various expert staff than is currently the case. From this we can conclude that support professions, and particularly social workers, play a crucial role in mitigating the problems migrants face on route to their target destination. In the broadest sense of the term, social work encompasses a set of measures and procedures carried out by professional social workers with the aim to provide assistance and support to individuals and/or groups who find themselves in an unfavourable position.

Theoretical and methodological approaches to social work with migrants

Having in mind the interdisciplinary approach used in this research, the theoretical starting point of the paper can be found in contemporary sociological theories, primarily those of the sociologist Anthony Giddens and his collaborators.⁷ These authors have spent decades researching modern globalisation processes which have, inter alia, spurred global migrations. Globalization processes integrating the world since the early 1980s rest primarily on the neoliberal ideology. That predatory capitalism has deepened inequality (the gap between the poor majority and the wealthy few) and is causing mass economic

6 “New migrations” to and on the European soil reached maximum intensity in 2015. They mostly took place via the so-called Balkan route (from Turkey through Greece and Italy, Balkan countries, to the European Union).” Valida Repovac Nikšić, *op. cit.* p. 205

7 See more: Anthony Giddens & Mitchell Duneier & Richard P. Appelbaum & Deborah Carr, *Introduction to Sociology* (Seagull Twelfth Edition), W. W. Norton & Company, Kindle Edition, 2021

migrations. Unfavourable economic circumstances pave the way for political instability, conflict and war, and turned population movements into forced or violent migrations.⁸ The manner in which people on the move (refugees, economic migrants and others) were forced to move and the testimonies (personal, media and others) about the circumstances along the way are a sufficient argument in favour of encouraging social and institutional responsibility and provision of both humanitarian and professional support to people in need.

Social work should be an essential component of expert support because, by its global definition, it is a practice-based profession and academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and empowerment and liberation of people. Social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for differences are listed as the cornerstones of social work.⁹ Social work includes responding to critical and urgent situations as well as everyday personal and social problems by means of numerous interventions which vary from those focused on psychosocial processes of a single individual to those aimed at inclusion in social policies, social planning and social development.¹⁰ The main role of social work is to provide help to those in need¹¹ and its main purpose is to set the foundations for social development, which, in the broadest sense of the term, represents a process of quantitative growth and qualitative changes which occur in the sphere of living, working, and social conditions of all people in a specific area.¹²

It is not difficult to see that social development measures focused on improved quality of life cover the entire population of a state, without regard for the reasons why certain persons found themselves on the territory of that state. In creating social development measures, special attention should be paid to socially excluded groups. According to data published in *Social Inclusion in B&H*¹³, these groups include the elderly, youth, people with disabilities, displaced persons and the Roma. Migrants are not recognized as a distinct socially excluded group that requires the involvement of social workers and other support experts (such as psychotherapists, sociologists, pedagogues, etc.) in the development of measures aimed at preserving the dignity of life. This may be explained

8 See more about the types of migration in: Silva Mežnarić, Migracijske aktualnosti: stanje, problemi, perspektive paradigmi istraživanja u: Migracijske i etničke teme 19 (2003), 4: 323–341

9 Global definition of the profession of social work - EASSW

10 Ivan Vidanović, Rečnik socijalnog rada (Beograd: Autorsko izdanje, 2006), str. 374.

11 Sabira Gadžo-Šašić, Socijalni rad s osobama s invaliditetom (Sarajevo: Fakultet političkih nauka, 2020), str. 18.

12 Mira Lakićević & Ana Gavrilović, Socijalni razvoj i planiranje (Banja Luka: Biblioteka udžbenici, 2009), str. 8.

13 UNDP. Socijalna uključenost. Izvještaj o humanom razvoju. 2007. str. 33.

by the fact that the migrant issue was not prominent at the time when the study of socially excluded groups in B&H was conducted.

Therefore, the approach to social work with migrants became a topic of interest only in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century (2015) due to significant migrations stirred by armed conflicts, human rights violations and persecution in war-torn Syria, Afghanistan and other affected countries. Since then, experts of various profiles have been striving to address the migrant crisis. Work with migrants is challenging because they have different cultures, languages and customs. Working with these people requires special professional approaches and social workers must be able to adapt to different types of people and assist them in accordance with applicable national regulations, while also investing superhuman efforts to help them in the true sense of the word, especially during the pandemic when the economic crisis has reached unpredictable proportions and directly affects the quality of work with the migrants.

The obstacle in working with migrants is the lack of knowledge of the language and their different social and cultural backgrounds. However, this does not affect the importance of each state's obligation to provide each migrant with a dignified existence while in its territory, despite such obstacles. Therefore, all migrants are entitled to social benefits while in the territory of any state. Professionals, such as social workers but also pedagogues, psychologists, teachers and others involved in providing services to migrants, face multiple problems¹⁴ on account of the language barrier and differences in cultural heritage. In fact, professionals of all profiles have an obligation to provide support and assistance to migrants. However, language and cultural barriers, as well as budgetary limitations, prevent them from using the traditional approaches in their work with migrants.

The example of Germany, which has faced the migrant crisis much earlier, can serve as an example of dealing with migrants. Germany continuously strives to design projects that contain a widely accepted operating model, primarily for social workers but also for other supporting professions. According to available sources¹⁵, training projects for professionals working with migrants have the following objectives:

1. Addressing the language barrier (primarily with migrant children);
2. Changing attitudes (both in the migrant population and in the local population);

14 Klauđija Kreger, *Multikulturalni socijalni rad s migrantima - iskustva Njemačke U: Studijski centar socijalnog rada* (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1999), str. 99.

15 Klauđija Kreger. *op. cit.*

3. Creative use of free time (such as creating opportunities for locals and foreigners to meet and socialise).

Accomplishing these goals requires certain activities. Some of these activities are:

- a) Arrange additional language lessons in both schools and camps in order to overcome the language barrier;
- b) Design measures to overcome mutual cultural prejudices;
- c) Open youth centres which, importantly, provide for socializing with youth from different cultural backgrounds.

In addition to these goals, various other activities can be designed at the local level, including group work/activities. Professional social workers can use traditional approaches in their work with migrants as well. The first approach, individual work, involves providing assistance to people when they find themselves in difficult circumstances and when they are not able to solve their problems on their own. In applying this approach, professionals should pay special attention to the client's personality and the environment in which they live. Therefore, in working with migrants it is of particular importance to study the circumstances in which the person lived previously and to consider and design the assistance accordingly, while also taking into account the resources that are available. Professionals should also try to identify the causes of disharmony between the individual and his/her environment, but also to consider the option of mobilizing other stakeholders to provide help and support. It is particularly important to develop relationships based on cooperation between the professional and the client.

In working with migrants and other socially excluded groups, individual support is just one approach for providing assistance and support to people who find themselves at a disadvantage. That is why group work, focused on working with a group, is an irreplaceable component of social work and is therefore often considered more efficient because it facilitates faster problem-solving and identification of actions focused on a common goal. Certainly, in addition to social work with individuals and groups, the approach based on social work in the community is of special importance. This implies the need for involvement of various local community stakeholders in the design of actions aimed at improving the lives of migrants, along with all those in a disadvantaged position¹⁶. The above demonstrates that the key to addressing the migrant crisis lies in involving the representatives of the centres for social work, non-governmental organisations and the local communities hosting the

¹⁶ Muhamed Dervišbegović, *Socijalni rad: teorija i praksa* (Zonex: Sarajevo, 2003)

migrant centres, as well as the representatives of nearby local communities.

In order to mitigate the impact of many crises that shook the world, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the first decades of the 21st century, all stakeholders in power must engage in internal development through adequate foreign policy. As pointed out by some authors¹⁷, this is the path that makes it possible to maintain social order, harmony and rapid and stable economic development, which, by all appearances, seems crucial for overcoming the impacts of numerous crises and thus also the impact of the migrant crisis. Namely, although the majority of migrants in B&H are here only temporarily, we must not neglect the need to provide them with well-designed support, primarily professional, because this is the only way to solve the accumulated problems that will continue to escalate if not addressed in due course.

The migrant crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina - the Sarajevo Canton context

After the closure of the official route in March 2016 and the closing of the European Union's borders, the only available route for irregular migration and abuse in the form of smuggling and trafficking is the transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina, named "the Bosnian Route" by the sociology professor Dželal Ibraković (2019). To make the situation even more complex, people on the move who cross the border on the Drina River primarily see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a "fast" transit through the territory and a passage to Croatia, as their goal is to reach the planned destinations in the European Union and the promise of a better life. Due to the closed and well-guarded border and many migrants' multiple failed attempts to get across to Slovenia, over 20,000 of them are "passing" through Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most of them stay in the country longer, mostly in the winter when it is impossible to leave, i.e. to participate in the so-called "game" - which is how they call the many dangerous and difficult attempts to cross the border to Croatia.¹⁸

So, it is obvious that Bosnia and Herzegovina was unprepared for the migrant crisis. About six years ago, tens of thousands of refugees and migrants were on the move across Southeast Europe with the goal to reach Western Europe.¹⁹ Most of the Balkan route is now closed, but this has exacerbated the

17 Meho Bašić, Makroekonomska efikasnost kao faktor ekonomskog razvoja Bosne i Hercegovine u: Pregled br. 4. 2006. str. 17.

18 Valida Repovac Nikšić, *op. cit.* str. 205.

19 BBC, Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>, 2016.

humanitarian crisis because vulnerable groups are not able to move on. For the last five years this has placed a burden on Bosnia and Herzegovina as it must deal with the wave of migrants that fluctuates in size and intensity (depending on the season), but remains active to this day. According to available data from the competent institutions and estimates made by international organisations, about 60,000 migrants and refugees have passed through B&H from 2018 to date. Some liberal estimates indicate that as many as 100,000 people on the move have passed through B&H in recent years and gone on to EU countries. In 2019, the number of migrants and asylum seekers in the territory of B&H was 29,302. The Service for Foreigners' Affairs of B&H has registered 15,311 migrants since the beginning of 2020. The European Union's report for 2020 indicates that B&H currently hosts 6,155 migrants residing in seven EU-financed temporary reception centres in Una-Sana Canton (USK) and Sarajevo Canton. Estimates indicate that close to 3,000 migrants remain outside the registered reception centres, mainly in the Una-Sana Canton, and that they live in highly inhumane conditions.

The migrants' country of origin and the reasons why they migrate have changed since the start of the transit through B&H. For example, arrivals recorded in 2018 primarily originated from war-torn areas of Syria, followed by Iraq and Afghanistan. Next to young men fleeing from military drafts, there was a significant number of families with elderly members and/or children. In 2019 the number of refugees fell, but there was a notable increase in the number of economic migrants, primarily young men from North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), Pakistan and Bangladesh, who as their reason for migration mainly point to poor socioeconomic circumstances in their country of origin along with other issues related to discrimination based on politics, economy or identity (gender, sexual preference, etc.). As already noted, the common feature of these migrations is that they are illegal. Even today, in 2021, if you travel east to the border between B&H and Serbia you may see young men swimming across the river Drina and, still wet, travel along the roads in the direction of Sarajevo. Unless they remain in one of the two reception centres (Ušivak and Blažuj) in Sarajevo Canton, migrants take trains or buses to the border with Croatia, usually to the Krajina region in the northwest of B&H. According to 2019 data, other than two reception centres in Sarajevo Canton and a reception centre in Salakovac in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, the majority are located in the Una-Sana Canton (Bira, Miral, Borići, Sedra). It should be noted that, besides these temporary reception centres, B&H has reception centres for foreigners located in East

Sarajevo and in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton.²⁰

The Vučjak camp was closed in late 2019 due to the living conditions in it, which Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, called “shameful for BiH”. Besides the low standard of living conditions in the reception centres, where the provision of humanitarian aid is mainly coordinated by international organisation such as the IOM (and financed by the European Union), large numbers of migrants are literally living in the streets and sleeping on bus and railway stations. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of some citizens and certain non-governmental organisations they have access to warm clothes and food right there on the street. But with such a large and prolonged influx of people on the move, volunteers and non-governmental organisations are facing major obstacles in their efforts to provide adequate assistance. The response of the state at all levels is far from adequate. Due to the lack of coordination and cooperation between different levels, the biggest burden of the migrant crisis falls on the local communities. The lack of institutional strategic planning and organisation also hinders the deployment of funds made available to Bosnia and Herzegovina by the European Union for effective management of the migrant crisis and humanitarian crisis prevention.²¹

Besides the very bad conditions in the reception centres that resulted in closures of certain camps, such as the Vučjak camp in late 2019 following the statement of the Council of Europe that such inhumane accommodation constitutes a direct violation of human rights, there is also a range of other problems. It should be noted that considerable confusion exists with respect to the statistics/official data on the number of people on the move and especially on the number of unaccompanied minors, children who lost their parents along the way, the sick, migrants belonging to the LGBT population, single mothers, etc. What is very worrying is the fact that this situation is further complicated by the often incorrect/discriminatory media reporting that contributes to misunderstandings and lack of acceptance by the local population, which considers “the guests/Others” undesirable and a danger to their lives and community. In this whole intricate picture that can be considered to constitute a humanitarian crisis, the role of the international organizations which coordinate the provision of support to migrants and the incoming financial assistance for these purposes, is quite non-transparent.

20 Sead Turčalo, Sigurnosni aspekti migrantske krize u BiH (Sarajevo: Neobjavljeni istraživački rad, 2019)

21 Valida Repovac Nikšić, *op. cit.* str. 206-207.

It is only through migrants' testimonies and media statements, as well as testimonies given by volunteers and independent journalists, that we can learn about the difficult conditions in the camps in Sarajevo Canton which are filled to maximum capacity. For this reason, a significant number of people on the move remain outside these reception centres and survive with the help of dedicated volunteers and independent journalist activists. Another worrying aspect is that the citizens of Sarajevo Canton committed to helping these unfortunate people are often exposed to hate speech, violence and police brutality. Unfortunately, these incidents are not often publicized or openly discussed in government institutions. On the contrary, sessions dedicated to the migrant crisis and the security situation in Sarajevo Canton have demonstrated the lack of understanding of this crisis by the politicians who use this difficult situation to populist ends, i.e. to "protect" the local population, especially in parts of the canton with higher concentrations of migrants (for example, around the reception centres in the Hadžići municipality). The above picture was the motivation for this research, especially after learning about the existence of severe psycho-social cases and the absence of a systematic approach to helping these people.²²

The research procedure

The main goal of this research was to gain insight into the (dis)use of professional approaches in the work with migrants housed in migrant centres in Sarajevo Canton, as well as social workers' (lack of) access to these centres.

The research covers professionals directly or indirectly involved in migrant crisis mitigation and provision of assistance to migrants in the Sarajevo Canton. The research included a total of six (6) respondents who wished to remain anonymous, so their names, positions and organizations will not be disclosed in line with the Bosnian Sociologists' Code of Ethics which emphasizes the obligation to protect the participants in the research process.²³ The participants were selected by contacting specific NGOs that provide expert support and assistance to migrants and the public institutions involved in the development of measures to mitigate the effects of the migrant crisis, and requesting that they each nominate a social worker or a professional from a relevant line of work who is involved in the development of migrant crisis mitigation measures. The

22 Excerpts from interviews conducted with citizen activists, volunteers and independent journalists.

23 See part sociological research work A) integrity and objectivity in the Code of Ethics of Bosnian sociologists.

majority of respondents have a university degree or some form of additional specialization, and most of them (66.7%) were involved in the migrant crisis mitigation process since the very beginning of this crisis in B&H.

The research was conducted in the period March-April 2021. Data were collected using survey questionnaires with predominantly open-ended questions. In the introductory part of the survey, participants were introduced to the purpose and goal of the research. Full data confidentiality was guaranteed, as this was prerequisite for participation of some respondents.

Data processing was based on qualitative analysis – analysis of answers to open-ended questions. Empirical content was collated by summarizing and paraphrasing the participants' answers, sentences were then refined into coding units, and then an open coding procedure was implemented in several steps: a) Assigning codes to empirical material; b) Grouping of related codes into categories; and c) Analysing the meaning of terms and categories.²⁴

Research results

The responses given by professionals, especially social workers working directly with migrants in migrant camps in the Sarajevo Canton, were subjected to qualitative analysis by analysing the content of survey questions the responses were categorized into thematic areas: 1. Difficulties and 3. Challenges.

²⁴ Hsieh Hsiu Fang & Sarah Shannon, Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. in Sage journal 15(9), 1277-1288. doi: 10.1177/104973230527668. 2005.

Table 1: Analysis of limitations/difficulties and challenges in working with migrants in migrant centres in Sarajevo Canton

Thematic area	Topics	Categories
Difficulties/limitations in working with migrants	1. Lack of professional social work	1. Absence of a targeted need for ongoing social work services 2. Occasional engagement through NGOs
	2. Undefined scope of work	1. Social stakeholders' lack of interest in assessing the need for professional social work 2. Social workers involved in the implementation of activities that have no points of contact with professional social work
	3. Social workers' status in camps	1. Inadequate status of occasionally engaged social workers 2. Generally insufficient presence of social workers
Challenges in the work with migrants	1. The need to develop standards	1. Standards/regulations for engagement of social workers in migrant centres 2. Social workers need to have a defined scope of work in migrant camps
	2. Additional training needs	1. Organization of additional training to familiarise social workers with migrants' specific cultures and customs 2. Training on migrant issues and approaches used in other countries to address the migrant crisis

Difficulties in working with migrants

Response analysis has identified three areas of particular concern in working with migrants. The first and perhaps the most serious is *the lack of professional social work* in migrant centres in the Sarajevo Canton. Other important issues include: *undefined scope of work of social workers and their inadequate status in camps*.

The importance of deployment of social workers to support the migrants accommodated in migrant centres is unquestionable, as confirmed by survey results and the fact that all respondents believe that social workers should constitute an indispensable part of professional support teams that should be continuously available to the migrants accommodated in camps. But the devastating finding is that a large number of respondents stated that in certain camps in Sarajevo Canton social workers are engaged only occasionally, through non-governmental organizations (33.3%), or that they are unfamiliar with how these professionals are engaged (16.7%). Another devastating finding based on survey results is that as many as 33.3% of respondents answered that social workers do not get involved through other organizations either. The results indicate that the situation regarding the provision of professional support is not uniform across all camps and that migrants housed in camps do not have access to ongoing support from professional social workers, i.e. that such support is occasional and spurious. Consequently, it is not surprising that as many as 66.7% of respondents indicate that the social workers' scope of work with this socially excluded group is not regulated. Only one respondent (33.3%) answered that he was not familiar with the state of regulation of social workers' duties.

This approach certainly contributes to the fact that in-camp services are not provided professionally, and that on-site social workers are often overwhelmed by tasks that have little or nothing to do with professional social work. There is no doubt that social workers should be involved in other migrant-related tasks in camps, but the problem arises when the work of professionals is not adequately structured or when social workers are preoccupied with other tasks much more than those dictated by their primary role. Precisely for this reason, social workers should be engaged in the camps and be available to migrants on a daily basis by making this their primary professional role in order to improve the migrants' quality of life during their stay in the camps. Social workers should also develop cooperation with the relevant stakeholders in order to overcome the migrant crisis. More precisely, they should act as a bridge in the process of identification of appropriate solutions.

According to the Law on the Fundamentals of Social Protection, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children of FB&H, one of the rights from the field of social protection is the right to “professional and other social work services” (Art. 19). It is precisely this right that should be regulated to extend the services to cover the migrants housed in camps. Individual work with migrants is of special importance, as well as group work where appropriate approaches would cover specific groups of migrants who share the same or similar difficulties that require professional support.

Challenges in the work with migrants

The fact that migrants are scattered outside the reception centres, along with non-transparent camp management, poor conditions in the camps and cultural barriers, are the obstacles to a systemic approach in addressing this crisis. It must be noted that not all migrants are covered by health and social services. There is also a lack of various forms of professional support that should be provided by experts/social workers in the camps. In fact, if social workers were involved, this would mean that they would share in the responsibility together with all other camp staff responsible for meeting the most basic needs of the migrants, namely food and basic hygiene. The largest share of camp staff comprises the so-called Migrant Assistants, who distribute meals to migrants, keep records of meals on a daily basis and maintain hygiene within the camp. Activities that involve organised provision of social services to migrants, such as providing support, working with age groups, empowering migrants, are clearly absent. There is also the lack of effort aimed at developing a cooperative relationship with the camp surroundings and with the relevant institutions important for joint identification of concepts for crisis mitigation. To create the necessary conditions and improve all of the above, standards for working with migrants must be developed. Also, social workers may face specific issues that require training, so short training courses should be designed and delivered to professionals working in camps.

Majority of survey respondents (66.7%) indicate this as a requirement. In this regard, they specifically stated that (although the scope of work for social workers is not specifically regulated) the professionals in this field should be engaged on: Facilitating the integration of migrants into the new community through interpersonal/community work and other areas; Psycho-social support to young migrants in line with the social situation and status of migrants; Creation of records with social characteristics; Cooperation with authorities in charge of reception centres. Respondents also stated that social workers should

participate in activities focused on improving the quality of life of migrants and unaccompanied children in order to protect their best interests and human rights, while also helping to prevent any violations of migrant rights. It seems that all of the above is a challenge for social workers because at this time we cannot talk about proactive development of measures that would accomplish these objectives, bearing in mind that the camps do not employ social workers dedicated solely to these activities. Also, there are no activities focused on development of standards for the support these professionals provide to migrants as a socially excluded group.

Conclusion and recommendations

“New migrations” are nothing new. For this reason, when analysing the recent migrant crisis that has shaken Europe and still persists in the transit countries of the Western Balkans, it should be borne in mind that migrations from poorer countries to the richer ones are continuous and have always existed, and that drivers such as wars and economic crises only intensify such migrations.²⁵

The need for a serious and humane approach to the current migrant crisis stems in particular from the Excerpt from the Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons that adopted the recommendations for the treatment of refugees/migrants and, *inter alia*, states that refugees are entitled to moral, legal and material support, appropriate social protection services and, in particular, assistance from appropriate non-governmental organisations. This points to the need for a systemic approach in terms of engagement of experts through “qualified” organisations, as stated in the document, but also through the establishment of migrant support services in the camps where migrants are residing. Of course, the number of engaged experts should be harmonized with the number of migrants in the camps. The basic responsibilities of expert teams would be to ensure the use of traditional approaches in the provision of support to migrants, including individual work and group work, as well as continuous work on developing cooperation with all relevant social stakeholders. This should contribute to the quality of life of people in migrant centres while also ensuring the safety of the surrounding population.

According to survey respondents, mitigation of migrant crisis impacts

25 Anthony Giddens & Mitchell Duneier & Richard P. Appelbaum & Deborah Carr , *op. cit.* p. 512

requires efforts to build mechanisms that would connect migrants with the institutions and civil society organisations that can significantly contribute to the provision of support to the people on the move. They also pointed out that it would be good to strengthen the capacities of the local institutions that provide services to migrants and to work on improving the quality of migrant accommodation. The importance of creating a single registry of migrants as well as a work program was also noted.

As can be concluded from research results, it is necessary to develop on-going training courses for staff that works with migrants in the fields of social protection, psychology, law and security. Although the pandemic may have affected the quality of the development of approaches to providing assistance and support to people on the move, we must not forget that they are still there, that the relevant institutions must create appropriate operating plans as soon as possible and that experts must contribute to the development of a systemic approach to the provision of support to the migrant population. Simply put, a unified migration policy is required, and, considering that this research covers the territory of the Sarajevo Canton, all indicators point to the need to establish a custom trained team of experts from the fields of social protection, human rights, security and law to actively address this issue while it is still current.

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SOCIAL IDENTITY MODELS OF BORDERLAND INHABITANTS IN REFERENCE TO COMPLEX SYSTEMS AND CULTURE EVOLUTION THEORIES

Abstract

The important changes in the way people build their identity and create their acting strategies. In case of borderland inhabitants the situation is even more complex because of a culturally shaped order based on systematic intercultural contacts. In that situation there is a need to adjust hitherto a scientific knowledge how the borderland inhabitants can shape their identity in such a complex and dynamically changing social reality. The main aim of this article is to show on an example of the borderland inhabitants how their identity models can be created in reference to system analyses, complex systems and culture evolution theories. In this article there will be presented a method of perception of the borderland inhabitants identity not as static constructs who undergo simple linear transformations but as open forms of complex networks composed of related elements.

Keywords: *identity; borderland; complex systems; complex networks; culture evolution theory; complex identity model*

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Introduction

The problem of a complexity of local identity is a contemporary dilemma typical for dynamic postmodern societies. The growth of individualism and subjectivity and the influence of modern communication technologies contributed to the situation in which people themselves began to create their social identities. On the other hand individuals are still involved in complex interactions of social structures. As a result contemporary people feel tension between the necessity of individual shaping their flexible identities and subordinating to surrounding them structural requirements. Relations among individuals, groups, other elements and surrounding them reality create a dynamic and self-organizing complex system.

In the area of the borderland the situation becomes even more complicated. The borderland is the area with a cultural diversity and long-term contacts of individuals from numerous ethnic, national and religious groups. The borderland people functioning shapes their specific type of identity, based on a social individualism of this area and its symbolically defined “periphery”. The today’s growth of importance of the modern and communication technologies and the influence of globalization led to even more complicated shaping of local identities on the borderland. The elements of this identity undergo both rapid and unplanned changes and still have relatively solid elements. They constitute a specific complex system being a subject of learning processes and self-organization².

Culture evolution theories explain how a cultural change and its component elements vary in different populations. Additionally they have different selecting mechanisms of specified cultural features transferred to next generations. As a result in each population there are different selection, replication and network transmission mechanisms or rules changes being a basis for social relations and human identity building. The culture evolution theory explains well mechanisms causing that some rules are relatively constant in a given population, and others may undergo rapid changes. People functioning in complex social contexts as the borderland area follow the so-called “intuitive morality” in their mutual relations which have their roots in biological survival strategies. In contrast to animals, the characteristic feature of the human culture is the so-called accumulation influence³. It means that only people have an ability to modify it rationally

2 Cliff Hooker, “Re-modelling scientific change: complex systems frames innovative problem solving”, *Lato Sensu: Revue De La Société De Philosophie Des Sciences*, Vol. 5 (1), 4-12., 2018, p. 5

3 Alex Mesoudi, *Cultural Evolution: How Darwinian Theory Can Explain Human Culture and Synthesize the Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 12

from generation to generation. The culture is a dynamic product of social interactions among them, which are being consolidated with time into models, standards and acting strategies. In effect their complex reality is simplified. Such acting significantly limits an applicability of the assumption about an entirely rational human behaviour especially in terms of confrontation with biological aspects of our behaviour. The formation of a flexible identity in a complex context is largely based on fast achieving an individual satisfaction, not on searching fully rational models of profit maximizing. In that case we can talk about the rationality limited to a defined resource level and knowledge available at a given time and place⁴. A question arises how the borderland inhabitants identity defining may transform due to the so-called “founder effect”⁵.

Theoretical framing: Borderland definition – Formation of complex borderland inhabitants identities

The borderland definition differentiation arises from the fact that it is a subject of many scientific disciplines, among them economy, political science, history and sociology. Different scientific disciplines representatives focus on its various aspects. The basic element of all borderland definitions is its three-dimensional aspect. It is related to describing the borderland as a peripheral area, in the neighborhood of a country border. The borderland refers to a separate territory inhabited by two or more communities with individual cultures and often different ideas of social order⁶. The cultural differentiation of the borderland areas is an effect of historical changes of political belonging of a given territory and population mixing due to settlement processes. The element integrating different communities living in the borderland area is a specific for them territory bond, associated with particular moral habits directed at the defined territory. According to Gabriele Pollini (2005) the territory bond consists of four important components: the ecological complex of territorial location and ecological interaction; the mental complex of the identity of the personality; the social complex of the solidarity of the place collectivity; and the cultural complex of expressive symbolism⁷.

4 Tomasz Szapiro, *Co decyduje o decyzji* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.,1993), p.39

5 Alex Mesoudi & Peter Danielson, “Ethics, evolution and culture”, *Theory Biosci.*, Vol. 127(3), 2008, 229-40., p. 236

6 Krystyna Romaniszyn, “Czynniki potencjalnej dekonstrukcji pogranicza etnicznego”, *Pogranicza Studia Społeczne*, Vol. XXVII, 2016, 93-107., p. 94

7 Gabriele Pollini, “Elements of a Theory of Place Attachment and Socio-Territorial Belonging”. *International Review of Sociology*. Vol. 15(3), 2005, 497-515., p. 501

The territory bonds are the factor which strongly influences formation of the collective borderland inhabitants identities. They decide the borderland inhabitants identify themselves and they are identified by others as representatives of given social communities. Building one's collective identity by an individual is based on playing specified social roles compatible with values and expectations of community members which he or she belongs to. The collective reference of all members to a particular symbolic complex defining their community is an integrating factor of that community. In the situation when in the borderland area different communities are functioning parallel one can assume there is a need among their members to strengthen a symbolic meaning of territorial bonds through systematically performed rituals. Different national and ethnic communities living on the borderland begin, through symbolic actions and rituals repeated in defined time intervals, to mark the identity borderlines of their community members. Such actions are treated as a systematically occurring demonstration of different community membership in the borderland area. Territory bonds, rituals, defined collective values and standards combined with a symbolic aspect is to build in peoples' awareness a sense of security and life stability within the community which require a systematic demonstration. This demonstration of belonging to defined communities in the borderland areas strengthens as a result of a threat of an "identity blurring" due to systematic intercultural contacts of its members. Another factor strengthening a need to develop moral and symbolic bonds with a given territory in the aspect of different communities is the globalization process and modern information technologies influence.

In the social aspect in the awareness of its inhabitants the borderland is related mainly to a sense of multiplicity, different borderlines and a necessity to cross them continuously⁸. The social categorization of the borders is expressed by many binary distinctions (We-They), which underline the borders' sharp edge and clear line of distinction between two separate communities⁹. In the aspect of a dynamic building of the borderland inhabitants identity there is a need to create such a method of identification which on the one hand enables to combine the components of the closed community membership and the openness to establish relationship with representatives from different groups. Both these elements despite mutual contradiction must synthetically integrate in the aspect of building by particular individuals rational acting strategies.

8 Andrzej Sadowski, "Pogranicze- Pograniczność-Tożsamość Pogranicza", *Pogranicza Studia Społeczne*, Vol. XIV, 2008, 17-30., p.20

9 David Newman, "Borders and Bordering Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 9(2), 2006, 171-186., p. 176

These actions perfectly explain the theories which show that in the contemporary world the globalization processes based on breaking relations with time and space are not identical with the rejection of the local community bonds with a specific territory.

The territoriality primarily meaning is a social space differentiation and creating defined borders. On the other hand the contemporary globalization and information society theories base on deterritorialisation processes a significant repercussion of which is a mutual dependence on a global scale caused by transnational processes and relations. The modern information technologies development and social groups mobility changes and modifies local cultures which is a realization of commonly claimed today's idea of deterritorialisation. The contemporary borderland areas experience simultaneous deterritorialisation and territorialisation processes creating at the same time a specific for its inhabitants complex social context¹⁰. The borderland area is a complex and dynamic construct. It is shaped both externally through a macrosystem policy influence of a given country and a wider influence of the globalization process and internally through permanent reproduction and crossing social borders by their inhabitants.

The borderland inhabitants identity is a reflection of the complex structural context and also an effect of an entirety of intercultural contacts among them. The intercultural contacts in the borderland area have a differential intensity, different targets and a course. Their main function is establishing a defined social order which should be acceptable by different communities inhabiting the borderland and guarantee a social safety. The awareness of a necessity of elaborating a defined social order among different borderland communities representatives increases in the situation of overlapping of the two processes. On the one hand the increasing the power of influence of democratization processes, connected with a public sphere formation, and on the other hand the intensification of the globalization influence and information society development¹¹. One can make a thesis that it is paradoxically combined with the borderland inhabitants' individuality increase. This process is connected with a civil subjectivity attitude development of the borderland inhabitants¹² and their access to vast information networks typical for the contemporary information society. Overlapping of the above processes results in a complexity

10 Basia Nikiforova, "Transforming Borders Functions in the Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian Borderland", *Limes, Cultural Regionalistics*, Vol. 3 (2), 2010, 124-132., p. 127

11 Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 163

12 Małgorzata Bieńkowska-Ptasznik, "Od wielokulturowości do postkolonializmu-czy etniczność ma płęć?" *Pogranicze, Studia Społeczne*, Vol. XVI, 2010, 41-61, p. 42

increase and fragmentariness of the surrounding social reality sensed by an individual's perception. The individual's confusion in the today's world complexity results in the increase of an attractiveness of community thinking¹³, focused on the territory bonds. This is not however identical with rejecting by the borderland inhabitants their individualism or exceeding the area of influence of the complex social networks. All the factors mentioned above are treated as equivalent but activating in the borderland inhabitants' minds in an asynchronous manner, creating the complex and dynamic identity. The above assumptions are aligned with a multi-faceted and constantly building the borderland inhabitants' identity concept created by Jerzy Nikitorowicz. This concept assumes that such understood the dynamic identity undergoes permanent transformations in the following aspects: inherited identity, unit-person identity and constantly shaped identity¹⁴. This identity is established and stopped by an active subject functioning in a defined social context. The borderland area constitutes a social space of a high level of differentiation which evokes in the perception of the subjects a necessity to create more complicated forms of their own identity. Such a person undergoes a permanent pressure of flexible and creative combining the inherited elements, connected with a defined social group, with a necessity of adjusting to complex structural conditions¹⁵. It does not mean however that the pressure increase of the more and more complex social context determines inner conflicts in the individuals identity paralyzing their ability to action. New stimuli coming from the more and more differential, network and complex social context cause temporary internal conflicts in the borderland inhabitants' minds but they also influence in a positive way the growth of their adaptive skills.

The above assumptions are perfectly explained by a theory of a "social identity complexity"¹⁶. The social identity complexity refers to the way in which individuals subjectively represent relations among functioning in different social groups. To be more specific people with a low social identity complexity perceive their groups as highly overlapping and convergent while people with a high complexity perceive their member groups as distinct and profiled. The research results show that people with the higher level of complexity of their

13 Michel Maffesoli, *Czas plemion* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), p. 220

14 Jerzy Nikitorowicz, "Tożsamość wobec dylematów generowania dziedzictwa kulturowego", *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, Vol. 10 (2), 2005, 35-47, p. 36

15 Ben Goertzel, *From Complexity to Creativity. Explorations in Evolutionary, Autopoietic, and Cognitive Dynamics* (New York: Publisher Plenum Press, 1997), p. 196

16 Marilyn Brewer & Kathleen Pierce, "Social identity complexity and outgroup tolerance", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 31(3), 2005, 428-437.

identity at the same time are much more tolerant towards different groups in their social environment. Specifically, because individuals with low social identity complexity regard their ingroups as highly overlapping and convergent, they believe that an individual who is an outgroup member on one identity dimension is an outgroup member also on all the others¹⁷.

People with the high identity complexity are characterized by profiled thinking. They assume that people they have specified social interactions with only fragmentarily function in a group in which a given person presently stays. It is related to perceiving people, groups and communities not as static constructs but elements related to the complex social networks.

The borderland inhabitants' identity games in the aspect of the complex systems theory: The borderland inhabitants' complex identity models

The system concept itself was invented and described by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1984). Its most simple definition describes the system as an organization of mutually dependent variables¹⁸. Among respective elements of the system particular series of mutual relations happen within certain frames which form a structure as a whole. All the elements are not only related to one another but also to the outside environment of the object. The system is an integrity which has a relatively stable inner structure of related elements being in mutual relations and influencing it as a whole. All the systems have particular common features: morphology, different combinations of mutual relations among system elements, specific configuration of functions and positions realized by particular elements and subsystems, hierarchy of a given system, adaptive ability¹⁹. The system as a whole never functions in void²⁰. The system environment on the one hand constantly influences it but at the same time it is effected by the system. As a result both the internal system structure and its entire form undergo constant, progressive or leap changes. The source of these changes are on the one hand external environment requirements and on the other hand specific relation configurations among particular elements of the system.

17 Sufei Xin, Ziqiang Xin & Chongde Lin, "Effects of trustor's social identity complexity on interpersonal and intergroup trust", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 46(4), 2016, 428–440, p. 429

18 Ludwig Bertalanffy, *Ogólna teoria systemów* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), p. 47

19 Janusz Sztumski, *Systemowa analiza społeczeństwa* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, 2013), p. 23

20 Czesław Mesjasz, "Complexity of Social Systems", *Acta Physica Polonica*, Vol. 117(4), 2010, 706–715, p. 706

A complexity concept in education has its source in science. In biological sciences the complexity is described as a natural effect of an evolution process. According to Peter Jedlicka (2007) the main trend in the natural environment evolution is the complexity growth²¹. The researchers from different branches of science endeavour to explain acting procedures of different systems through appealing to specific relations among their elements.

The so-called reductionism means explaining phenomena through something simpler (...) it takes a particularly expressive form in elementary particle physics where dominates an aspiration to discover “a theory of everything”. Such a theory by means of a few equations would express basic reactions of all matter forms²².

Such an assumption is not identical with an opinion that the complexity means a simple contradiction to an idea of simplicity. The complexity system is not a complication or overlapping of simple systems. The complexity systems are configurations in which there are not clear connections between cause and effect because they undergo changes in time²³ (Olmedo, 2010: 74). The idea of simplicity itself is not a reductionism of the whole system to characteristic features of its elements. John Collier (2009) claims that: In some respects this is a bottom-up approach, since the simpler systems coincide with components of more complex systems, but really the same principles are applied across levels in a common context of the dynamical openness of interacting systems, with its inherent holism and possibilities for emergence²⁴.

The complex systems occur in the situation when developing in time the simple system crosses a certain border of the structural emergence. Then such a hitherto clearly defined system begins to behave unexpectedly.

Both the complexity and simplicity are related by a specifics of particular objects functioning as a whole. Christoph Adami (2002) underlines that: In the theory of dynamic systems we are interested in a general complexity of processes. For example periodic and random processes are perceived as simple

21 Peter Jedlicka, *Physical complexiti and cognitive evolution*. In: C. Gershenson, D. Aerts, B. Edmonds (Eds.), *Worldviews, Sience and us, Philosophy and Complexity* (pp.221-231). (London: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte., 2007). p. 221

22 Peter Coveney & Roger Highfield, *Granice złożoności, Poszukiwania porządku w chaotycznym świecie*, (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 1997), p. 33

23 Elena Olmedo, “Complexity and chaos in organisations: complex management”, *International Journal of Complexity in Leadership and Management*, Vol. 1 (1), 2010, 72-82, p.74

24 John Collier, *Organized Complexity: Properties, Models and the Limits of Understanding*, 2009, Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c670/78a7636e2f4ad7c2483c1d494e766c8bc11f.pdf>

(...) despite the scale they can function²⁵.

The complex systems always include a certain level of chaos and are characterized by a lack of clear borders. This is not however identical with a lack of inner structure or lack of order of its elements. The complex systems are dynamic, non-linear and open but at the same time their characteristic feature is a specific inner order. The complexity assumes a certain emergence, having a particular inner structure in which the elements are related with a complicated network of mutual relations. According to Andrzej Nowak (2009): It comes from the fact that in a set consisting of simple interacting elements the complexity appears only on the level of total system - one can observe the emergence effect. The emergence means specific features occurring at the system level which are not present at the level of elements and which should not be expected on the basis of the features of the elements themselves²⁶.

Creating analytical models of different borderland inhabitants identities one should take into consideration complicated connections among different elements in that area (Figure1). On the one hand it is necessary to describe relations among elements being at a disposal of an individual (socialized standards and values, assets and social knowledge resources), and on the other hand to consider such determinants as certain meso factors influence (functioning in specified institutions and organizations) and macrostructural factors (eg. applicable law, specified character of economic or political relations in a country) and global (eg. fashion, new life styles, information flow via media and social media). This entails the borderland inhabitants' identity idea begins to resemble not a solid construct but a complex network in which different component elements are activated in different combinations depending on external stimuli. The borderland itself should be treated as the complex system in which particular elements interact in complicated relations based on reciprocal (feedback) connections²⁷. Those relations should be recognized dynamically as representatives of two or more groups inhabit a particular structural reality. The borderland inhabitants' identities are the dynamic and complex constructs which constantly undergo adaptive redefinitions but at the same time maintain a stable form in individual's awareness. It is needed to be underlined that they are sensitive to the way strategic games are realized among different groups in complex mutual relations networks in a specified structural environment in

25 Christoph Adami, "What is Complexity?" *BioEssays*, Vol. 24 (12), 2002, 1085-1094, p.1085

26 Andrzej Nowak, Wojciech Borkowski & Katarzyna Wnikowska-Nowak, *Układy złożone w naukach społecznych*. (Warsaw: Scholar,2009), p. 12

27 James Ladyman, James Lambert & Karoline Wiesner, "What is a complex system?" *European Journal for Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 3, 2013, 33-67 (2013), p. 35

the borderland area, being inherited in cultural patterns after the ancestors. On that model a specific unique tendency to individual learning and verifying so far used identity elements, updated, removed, or corrected, depending on a kind of acting strategy accepted, is imposed.

In that context the complex borderland inhabitants' identity model despite its stability in individuals' perception in fact is a culturally programmed construct to adaptation to a highly complicated and dynamically changing social environment. A high flexibility of the complex borderland inhabitants' identity enables them to create such acting strategies which on the one hand are strongly built-in the cultural transmission of the particular community and other macro-structural forms (eg. a given nation, supranational institutions), and on the other hand are directed to interact with different groups or communities members. Such actions, despite the fact they are based on internal contradiction, build a rational acting strategy for the borderland inhabitants. This is possible due to their complex identity which particular elements interact in various combinations depending on what social context a given person is functioning. In effect the borderland people behaviour, resulting from different structural stimuli (eg. new government policy towards national minorities, economic crisis, liberal or conservative parties coming to power), or being a result of particular events happening in a specified place and time may produce often unpredictable forms of collective actions frequently based on mutual imitation. Within this complex borderland system people who live in it have their acting strategies based on equally complex identities. The social understanding of the borderland as the complex system in which particular intercultural contacts take place is based on a social dynamic games description within a specific structural context which result in a defined social order. People living in such a dynamically changing social reality in order to be able to function effectively in it must adjust their identities and strategies to gain a high adaptation level.

In systematic analyses a state of social order is understood as a stable balance. The complex social system stability is connected with its ability to inner automatic adjustment and finally adaptation of the whole system in case of any stimuli which disrupt the balance²⁸. The power of the system is an inner regulator enabling fast identification and solution of system problems which disrupt system balance. In that context it is assumed that the complex system, once it is deprived of a stimulus, returns to the balance²⁹. In case of the open

28 Joe Tranquillo J., *An Introduction to Complex Systems* (Switzerland: Springer Springer International, 2019), p. 301

29 Manuela R. Contini, "The Paradigm of the Complex Dynamic Systems and Sociological. Analysis", *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 92 (10), 2013, 207 – 214. p. 209

complex systems characterized by non-linearity the system can have a few balance states. One cannot assume that as a result of such dynamic actions which take place on the borderland there will be one commonly accepted social order idea, acting strategy or social identity form being a consequence of the games among individuals, groups or communities. Such a situation may happen but it will be only an alternative to other states. Balance points in the complex and non-linear systems are connected with system initial conditions. Therefore the cultural background is important and how it is transferred from generation to generation in respective borderland communities. Those cultural transfers in different borderland communities do not have to be compatible with one another. In particular structural conditions or situations they can cause conflicts among different communities representatives or actions aimed at domination of one form over the other. A scenario of an intended assimilation of a given community by another is also possible and creating on that base a new stable balance state. A state of pluralist multicultural based on mutual trust and tolerance is in that sense one of many possible stable balance state forms.

A stability of the whole complex system is a consequence of stability of the borderland inhabitants' acting strategies existing within its frames and their identity state. However there is a possibility that an idea of a stable system as a whole from individuals' point of view will not be compatible with a stability logic, dominating at a given time in the system. In that situation we can talk about a clear threat of dynamic balance in the complex system. The social system stability is never absolute because the absolute excludes any changes. In the situation of an ideal stability interaction in the system all the stimuli disrupting the balance state would be offset to the system origin state though they could introduce positive changes increasing its level of adaptability. In case of individuals in the dynamic complex systems the stable balance is perceived by them as a guarantee of ability to build individual acting strategies. It does not function in an ideal way but is rather regarded as a state the open system aims at. The entire achievement of that state is receding by a constant flow of stimuli to which one has to adapt. John Collier (2010) claims that: This balance is not absolute, but is probabilistic over the dimensions and boundaries of the cohesivity. Just as there are intensities of forces and flows that must be balanced, there are, due to fluctuations, propensities of forces and flows that show some statistical distribution in space and time³⁰.

30 John Collier, *A Dynamical Approach to Identity and Diversity in Complex Systems*, In: P. Cilliers, Rika Preiser (Eds), *Complexity, Difference and Identity: An Ethical Perspective* (pp.83-97), (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), p. 90

This entails that game of identity, collective memory or group business in the borderland area are a natural and permanent state, and their effects will shape new forms of a stability social order. The new states of the social order established at a given time would be reflected in dominating identities and strategies of its inhabitants.

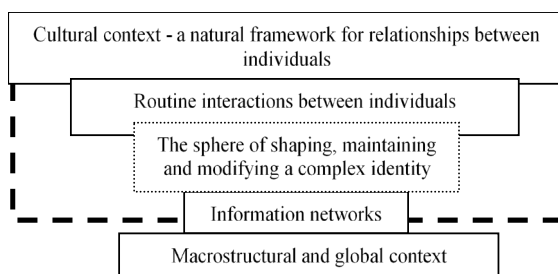


Figure 1. The borderland inhabitants' complex identity model

The complex borderland inhabitants' identity and individual and social learning in the aspect of the cultural evolution theory

In the cultural evolution theories the social system change is understood as a by-product of numerous individual interactions among people and their social environment. The main aim of the cultural evolution is the highest possible adaptive level of a particular community. It is assumed that people are a cultural species which is a distinctive feature from an animal society. Through their whole life people acquire values, standards or rules from other members of a given society. This is done through social learning processes and mutual imitation, which highly determine their further actions. People growing up in different societies show unlike ways of thinking and behaving because they acquire different cultural standards, which are to increase their ability to adapt to actual conditions. The complexity and networking growth of contemporary societies causes a higher level of differentiation within communities themselves.

In each population there are distinct selection, replication and network transmission or change mechanisms. Additionally each person is equipped in ability of individual learning which enables him/her fast and actual adaptation to changing environmental conditions. The individual learning is however expensive and long-lasting because of that the culture limits its application significantly. The culture enables us to use things, abilities and knowledge invented

by other people which were transferred to us within our cultural heritage³¹. The cultural heritage is defined in that sense as an intergeneration transfer of attitudes, values and acting strategies allowing to perceive the cultural evolution parallel to a biological evolution in which random elements are crucial. In each population however there are different mechanisms, selecting or modifying certain cultural elements, which is connected with a requirement of adaptation to specific conditions. The statement that only those acting strategies which increase an optimality of actions in a specific environment have the biggest chance to replicate to the next generations is an important assumption of the cultural evolution theory. The growth of complexity, fragmentariness and networking of the contemporary social reality of the borderland inhabitants must be reflected in their identities and acting strategies. Establishing a specified attitude towards other borderland communities' representatives is therefore an effect of individual and group interactions among people which as a consequence of the selection in specific structural conditions have been consolidated. This does not mean however the representatives of a given community, due to new and powerful stimuli, will not start verifying both their previous acting strategies and identities. In that sense people particular identity states and their acting strategies would be a dynamic system adjusting to a specified cultural environment.

Richerson and Boyd (2005) underline additionally that the cultural evolution theory is based primarily on a power and competition idea. According to them the cultural system can be divided into two parts. On the one hand we deal with an inertia which means in the social system there are such processes that, through imposing a defined social order, maintain a particular direction in the population development. The power of these processes lies in a tendency to a mutual imitation of certain standards or acting strategies by individuals, commonly occurring within societies. On the other hand in each system there are opposed processes which generate new processes and unpredictable changes. As a result: These processes overcome the inertia and generate evolutionary change³².

Alex Mesoudi (2016) draws our attention to the fact that many experiments have shown people have a tendency to two kinds of cultural learning. The first one is based on the so-called "payment error", imitating people who represent an attractive success level as far as high or higher payment.

31 Alex Mesoudi, *Cultural Evolution: How Darwinian Theory Can Explain Human Culture and Synthesize the Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 17

32 Peter Richerson & Robert Boyd, *Not by genes alone: how culture transformed human evolution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 68

The second, alternative to the first one, applies to the so-called “conformist prejudices” which means that there is a disproportionately greater possibility people would copy the most common behaviour in population regardless the payment obtained³³. The population thinking relies on the assumption we can collectively transfer decisions made on a small individual scale to big scale patterns at the level of the population. Learning is here a key component of the cumulative cultural evolution where certain acting strategies defined at the micro level as beneficial are preserved and transferred to the next generations. The social learning allows certain communities react quickly to environmental changes but this comes only through using the whole adaptive knowledge which is stored in a learned acting repertoire of the population. This does not mean however the social learning domination in a given population increases in a simple way its adaptability. The situation is more complicated. The individual learning despite its costs often has innovative effects showing new possibilities of acting and thinking. To increase adaptive abilities and adaptation of the population the social learning must also somehow increase the individual learning usefulness through cost lowering³⁴. This is important especially in case of the complexity of the contemporary social reality growth. In case of contemporary people the ability of social learning contributes to maintaining and accumulation of culture, being a base for more innovative forms of acting. Creating the complex identity of individuals and adjusted to them acting strategies in the environments of a high level of complexity, which nowadays undoubtedly the contemporary borderland is, is connected with specific overlapping of forms of the social and individual learning. People living in such a dynamic and complex social environment which significantly relies on cultural learning may acquire much more optimal strategies when only such appear in their population. Those strategies are then improved to a small extent through individual learning of specific people. This process will be repeated in each generation. As a result nowadays in the areas of a high diversity and intercultural contacts the most optimal strategy is the complex identity building, enabling to combine the cumulated social knowledge with a possibility of limited individual testing of actions through entering into different social relations networks.

A phenomenon of a founding effect influence on borderland minorities acting strategies changes is an interesting phenomenon in the aspect of the

33 Alex Mesoudi, “Cultural Evolution: A Review Of Theory, Findings and Controversies”, *Evolutionary Biology*. Vol. 43 (4), 2016, 481–497, p. 494

34 Joseph Henrich & Richard McElreath, “The Evolution of Cultural Evolution”, *Evolutionary Anthropology*, 12Vol. (3), 2003, 123–135, p. 127

borderland identity transformation. Taking into consideration various migrations in the mankind history the founding effects are quite common in different time and place. The founding effect takes place when a new population of people is found by a small number of individuals from a bigger population. The smaller population in new social conditions may take totally different features than those of the parent population. Migrating to a specific country a particular class or a social group of a given society may induce the so-called "sampling error" which can occur in a further evolution of that population, e.g. the working class migration will cause their values system and acting rules spreading exclusively. That is why during the examination of particular national or ethnic borderland minorities it is necessary to examine their history of arrival to this particular area. Their culture may, as a consequence of the "sampling error", assume a totally different way of cultural evolution than that of their parent society, heading towards entirely different routes of further development³⁵. Such actions may be a reason for social conflicts or new game forms of identity in case of a particular minority in the borderland area who may experience a lack of compatibility of their cultural patterns as a result of contacts with their parent population.

The culture is a dynamic product of specific social games taking place in a certain context which are consolidated into particular patterns and rules and acting strategies within time (Figure 2). Culturally acquired features in a given population show however highly different forms. As a consequence there is always a certain competition among those cultural variants towards particular resources such as a place in collective memory or an approach economic or political resources. The assumption that not all cultural variants have equal chances to survive and spread is very important. The winners are those which are perceived by the majority of people as attractive and popular. The mentioned patterns undergo the selection in next generations and within their frames random mutations occur, according to the necessity of the constant adaptation to the environment, and processes of a cultural difussion, intensified nowadays by the globalization and information society development, begin to influence. The important factor which changes a natural and cultural drift of certain forms transmission is the growth of the cultural difussion and related with it recombinant and transformation powers in contemporary societies. In effect in case of the borderland inhabitants the complex identity manifested in simultaneous being in the cultural area of their own community and constant

35 Alex Mesoudi & Peter Danielson, "Ethics, evolution and culture", *Theory Biosci.*, Vol. 127(3), 2008, 229-40, p. 235

entering dynamic relations with various groups representatives seems to be the most effective adaptive strategy.

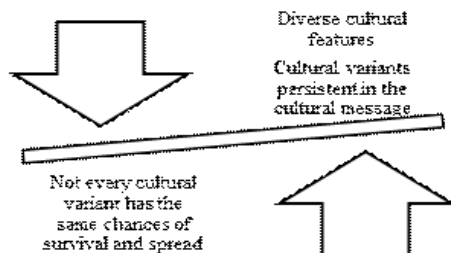


Figure 2. The borderland inhabitants identity model in reference to culture evolution theories

Conclusions

The borderland inhabitants' identity models presented here refer to their methods of dealing with the complex and dynamic social reality. People living in the area of the borderland are culturally adapted to functioning in a more diversified environment than other regions' representatives. This fundamentally influences the fact that they have better predispositions to a hybrid combining in their identity the complicated forms of group and community belonging. In the borderland inhabitants' perception the reality which surrounds them on the one hand constantly creates many opportunities to undertake innovative actions and on the other hand it is based on the necessity to cultural demonstration of their belonging to a certain group or community. Additionally as a result of the globalization processes power growing and information technologies development the social reality existing around them begins to be perceived as even more dynamic, complex and chaotic. As a result the individuals are constantly forced to arrange the rules of the game surrounding them into a rational acting strategy based on the properly shaped creative identity. From the point of view of the complex systems theory it is not possible to create a solid social identity and related to it acting strategy. The dynamic, emergence and disturbed by non-linear leaps changes in the social system force individuals to continuous redefining of their identities and at the same time do not interfere their continuity in time. This does not mean however a constant innovative creating of new social constructs by the borderland inhabitants. Such actions would be highly expensive and hazardous. In order to gain the awareness of the social settlement the individuals often use in their adaptive strategies the elements already existing in the system which are combined with new game

rules. Considering the methods of the borderland inhabitants' identity building one can say that their basic feature are dynamism and form recurrence in time. The individuals' identity, similar to the social system itself, undergoes transformations in a linear or non-linear way, producing new forms requiring updating the already existing identification forms.

The complex system logic prefers those forms of individuals' adaptation which are able to balance the important and variable structural factors multiplicity most. This criteria is fulfilled by the complex identity model which is built with an organized but open for new stimuli construct. On the one hand it enables the individuals to settle in a secure and familiar world of traditional values, and on the other hand its elements are open to intensive searching, reading and adapting to new system requirements. Its form combining both a passive and active element of identity simultaneously considering the subjective acting rules enables the individuals to balance both actions. Firstly, preserving a sense of continuity in the rapidly changing social reality and secondly, actively incorporating new system elements into its network construct. The borderland inhabitants' identity of low complexity is ineffective as far as the complex social system consolidation and growth. This does not mean however that the identity mentioned above may not suddenly return in the borderland area. The impact of certain system stimuli or spreading of particular interpretations of a specific event in the complex social borderland networks (e.g. a protest description, reasons of a crisis descriptions) may lead to a situation of a return to the identity model of the lower complexity. In that sense one cannot assume that the borderland inhabitants' identity transformations would be developing always in a linear way, according to a visible cause-effect connections pattern. Such a situation is possible but remains one of many available alternatives of the development. The complex systems and cultural evolution theories assume a particular social order state is a derivative of spontaneous interactions among people at the microscale level in a situation of the complex social environment influence. The specifics of people's cultural assets is the ability to learn both individually and socially which is connected with a necessity of preserving certain cultural continuity and a high level of adaptation. The today's high dynamics, complexity and fragmentariness of the surrounding social reality, being originally in the borderland area at naturally high level, begins to create new forms of people's identification. Those new forms of identification are not however a simple negation of previous highly traditional identities but they are a creative construct ingrown in the contemporary society requirements. Actually they are not a construct at all but rather an open network of complex identification connections which constitute a unity through their implementation into selected elements of the cultural tradition.

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ELECTORAL PROCESS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN BULGARIA: PATRON-CLIENTELISTIC RELATIONS, KINSHIP NETWORKS AND IMITATION OF DEMOCRACY

Abstract

Bulgaria is among the countries of the former communist bloc, which after its collapse are making an accelerated vertical attempt to democratization and economic liberalization in order to be gradually integrated into the structures of the European Union. Through the method of participatory observation this article reveals the logic and specifics of the electoral process in a small municipality in Bulgaria and in particular the shortcomings in the functioning of local democracy in all its aspects: election commissions, political participants, and voters' behaviour. The conclusions reached in the article are that on a superficial level there is only an imitation of democracy, skilfully undermined by the well-established networks of kinship and patron-clientelistic dependencies. Their parasitism on the public resource destroys the social frame and makes the process of democratization practically incomplete in an endless period of time.

Keywords: *Electoral Process; Kinship; Clientelism; Democracy; Bulgaria*

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Introduction

Not without reason, the term ‘Bulgarian elections’ acquires a pejorative meaning in the context of the Bulgarian political transition. Numerous falsifications of the elections over the years, vote buying, the presence of ‘dead souls’ on the voter lists and the close involvement of political parties with ‘hoop of companies’² contribute to it. Although defined as ‘second order elections’³, local elections in Bulgaria have a different charge, and contrary to the tendencies for lower voter turnout in elections of the same type in Western Europe and USA⁴, since the country’s accession to the EU in 2007, their activity has been increasing.⁵

This article is based on a study conducted by the method of the participatory observation of the election process in a small municipality in Southern Bulgaria. It takes place in the period September - November 2019 and is expressed in the participation of the author in the Municipal Election Commission (MEC). According to the method used, the names of the candidates for elected positions, the name of the municipality, and the names of the other settlements are anonymized⁶. The article will stress on the main problems in the electoral process in the local elections with a focus on the election for mayor; the participants in the pre-election competition will be reviewed: biographical notes, party affiliation, pre-election messages, tools to carry out the campaign; their results will also be interpreted.

The thesis defended in the study is that at first glance the organization of the election process and the election campaign are carried out according to democratic procedures and practices, but in depth there are significant deficits that undermine its foundations and affect the election results: poorly prepared election administration, patron-clientelistic relations, family dependencies and religious affiliations.

2 A term used by the chairman of the ethnic party DPS (Movement for Rights and Freedoms), Ahmed Dogan, in an evening talk show in 2005 to describe the affiliation of Bulgarian political parties with companies and corporations.

3 Anthony Heath et al., “Between first and second order: A comparison of voting behaviour in European and local elections in Britain”, *European Journal of Political Research* 35, 1999

4 Hester M. van de Bovenkamp and Hans Vollaard, “Strengthening the local representative system: the importance of electoral and non-electoral representation”, *Local Government Studies*, 45(2), 2019; Christopher Warshaw 2019, “Local Elections and Representation in the United States”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, 2019

5 Antoniy Todorov, “Politicheski izbori i demokratsia”. In: Kanev, D. and Todorov, A. (eds.) *Kachestvo na demokratsiata v Balgaria* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2014), p. 192

6 Alexey Pamporov, “Saper vedere: The Observation as a Method of Data Collection in the Sociology”, *Sociological problems*, 2007

The research interest in the specific municipality is dictated by two inter-related factors: 1. Since 1999, it has been governed by the member of the EPP right wing party SDS (Union of Democratic Forces) – the party-symbol of Bulgarian democracy and transition, which to date has become a boutique organization with less than 1% electoral support at the national level. In this sense, the long-standing electoral victories of the SDS in the municipality represent a precedent that requires mandatory explanation; 2. The studied municipality is entirely rural, including fifteen settlements and a population of 10,518.⁷ The structural sectors of the local economy are agriculture, food, woodworking, furniture and clothing.⁸ At the end of 2018, the working population in the municipality has a share of 50.67% and unemployment is 6.42%. In terms of age, the share of residents over 64 is over 30%.⁹ Data on the educational level show that 6.2% of the inhabitants have higher education, 38.3% have secondary education, 36.7% have presecondary school education, 12% have primary education, and 6.6% have no education at all.¹⁰ The socio-economic structure of the population from a sociological point of view provokes interest, as the political processes that take place inside are an indicator of the modernization development and the quality of democracy in this geographical zone of the EU.

Design and Operation of Municipal Election Commission (MEC)

According to Huntington, the collapse of communism and the democratic transitions of the countries of Eastern Europe and some former Soviet Republics are the culmination of the third wave of democratization.¹¹ As part of this process, Bulgaria is among the first post-communist countries to implement political, administrative and financial decentralization, and since 1991 has provided citizens with the opportunity to independently elect their representatives in local self-government.¹² However, transplanting democratic procedures does not always mean adequate representation. The local government elections held in 2019 show the shortcomings of Bulgarian democracy, defined

7 National Statistic Institute, NSI

8 District Development Strategy 2014-2020

9 Youth Plan 2019

10 NSI, Census 2011

11 Samuel Huntington, *“The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century”* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)

12 Garry Bland, “Elections and the Development of Democratic Local Governance”. *RTI International*, 2006; Pawel Swianiewicz, “An Empirical Typology of Local Government Systems in Eastern Europe”, *Local Government Studies*, 40(2), 2014

by social scientists as ‘defective’¹³, ‘captured’¹⁴, ‘arrested’¹⁵, and the government of the state as ‘autocratizing regime’¹⁶.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) defines election administration bodies as ‘the primary guarantor of the integrity and purity of the electoral process’¹⁷, while Todorov considers them the ‘most important actor in the elections’¹⁸. In Bulgaria, their construction and functions are regulated in the Electoral Code, adopted in 2013. According to him, during local elections, a MEC is appointed for a term of four years. Each member is nominated by a party represented in parliament or by a party that has representatives in the European Parliament. They receive quotas depending on their electoral weight. The total number of the population of the surveyed municipality predetermines the composition of the MEC to be a minimum of 11 and a maximum of 13 members. The exact number, as well as the staff of the commission, should be specified at a working meeting of all interested parties with the current mayor of the municipality. If it is not possible to reach a consensus between the parties, the MEC is appointed by the Central Election Commission (CEC). The studied case is such. This is where the first breakthrough in the mechanism occurs. The CEC appoints MECs without a regulation or procedure for determining the commission governing persons, but only on the basis of the name and education of the proposed persons. In the studied case, the local leadership of the ruling GERB (Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria) party attempted to lobby for the CEC’s decision by sending a list of the names of the members of the commission governing body that suited it. The result is that half of the proposals of the local leadership receive support from CEC.

The requirement to all members of the commissions is to have higher education, and if possible to be a Degree in Law. The composition of the MEC

13 Atanas Slavov, “Ten Years of European Membership: Defective Democracy, Dependent Institutions”, *Sociological problems* 1-2, 2017

14 Antoaneta Dimitrova, “The uncertain road to sustainable democracy: elite coalitions, citizen protests and the prospects of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”, *East European Politics*, 34(3), 2018; Andrey Nonchev, “State Capture of the Post-Socialist State: Challenges to European Integration”, *Research Papers of UNWE* 3, 2019

15 Ben Stanley, “Backsliding Away? The Quality of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 15(4), 2019, p. 350

16 Anna Luhrmann et al., “*Democracy Facing Global Challenges: V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2019*”, University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2019, p. 11

17 Cited in: Joo-Cheong Tham, “Deliberative Democracy and Electoral Management Bodies: The Case of Australian Electoral Commissions”, *Election Law Journal*, 12(4), 2013, p. 386

18 Antoniy Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 151

(13 members) covers the requirement only in its mandatory part. The professional fields of the members are very diverse: two lawyers; two nurses; three accountants; two retired teachers; sociologist; office assistant; air-conditioner installer; CCTV installer. The division by gender is eight women and five men. A total of seven of the members have experience in holding previous elections, which is close to the finding of Killesteyn, that even in countries with established democracies such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, every second election official is inexperienced¹⁹. The CEC's decision effectively puts on the four governing body positions a lawyer, a CCTV installer, an office assistant, and a retired teacher, two of whom have no election experience.

The EC prohibits MEC members from being of the same family, as well as a member of their families from being a candidate for an elected position. However, the Electoral Code does not prohibit other family ties, which in practice leads to a precedent - the MEC secretary is a sister of one of the candidates for mayor of the municipality, and one deputy chairman is the nephew of a candidate for municipal councillor. Throughout the whole period of the study, this kinship did not manifest itself in any way in the work of individual members, but nevertheless, the existence of such an opportunity is a weak point in the EC and in certain circumstances would be a reason to compromise the electoral process.

The work of the MEC is managed entirely by the Electoral Code, and the decisions of the CEC. It mainly consists of daily shifts, regular and extraordinary meetings for reviewing documents for registration of candidates, complaints and signals of violations of the Electoral Code and decision-making on them, announcing the election results. MEC members undergo voluntary training, which is organized by the CEC for an hour. The work of the MEC is supported by two technical assistants, and an expert. They are also appointed on unclear criteria, depending on who has a close relationship with the current mayor, or the MEC chairperson. Thus, at the insistence of the party that has run the Municipality for the last 20 years, the two appointed technical assistants are employees of the municipal administration, and the expert, who is also inexperienced, is appointed at the insistence of the MEC chairperson.

Another feature that manifests itself in the case under study is that, although nominated by political parties, there are no strong party affiliations

19 Ed Killesteyn, "Polling Officials: The Strength and Weakness of Democratic Systems", *Election Law Journal*, 14(4), 2015

among MEC members. These weak links with the political parties are also present in the recruitment and appointment of members of sectional election commissions. Again, on a non-compulsory basis, some SEC members go through one-hour training organized by the MEC, which is extremely insufficient to familiarize themselves with the election legislation, their functions on election day, the counting of votes, and the recording of the results in the election protocols.

These gaps in the activities of local election administrations testify to their relatively poor training²⁰, to their imperfect recruitment, appointment and actions, and instead of being the 'backbone of the theatre of democracy'²¹, they rather generate distrust in relation to the overall organization of the election process. Their structuring, work and staffing are far from the ideal type of rational bureaucracy of Weber²², but in the case studied their actions do not have a decisive impact on the election result.

The Election competition

Registrations and Profile of the Candidates

According to the Law on Local Self-Government and Local Administration, the mayor of the municipality is an executive body, i.e. his or her functions and actions are guided by the decisions of the municipal council. Tsoneva and Georgiev see in the structure of local government a systemic problem, as on the one hand the mayor is elected by the population to implement his or her election program, but on the other hand the council is the one that determines whether this will happen depending on its support or lack of support.²³ Due to this problem, after taking office, mayors embark on the search and provision of the majority they need, based not on 'principles and management programs, but on thin balances and the satisfaction of various economic demands'²⁴.

The registration of the parties for participation in the elections and of their candidate lists is carried out not later than 32 days before the elections and this process has a special charge for all participants in them, including the

20 Antony Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 224

21 Ed Killesteyn, *op. cit.*

22 Max Weber, "Sociologia na gospodstvoto. Sociologia na religiyata" (Sofia: UI "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 1992)

23 Antoaneta Tsoneva and Svetoslav Georgiev, "Kmetove na lizing (Sofia: Fondatsia RiskMonitor", 2008), p. 20

24 *Ibidem*, p. 21

MEC. Incomplete set of documents, lack of signatures, false signatures, lack of stamps, wrong names are just some of the main problems that accompany registration and which exacerbate relations in the commission and provoke scandals about the admissibility and legality of such documents.

The size of the population determines the mandates of the municipal councillors who must be elected - for the surveyed municipality, these are 17 people. Six parties and one local coalition have registered a total of 81 candidates to run for municipal elections.

Elections for a local mayor are also being held in eight of the settlements. A total of 26 candidates are taking part in this competition. In the other villages (with a population of less than 350 people) the mayors are appointed by the municipal council on the proposal of the mayor of the municipality.

A precedent is one of the settlements with a population of less than 350 people. A few months before the presidential decree for carrying out elections the current mayor managed to 'make sure' to provide the minimum required number of the population by persuading his relatives, acquaintances and a group of Roma people to change their address registration. The goal is, as he puts it, 'for the village to democratically elect a mayor, not someone to appoint the mayor'.

In the competition for mayor of the municipality, three parties and a local coalition registered four candidates:

- Candidate 1: a 42-year-old man, married, with one child. He has a university degree in law and theology and works as an expert in public administration. He is running for mayor of the municipality for the fourth time. He was nominated by the patriotic party NFSB (National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria), of which he is the municipal chairman. His political experience consists of two terms as a municipal councillor from various political parties. He lives in the municipal centre and professes Eastern Orthodoxy.
- Candidate 2: a 39-year-old man, married, with two children. He has a university degree in agronomy and develops his own business in the field of trade in plant protection products. He is a candidate for mayor of the municipality for the first time, nominated by the right-wing party GERB. Candidate 2 is not a member of GERB party and has no political experience. He has recently started living in the municipal centre, a native of a settlement outside the municipality. He professes Eastern Orthodoxy. His candidacy is also supported by the Volya (Will) party.
- Candidate 3: a 64-year-old man, married, with two children. He has a secondary education and works as a manceple in an farm cooperative. He

is a candidate for mayor of the municipality for the second time, nominated by the left-wing BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party). Candidate 3 is the chairman of the municipal organization of the party that nominates him. He has two terms as a municipal councillor from the same party. He lives in the municipal centre and professes Eastern Orthodoxy.

- Candidate 4: a 39-year-old man, married, with two children. He has a higher pedagogical education. In the period 2015-2019 he is mayor of the municipality. Candidate 4 is a long-time member of the right-wing SDS party. In the 2019 elections, the SDS is running in a local coalition with the BDC (Bulgarian Democratic Centre) party, which has no structures in the municipality. He lives in a small village and he professes Catholicism.

As can be seen from the profiles of the mayor candidates in the case under study, these are mostly young people. Another distinctive feature of them is that only one of the four has changed his party affiliation several times, a circumstance that is not an isolated case either inside or outside the EU²⁵. However, the party nomadism is strongly expressed among the candidates for municipal councillors.

Pre-election Campaign and Violations of the Electoral Code

The Electoral Code envisages the pre-election campaigns to be held within 30 days and to be terminated the day before the elections. In the studied municipality it is carried out mainly by putting up posters, distributing campaign materials, theatre performances, concerts, organizing fairs and meetings with voters. The channels through which the pre-election messages reach the citizens are the social network Facebook, creation and broadcasting of videos on Youtube, as well as paid publications in regional media.

Spreading all kinds of rumours and misinformation is also one of the ways to conduct an election campaign.²⁶ Ivanova even claims that this non-standard agitation has a greater effect, as well as that 'in every municipality that does not include a big city, mainly rumours' are used.²⁷ This type of campaign between Candidate 2 and Candidate 4 is particularly acute. The rumours concern the

25 Antonio Costabile and Antonella Coco, Social actors and social ties in multiple modernity: Familism and social change in the South of Italy, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 4(1), 2017

26 Satendra Kumar, "Uttar Pradesh local elections 2015: money, muscle and manipulation in a village", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 2019

27 Evgeniya Ivanova, "Local Elections 2003 – ethnic or political vote? Kirkovo Municipality, Kardzhali Area", *Sociological problems 1-2*, 2004, p. 379

biography, family or company affiliations of the candidates, the distribution of public procurements and appointments in the structures of the municipal administration, and the mayoralties in each settlement. The arsenal of this type of 'technique' includes mutual accusations of drug, alcohol and gambling addictions of candidates and members of their families; of corruption and secret connections with oligarchic circles. An active role in this campaign is played by the marital partners and the closest relatives and friends of the candidates for the mayor's post, but also employees in the municipal administration, former mayors, and municipal councillors.

In the standard campaign, Candidate 1 organized three public events, at which he presented his candidacy for mayor, as well as the list of municipal councillors and candidates for mayors of some of the settlements. His presentations focus more on clarifying the structure of the municipal administration, the functions of local self-government bodies and the potential opportunities for applying for various EU operational programs. Candidate 1 is also actively involved in the opening of a playground in the municipal centre, which is rumoured that he has personally lobbied for its construction by his contacts with the upper echelons of power in Bulgaria. The other method that Candidate 1 uses is a door-to-door campaign.

Candidate 2's campaign is focused on organizing public events in larger settlements, along with holding three concerts with famous Bulgarian artists. The main highlights of his election program are the renewal of the old water supply network; completion of the sewerage system; organizing own separate garbage collection and garbage removal; modernization and reconstruction of schools, kindergartens and gyms; expanding the activity of the medical teams; priority of local private companies in announcing public procurements.

Candidate 3 does not rely on a broad campaign, but rather on individual and collective meetings with a narrow circle of voters. He holds two public events, one of which is attended by the President of the Party of European Socialists. The candidate's messages are mostly related to honesty, openness and commitment to the introduction of free kindergartens and nurseries. The other tool of his campaign is to put up posters, distribute leaflets and posts on the social network Facebook to party members and supporters.

Candidate 4 uses a variety of channels to disseminate election messages: posters, leaflets, booklets covering the past four years and a program for the next term. His pre-election arsenal also includes Facebook calls for support, paid media publications, organized and spontaneous meetings with voters, as well as holding two public events - a theatrical performance and a concert. The pre-election commitments of Candidate 4 are: reduction of unemployment

and promotion of employment; establishment of a secondary school in the municipality; construction of a system for video surveillance in schools, kindergartens and the entrance-exit arteries in each settlement; completion of sewerage and water supply in larger settlements; reconstruction of sports facilities; introduction of family composting, independent garbage collection and garbage disposal; attracting foreign investment; giving priority to local private companies in conducting tenders for small public procurements.

Kera and Hysa defend the thesis that ‘free and fair elections constitute an important pillar of democracy. A fair political competition needs transparency of campaign finances and in general of money in politics.’²⁸ The financial resources used by the candidates in the surveyed municipality are not transparent. Basically, these are donations from companies close to the raised candidate, personal funds and a small part come from the party. This means that the one who raises more funds will be better positioned in the campaign. Linking some of the candidates with a ‘circle of companies’ is a prerequisite for dependence and the formation of patron-clientelistic chains, especially thriving after Bulgaria’s accession to the EU.²⁹ The reason for the increased interest of the private sector in the local elections and the support of certain candidates is that in the words of the former chairman of the Supreme Administrative Court and former ombudsman of Bulgaria Konstantin Penchev, ‘if there is anything further to plunder, it is in the municipalities. Even more, elections will be decided on the basis of principles such as “supply - demand”³⁰. In the twelfth year of Bulgaria’s accession to the EU, this pattern still exists. It is noteworthy, for example, that in order to respond to the gift they receive from local businesses, two of the candidates in their campaign messages declare a commitment to prioritize local companies in public procurement, a tactic that is incompatible with the principles of neoliberal market economy and free competition.

During the election campaign, the MEC received three signals of violations of the Electoral Code, expressed in the distribution of campaign materials on Facebook, which lacked the mandatory caption ‘Buying and selling votes is a crime’ and containing the Bulgarian flag, as well as unregulated posting of posters on public buildings. Regarding one of the signals the MEC established that no violation had been committed. In the other two it confirmed the violation on the basis of the evidence provided by the applicant, but

28 Gentiana Kera and Armanda Hysa, “Influencing votes, winning elections: clientelist practices and private funding of electoral campaigns in Albania”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2020, p. 13

29 Antoaneta Tsoneva and Svetoslav Georgiev, *op. cit.*; Antony Todorov, *op. cit.*;

30 Cited in: Antoaneta Tsoneva and Svetoslav Georgiev, *op. cit.*

did not draw up an act, as at the time of the official inspection the violations had been eliminated. The removal itself is preceded by a telephone call from a member of the commission, usually from the same political quota, which in practice constitutes a leak and compromises any further action. Another reason for the lack of will to impose fines is the relatively high amounts for the Bulgarian standards provided in the EC, as well as the prevailing conformist opinion among MEC members that ‘in a small municipality everyone knows each other and it is better not to spoil relations’. In other words, *de jure* democratic institutions are present, but *de facto* their democratic functioning is not developed.³¹

Round 1

Bland asserts the opinion that the three components of any electoral system are the size of the constituency, the structure of the ballot-paper, and the electoral formula.³² On the election day, voters have separate ballot-papers for each election: for a mayor of a municipality who is elected by a majority electoral system; for municipal councillors who are elected by a proportional electoral system with the possibility of rearranging the lists by preferential vote in a formula for calculating the result by the method of Herr-Niemeyer; for local mayors (where such election takes place), who is elected by the majority electoral system.

The Election Day was characterised by tension and problems - absentee members of the sectional election commissions, power supply failures in three of the sections for two hours and blocking of the voting process, signals of violations of the EC. Two of the signals of violations are related to unregulated campaigning in front of the polling stations. No violations were found during the inspection, but as in the election campaign, violators were notified in advance that an inspection was pending. Similar to Stockemer’s findings about the electoral violations in North Macedonia,³³ in the observed municipality during the Election Day, regular monitoring of the polling stations reveals other problems such as gatherings of large groups of people in front of the polling stations, who meet and persuade the arriving citizens to vote in a certain way. Some of the people in the groups also perform control functions - to monitor

31 Daniela Pastarmadzhieva and Yliyana Yarkova, “Electoral Behavior and Citizen Participation: A View from the Bulgarian Villages”, *Balkanistic Forum* 1, 2020, p. 206

32 Garry Bland, *op. cit.*

33 Daniel Stockemer, “Gender equality and electoral corruption: some insights from the local elections in Macedonia”, *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 2018

and check whether ‘their people’ have voted and if not to invite them to do so, and if necessary to transport them to the polling stations. Unlike established democracies, such as the United Kingdom, where crowding in front of sections is rather the exception,³⁴ this practice in Bulgaria has become a regularity and does not impress either the election administrations or the police bodies that guard the election premises.

During the Election Day, two more signals for violations of the Electoral Code were received: for unregulated collection of personal data from the ID cards of voters by members of one of the polling stations and for adding a group of voters to the voter lists, declaring an address where in fact there is no residential building. In both cases, the MEC does not carry out an inspection, but forwards the signals to the competence of the Commission for Personal Data Protection and to the acting mayor of the municipality, respectively.

The EC provides an opportunity for citizens to vote at the current address with a certificate issued in advance by the relevant civil registration office. These citizens are not present in the official voter lists and are therefore registered on the Election Day. This is another practice in the Bulgarian election process, known as ‘election tourism’, which practically predetermines many elections. This paradox reaches the point that in one of the settlements the ballot-papers are not enough, as almost 50% more voters appear in front of the polling station than the actual number of residents entitled to vote at a permanent address. Such a registration is present in each of the sections in the municipality and for the most part they are organized in advance by the current mayors with the participation of the municipal administration. The vote count becomes ‘genuinely social process’,³⁵ in which, according to the EC, in the polling station, in addition to the members of the SEC, may also be present members of the MEC, advocates and representatives of political parties, NGO observers, the candidates themselves, media representatives. Gathering many people on the one hand gives publicity to the election process, but on the other hand the gathering of many people in the sections predetermines tension and scandals, and hence errors in counting and errors in reporting the results. All of them became known later when the protocols were reported to the MEC. The most common mistakes are the wrong sum of the results of the individual candidates, unreported and lost ballot-papers, multiple strikeouts and corrections.

34 Toby James and Alistair Clark, “Electoral integrity, voter fraud and voter ID in polling stations: lessons from English local elections”, *Policy Studies*, 2019

35 Achim Goerres and Evelyn Funk, “Who Counts, Counts: An Exploratory Analysis of How Local Authorities Organise the Electoral Count in Germany’s Most Populous State”, *German Politics*, 2018, p. 6

The MEC has the power to request a recount of the ballot-papers only when gross factual violations are established. Such an option usually does not occur due to the desire of most of the MEC members to end their work sooner.

After the reporting of the last protocol from the polling stations in the MEC, the results are summarized by computer processing. The first round ended with a turnout of 62.9%. The summarized data from the election for mayor of a municipality show that Candidate 1 collects 12.17%, Candidate 2 receives 33.84%, Candidate 3 receives 12.86%, and Candidate 4 wins 38.7%. The ballot-paper also provides a place for a protest vote, where voters can indicate that they do not support any of the candidates. 2.43% of the citizens exercised this right. The total number of invalid votes in this type of election is 4.07%. With these results, Candidate 2 and Candidate 4 were determined to participate in a second round, scheduled for one week later.

The results of the elections for municipal councillors show that the NFSB party garnered the support of 11.09% of voters and won 2 seats; GERB won 23.46% and received 4 seats; Volya collected the vote of 11.53% of the citizens and received 2 seats; BSP won 16.63% and received 3 seats; The local SDS-BDC coalition won 36.26% and gained 6 seats. The preferential threshold for rearranging the candidate lists is 7% of the total number of voters for the party. These preferences practically rearrange the lists of each of the parties and the coalition, but in reality three candidates manage to rearrange the lists of their party so as to secure a place in the Municipal Council. 3.45% of voters exercise their right not to support anyone, and the invalid ballots in this type of election are 24.9%. One of the natural explanations for the high share of invalid ballot-papers is their design.³⁶ The complexity of the ballot-paper for the election of municipal councillors is that in addition to ticking the preferred party or coalition, there is also the possibility of a preferential vote. But preferential voting has been introduced in Bulgaria since 2014 and is nothing new for Bulgarian voters. In addition, the invalid votes in the surveyed municipality for the same type of election in 2015 was 20.1%, i.e. instead of the voter demonstrating getting used to and understanding the way he or should vote, an inverse correlation is observed. Todorov makes another hypothesis. He acknowledges that in local elections the number of invalid ballot-papers is relatively higher and suggests that behind this lies the mobilization of specific groups of the population, often marginalized, who are more likely to make a mistake in voting.³⁷ Although it sounds plausible, it is partly true. In one of

36 Michal Pierzgaliski et al. "Ballot Paper Design and Vote Spoiling at Polish Local Elections of 2014: Establishing a Causal Link", *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 2019, p. 22

37 Antoniy Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 210

the sections in the municipality where an ethnically homogeneous population votes, the invalid votes are 15.8%, while in a section of a mixed constituency, where a large part of the Roma population is included, they reach 27.2%. The difference is obvious, but the percentage in the first section is also high enough, especially when compared to the invalid votes in the local elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, where this percentage varies from 0.35% - 2.7%.³⁸ The authors of this study believe that the share of invalid votes depends on the ways of organizing the electoral process.³⁹ Obviously, in the studied case the high part of invalid votes is caused by a set of factors: the complexity of the ballot-paper, poor preparation and training of election commissions, errors or manipulation in counting votes, pressure groups in front of polling stations, low political culture of citizens, poorly educated social groups, high percentage (11%) of Roma population⁴⁰.

The professional fields of the newly elected municipal councillors are: three businessmen; three farmers; two accountants; two nurses; a general practitioner; two secretaries of GP; a manceple in a consumer cooperative; a principal of a presecondary school; general practitioner, an engineer. Most municipal councillors have more than one mandate, and only three of them have no political experience.

In the elections for a local mayor in five of the settlements a mayor was elected in the first round, and in the other three a second round was scheduled. The citizens who have chosen not to support any of the mentioned candidates in the respective settlements vary from 0.73%-4.38%, and the invalid votes are from 0.83% -5%. Three of the election winners remain in office. One of them was nominated by GERB party, and two by SDS party, one of which is with imposed and enforced 'probation' sentence for beating a football referee. In the other two settlements, the newly elected mayors were nominated by BSP party, have no previous political experience and come from the fire brigade and the military professions. There are no mayors with higher education among those elected in the first round.

Round II

There are no official events as part of the election campaign between the two rounds. Both candidates are rely first on negotiations with the defeated ones. Candidate 1 officially stands behind Candidate 4, and part of their

38 Achim Goerres and Evelyn Funk, *op. cit.*, p. 9

39 *Ibidem*, p. 16

40 NSI, Cencus 2011

agreement includes Candidate 1 to receive the position of Deputy Mayor of the municipality in case of victory of Candidate 4. This pre-election coalition relies on individual meetings with voters, local businessmen and pressure on employees in the municipal administration to activate their close family and friends, as well as pressure on dropped candidates for local mayors to provide support.

Candidate 2 is officially backed by part of BSP structure, while the other part of this party calls voters to vote by conscience. Candidate 2 is also backed by the former mayor of the municipality, who in fact stands against his party. For some SDS voters, this is considered as treason.

Rumours are also part of the pre-election arsenal, this time related to mutual accusations of vote buying and new attacks between them on the social network Facebook. There was no evidence of vote-buying, but police patrols were sent to the largest Roma neighbourhood in the municipality 48 hours before the second round as a respecting and preventive measure.

Election Day passes without the tension typical of the first round. For the entire day, the MEC receives only one signal for unregulated campaigning, but as in the cases of the first round, the leakage of information predetermines the outcome of the inspection. Despite the weaker interest in the elections, the characteristic concentration in front of the polling stations in some of the settlements remains.

The Election Day ended with a lower turnout than the first round of 55.55%. The election headquarters of the political parties conducted a parallel counting according to the data from the protocols from the polling stations and on this basis about an hour after the end of the Election Day a bell from an Orthodox church announces the victory of the Catholic candidate. Official data show that 42.14% voted for Candidate 2 and 56.45% for Candidate 4. 1.4% of the voters exercised a protest vote 'I do not support anyone', and the invalid ballot-papers were 19.74%, i.e. again a high share in a simplified ballot-paper containing only two names.

In the three settlements where elections for local mayor were held, two are newly elected mayors nominated by SDS, and the third raised by GERB keeps his post. The newly elected mayors are respectively a farmer and a bus driver. They also do not hold higher education.

Interpretation of the results

For Brusaporci, 'the local authorities represent the first and primary link in the chain of multi-level governance which ultimately leads to the European Union'⁴¹. In fact, the direction of the processes in the case under study is exactly the opposite, and instead of moving towards the core of the EU, local authorities are pushing the country towards the third world. What do I mean?

From 1999 to 2015, the election for a mayor in the surveyed municipality was won by the same SDS candidate in the first round, but the ruling majority is always a coalition. In 2015, the elections were won again by SDS, but by another candidate, who until that moment had been in the team of the former mayor. In 2019, he won his second mandate again. Against this background, at the national level, in the last elections in which the SDS participated independently in 2013, it received 1.37%. From then until 2019, its participation in elections took place in various coalitions and the maximum result it reached with them was 8.88%.

Evans postulates that 'fair, democratic elections are key to decision-makers' legitimacy in the eyes of the public.'⁴² Despite the numerous gaps in the electoral legislation, 'electoral tourism', violations of the EC and poorly prepared election commissions, the study showed that formally on the surface the electoral process is carried out according to democratic procedures. Beneath the surface, however, processes are revealed that are deeply entwined in the social fabric and erode the already fragile democratic foundations.

The electoral victory of SDS party in 2019 in the studied municipality is due to the strictly established network of patron-clientelistic relations. Scott considers them 'a special case of a two-person relationship involving friendship in which an individual from a higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for people who are of lower status (clients) reciprocate by offering support and assistance, including personal services or protection',⁴³ i.e. 'patronage or clientelism is a concept of power that is born from an unbalanced relationship between patrons in one party and the client on the other'.⁴⁴ It is based on the

41 Gianfranco Brusaporci, "The impact of EU multi-level regionalism strategy on Bulgarian local authorities: qualitative comparative analysis among nine border areas", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2016, p. 6

42 Matt Evans, "Democracy, Legitimacy and Local Government Electoral Reform", *Local Government Studies*, 40(1), 2014, p. 44

43 James Scott, "*Comparative Political Corruption*" (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 92

44 Robi Kurniawan, "The Pattern of Clientelism in Lampung Local Election", *MIMBAR*, 34(2), 2018, p. 285

principle of mutual benefit. The patron receives political support, and the resources he distributes can be money, goods, services, facilitated access to social benefits, political appointments in the structures of the administration, protection against dismissal, access to public funds for business and public procurement.⁴⁵

In this regard, SDS's strategy unfolds in several scenarios. In the first place, several large families are involved, from which candidates for mayors and municipal councillors are nominated. The newly elected mayor of the municipality comes from a large Catholic family from the third largest settlement in the municipality. Similarly, his wife comes from such a family, and she is from the same village. However, both of them live in the neighbouring small also Catholic village, where the mayor's father is from. To strengthen this connection, his first cousin was included at the top of the list of municipal councillors.

The candidate for mayor of the third largest settlement with a homogeneous Catholic population is of another large family, and a representative of the same family is places at the top of the list of municipal councillors. In the neighbouring settlement with mainly Catholic population, the same formula applies, i.e. a candidate for a local mayor comes from a large family with a Catholic religion. The two settlements with a Catholic population provide 31% of the votes of Candidate 2, while Candidate 4 manages to accumulate only 14.3% of their votes there.

In general, religion has a peripheral function in Bulgarian public life, but this is not the case with the Catholic community, whose number in Bulgaria is 0.85% of the total population, and in the studied municipality it is approximately 30% of the total population.⁴⁶ 'Catholicism in fact considers the family as a value in itself and as a specific model around which to organise social life. The Catholic religion penetrates society, including its public and political dimensions, through its models of family education and of socialisation.'⁴⁷ Hence, the purely primary motivation of voters to support the 'cousin' becomes a very personal and intimate act. Within the framework of this strategy, two more large families are included, but this time from the circle of Eastern Orthodox

45 Charles Tilly, "Trust and Rule", *Theory and Society*, 33(1), 2004; Francis Fukuyama, "The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution" (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroud), 2011; Herbert Kitschelt, "Divergent Paths of Postcommunist Democracies", In: Diamond, L. and Gunther, R. (eds.). *Political Parties and Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 2001; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, "Patrons, clients and friends: Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society" (Cambridge University Press, 1984)

46 NSI, Census 2011

47 Antonio Costabile and Antonella Coco, *op. cit.*, p. 92

Christians from the municipal centre, who manage to nominate one of their representatives among the municipal councillors. The only obstacle that this line gives is the attempt for ethnic opposition by raising the candidacy of a young woman of Roma origin as mayor in one of the smaller settlements. Although in many democracies this is a common practice,⁴⁸ in Bulgaria there is still a special sensitivity on this issue. In the competition with the other three candidates, she managed to win in the first round, but in the second round, the consolidation of the Bulgarian vote deprived her of success.

The kinship model for political participation and adaptation of family ties in the political body is characteristic of societies of 'low trust', such as Greece and southern Italy, in which the family is the basis for social cooperation, i.e. where informal groups and associations are absent between the family and the state⁴⁹ or in societies such as India, where local elections are used by privileged castes to create shadow states as a means of controlling the local and regional economy⁵⁰. Obviously, three decades since the beginning of the Bulgarian transition, family ties and their use can still be a 'strategic resource for political and electoral success'⁵¹. At the same time, the result shows that public relations in Bulgaria are at the pre-modern level, typical of Western European societies until the middle of the 19th century, when traditional family ties still shaped political parties and local politics⁵².

The second scenario is the bureaucratic vote. Under pressure from local party leaders, municipal administration officials, in the town halls run by SDS mayors, and staff in kindergartens and schools, are actively campaigning among their families, relatives and friends with the main goal of keeping their jobs. In addition, some of the jobs in the administration are also reserved for relatives of the patron, the mayor and the councillors.

The model, also known as 'party patronage', is based on the "politicization of the civil service"⁵³ and the ability of political parties to distribute and control

48 Timothy Krebs, "Local Campaigns and Elections", In: Haider-Markel, D. (ed.). *Oxford Handbook of State and Local Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 246-266

49 Francis Fukuyama, "Political Order and Political Decay" (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroud), 2014

50 Satendra Kumar, *op. cit.*, 2019

51 Antonio Costabile and Antonella Coco, *op. cit.*, p. 78

52 Carola Lipp, "Kinship Networks, Local Government, and Elections in a Town in Southwest Germany, 1800-1850", *Journal of Family History*, 30(4), 2005, p. 362

53 Guy Peters and Jon Pierre, "Politicization of the Civil Service. Concepts, Causes, Consequences", In: Peters, G. and Pierre, J. (eds.). *Politicization of the civil service in comparative perspective: The quest for control* (London: Routledge, 2004)

appointments in the public sector⁵⁴. Ivanova claims that this is natural, as most of the jobs are provided by the municipality⁵⁵. But, naturally it is only where the vertical attempt for modernization and democratization has not reached its zenith, i.e. where we do not have the social prerequisites and basis for the creation of free, independent and critical thinking individuals, for the development of civil society and institutionalized forms of genuine political participation. It is in such a context and environment that local democracy takes place. This predetermines that the majority of voters are primarily interested in their own well-being⁵⁶ and especially in small settlements where job opportunities are limited. This manner of self-sufficiency or settling one's own situation has become the norm throughout the Bulgarian transition. Many Bulgarians do not maintain social ties outside their own family, relatives or close circle of friends. They are not members of NGOs, political parties, voluntary associations, etc., or if they do, it is in exchange for some personal interest. Thus, here we find the pursue and implementation of the first two steps of the Maslow hierarchy⁵⁷, forming human behaviour, related primarily to the satisfaction of physiological needs such as feeding, drinking and sleeping, and secondly to the satisfaction of safety, which includes work, health and property security. 'The countries that are late in the process of economic development and modernization, or the relatively poorer people of these countries give primacy not to the quality of life, self-expression, freedom, or a better environment, but, in accordance with the hierarchy of needs related to physiological and safety requirements, attach more importance to economic profit, working conditions, avoiding risk/uncertainty, and achieving material success.'⁵⁸ Therefore in this vote we cannot highlight the classical understanding of rational choice, guided by goal-oriented political behaviour, through which the rational citizen examines the policies and platforms of political parties to assess their value and on this basis to make informed choices.⁵⁹ In this context, there are no post-materialist values, no educated class, no civil society,⁶⁰ no NGOs for the sole reason

54 Petr Kopecký et al., "Party patronage in contemporary democracies: Results from an expert survey in 22 countries from five regions", *European Journal of Political Research* 55, 2016

55 Evgeniya Ivanova, *op. cit.*, p. 385

56 Zeynep Uslu et al. "The Factors Affecting Voter Behaviour in Local Elections Kocaeli Sample", *Turkish Studies*, 12(3), 2017

57 Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation", *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 1943

58 Zeynep Uslu et al., *op. cit.*, p. 5

59 Betty Dobratz et al. "Power, Politics, and Society: An Introduction to Political Sociology" (London: Routledge, 2016)

60 Kathleen Dowley, "Local Government Transparency in East Central Europe", *Local Government Studies*, 32(5), 2006

that the social development in the studied municipality at this stage has not reached the maturity to make them possible. In societies with huge poor masses and poorly educated voters, the easiest form of electoral mobilization is the provision of individual benefits such as public sector jobs, handouts or political services⁶¹. That is why physiological choice is in itself the rational choice for the clients. They are not interested in any promises for the distant future, in the development of any ideas or in the observance of certain political principles. They live here and now, and for them it is the choice that gives them some security, some stability, albeit to the detriment of democracy.

At the top of the network of complex dependencies is SDS mayor, a 50-year-old man with a secondary school education, an Eastern Orthodox man who owns a construction repair company. His political experience is six mandates as a municipal councillor from SDS. All appointments in the municipal administration must go through his sanction. His company is supported mainly by the implementation of small public procurements within the municipality, related to the repair of kindergartens, schools, public buildings owned by the municipality, sidewalks, parks and playgrounds. According to Art. 20, para. 4 of the Public Procurement Act, the contracting authority may award a public procurement directly for construction activities with an estimated value of up to BGN 50,000 without a tender procedure. Often, over the years, large construction repairs, exceeding the minimum, are deliberately cut into separate activities so that the SDS mayor's company can obtain them without a competitive element and without publicity. According to him, in a private conversation with the author of the article, what he has built for so many years in the municipality resembles the 'structure of the Sicilian mafia'. This is the third line of focus here, i.e. the network of complex patron-client interactions. As part of it, companies from BSP's long-time coalition partners also receive a share of public procurement.

The last fourth line that enters the 'local election machine' of SDS is the constant work with marginalized groups – Roma people, socially disadvantaged, and lonely pensioners. It is being carried out again under the leadership of the SDS municipal chairman in close liaison with key municipal officials, the mayor of the municipality, and the mayors of the settlements. These include facilitated access to social benefits, legalization of illegal property, and buildings of the Roma population, provision of transport for disabled and lonely pensioners to public institutions or hospitals, appointment of social assistants for those in need. What they receive in return is political support on Election Day.

61 Francis Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 456

Warsaw believes that in local elections, parties are of secondary importance and many of the elections are technically non-partisan⁶². The study practically confirms the validity of this statement by showing that behind the SDS party there are no principles, ideas and values characteristic of the right-wing parties, as there is no social base for their development. Accordingly, the party serves mainly as a legal tool for participation in local elections, through which to realize personal, economic and career interests - taking mayor's post, achieving appointment or keeping the job at the administration, or the use of public resources without rules and without obstacles. The conclusion is in line with Hristov's more general statement that Bulgarian political parties, without exception, are power groups that do not meet the basic requirement of being political organizations, namely to represent a separate, known legitimate group interest having its own bearers.⁶³

Conclusion

The start of Bulgarian democracy after the collapse of the USSR was implemented 'vertically',⁶⁴ i.e. democratic procedures and mechanisms have been introduced and adapted to the Bulgarian social reality. This vertical attempt at democratization and Europeanization, respectively, leads to various side effects and mistakes, and the analysis of the local government election process outlines some of them.

On the surface, the electoral process is carried out according to all democratic procedures, but underneath there are serious defects such as gaps in the Electoral Code, poorly prepared election commissions, 'election tourism', a high proportion of invalid votes, unintentional and deliberate errors in counting and reporting results. To these should be added the slender network of patron-clientelistic dependencies built around the local political leadership of the ruling party on the basis of parasitism on public financial resources, and the penetration of family and kinship relations in the depths of local politics and administration.

In a community with high levels of marginalized, poorly educated and elderly people, in which access to jobs is limited, physiological survival becomes an end in itself for many voters. It passes through the instrument of patronage that SDS party has been able to provide for two decades.

62 Christopher Warsaw, *op. cit.*

63 Ivo Hristov, "Pred pepelishteto na nestanaloto balgarsko obshtestvo" (Sofia: Zahariy Stoyanov, 2017), p. 67

64 Antoaneta Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, p. 258

In opposition to the statement that ‘the disintegration of democracies today begins with the ballot box’⁶⁵, the article shows that this process does not start with the ballot box, but long before it. Therefore, in the thirtieth year since the beginning of the transition, there is an imitation product of democracy⁶⁶, with no prospects in the foreseeable future for its full-fledged infiltration into the social fabric.

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65 Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, “*Kak umirat demokratiite*” (Sofia: Siela, 2018), p. 11

66 Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, “*The Light That Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy*” (New York: Pegasus Books, 2019)

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Youth Plan 2019

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PLAY AS AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENON

Abstract

Numerous phenomena of public and hidden play (fighting for something or presenting something) are present in all human ages, from the primordial community to the present day. Play, as dealing with imaginary illusion, is part of man's individual and collective existence. All five existential phenomena: death, love, struggle, work and play, are encompassed by play and expressed through play (E. Fink). Play permeates all significant primordial activities of common human life (speech, myth, cult, etc.). All stimulating forces of social life (from economics to art) have their roots in the act of playing. Play elevates human existence above the purely biological, vegetative one. It decorates and complements life. This points to its importance for the individual (biological function) and society (expressive power, creation of spiritual and social ties, expression of the ideal of living together) (J. Huizinga). Impulses and elements of play, which exist in and out of the world of play, determine the existence of different types of plays: competitions, games of chance, disguising and plays of ecstasy. The dominance of some of these types of play in a society reflects the society - its style and values (R. Kajo). In modern society, elements of play are increasingly disappearing, and play is increasingly manifesting pathological conditions and tendencies of individuals and groups.

Keywords: *play; existence; man; society*

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Introduction

The significance of the play for man, social groups and community has always been present. As Eugen Fink² observes, play is “not a marginal phenomenon in the landscape of human life nor just an advantage of childhood“, it is “a fundamental phenomenon of our existence“. Among all beings, man is the only one playing. From primitive peoples to later peoples of industrial urbanization, there are, in various areas of life, numerous phenomena of public and hidden play. Play involves people of all ages (from a child in a sandbox to an old man playing “solitaire“)³. One can play above the level of childish pleasure and rest below the level of serious life: “it is play of beauty and holiness“⁴. Regardless of the time in which we observe play, its essence is clear: “constant change, change of the established, completed, worn out. It releases from restraint and frustration, encourages, develops imagination, individuality, enthusiasm, uniqueness, self-confidence, and is directed against boredom and laziness. Play is not a substitute for reality nor an escape from it (‘asylum’, temporary refuge, hiding), it is an integral part of reality, its ‘brighter’ side, ‘correction’“⁵. The functions of play are “fighting for something or presenting something“⁶.

Play is a basic existential phenomenon (with death, love, struggle and work). It is by no means foreign to understanding, but this phenomenon is indeed largely a rejection of the notion. “The meaning of play is not something other than play - play is not a means, a tool, it is not an opportunity to express a meaning. Playing is meaningful in itself and through itself. Those who play move in the meaningful atmosphere of their play”⁷. Work and rule testify to the self-care of human existence for the future. Play contradicts them. The magic of play (happiness and seductive charm) consists of its deep carelessness, pointlessness and uselessness, blissful floating and distance from every life trouble⁸. The phenomenon that turns a savage into a man, as Friedrich Schiller⁹ observes, is “the

2 E. Финк, *Основни феномени људској постојања* (Бања Лука: Филозофски факултет и Библиотека „Преводи“, 2004)

3 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 343

4 J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens: o podrijetlu kulture u igri* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1992), 24

5 I. Šjaković & D. Vilić, *Sociologija savremenog društva* (Banja Luka: Ekonomski fakultet, 2010), 241

6 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 18

7 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 362

8 *Ibidem*, 347

9 F. Šiler, *O lepom* (Beograd: Book & Marso, 2007)

enjoyment of *illusion*, the propensity to *adorn* and *play*¹⁰.

Roger Caillois talks about the cultural effectiveness of play and lists four categories of play that exist depending on what prevails in them: *Agon* (competition), *Alea* (chance), *Mimicry* (simulation) and *Ilinix* (vertigo)¹¹. The essence, character and orientation of the collective spirit and life is evidenced by the dominance of one of the mentioned groups of plays, ie “their choice reveals, in turn, the face, style and value of a particular society¹². In modern society, elements of play in culture and society are increasingly disappearing, and play is increasingly manifesting pathological conditions and tendencies of individuals and groups.

The concept and characteristics of play

Play is a special, meaningful form and quality of action, which has a social function. Play is interwoven with almost all significant primordial activities of common human life - speech (metaphor - play on words), myth (earthly is based on the divine), cult (sacred rites, consecrations, sacrifices and mysteries were performed in pure play) and the like. On the other hand, all significant stimulating forces of cultural life spring from cults and myths: from law and economics to art and science. Their root is in the act of playing¹³. Play manifests the human - play is for man the treatment of imagination with possibilities, the relationship to the imaginary illusion. This is not found in animals¹⁴. As Friedrich Schiller observes, like any bodily tool, “the imagination in man has its free movement and its material play in which it, without any connection with the character, enjoys only its arbitrariness and complete freedom¹⁵. Our existence in play is “to some extent actively reflected in ourselves, we imagine what we are and how we are¹⁶. Play is a mirror of itself and all basic intertwined phenomena of existence (death, love, struggle and work), it encompasses them all, as well as itself¹⁷. According to Johan Huizinga¹⁸, play is defined as “voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed

10 *Ibidem*, 190

11 R. Kajoa, *Igre i ljudi: maska i zanos* (Beograd: Nolit, 1979), 65

12 *Ibidem*, 94

13 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 12

14 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 34

15 Šiler, *op. cit.*, 198

16 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 378

17 *Ibidem*, 380

18 Huizinga, *op. cit.*

limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life'. (...) It seems that the category of play can be considered the most basic spiritual element of life"¹⁹. From this definition, some recognizable features of play stand out: freedom, an exit from real, ordinary life "into a temporary sphere of activity with some aim of its own aspiration", completeness and limitation to certain boundaries of time and space, repeatability, special and unconditional order within the playground and tension (uncertainty, chance, but also the desire to relax)²⁰. The space of the world of play cannot be placed and dated in a coordinate value system even though play uses real place and real time. "And this strange world that opens up in play, is not only at a distance from ordinary reality, it has the opportunity to repeat in itself its distance and contrast to reality"²¹.

Roger Caillois²² emphasizes the importance of J. Huizinga's endeavor in re-searching play - in finding it where others before him had failed, by exploring its fertility in the field of culture. But he thinks his (Huizinga's) definition is too broad and concise. Although there is a secret in any activity of play, play takes place at its expense – when a secret has a ritual function it is not play, but an institution. Although they occupy a significant place in the economy and everyday life of various peoples, bets and games of chance exclude J. Huizinga's definition of play as an action free of any material interest. However, play entails a certain economic interest. In some manifestations of games of chance, play brings profit or is extremely destructive, but that does not mean that even then play remains strictly unproductive. Play differs from work or art in that it creates neither wealth nor a work, it is an opportunity for pure spending (time, energy, ingenuity, skills and money to buy props or rent a bar)²³. Thus, play is a free, voluntary and independent activity (we play if and when we want), to which the player surrenders for his own pleasure. A special occupation that takes place within precisely defined temporal and spatial boundaries with precise, imaginary and irrevocable rules (there are plays without rules, in which fiction replaces rule), with an uncertain outcome to the end. Plays are either regulated or fictional, they are not both²⁴. R. Caillois adds two new areas to the world of various plays: the field of games of chance and betting and the field of

19 *Ibidem*, 31

20 *Ibidem*, 15 – 17

21 Е. Финк, *op. cit.*, 357

22 Кајоа, *op. cit.*

23 *Ibidem*, 31 – 33

24 *Ibidem*, 34 – 36

mimicry and interpretation.

Although play itself is not an illusion, as E. Fink observes, “it uses to some extent the illusionistic effects that are otherwise operated by deliberate deception - it accepts the element of deception, but not to betray it as a valid reality, but to have such illusionary as medium of expression. The mask in play should not seduce, it should tame, it is a prop of the practice of magic. Play moves in a guaranteed ‘illusion’, it does not deny it and does not betray it in any way as ordinary-real. Every play works with imagined illusory”²⁵.

Play as an existential phenomenon and the content of existence

Human play is one of the five basic phenomena that encompasses itself and the other four (death, love, struggle, work), “presents them in a strange element of the imaginary and thus achieves for human existence a pure self-presentation and self-perception in a strange play of pure illusion”²⁶. All the great contents of our existence appear in play²⁷.

Play decorates and complements life, which clearly indicates its necessity for both the individual (biological function) and society (expressive power, creates spiritual and social ties, satisfies the ideals of living together)²⁸. As E. Fink observes, play prevents the sinking of human existence into the vegetative. “Many meaningful motives have certainly flowed from the practice of play into the living fields of work and rule - play has become a reality, it is said. The discoveries made in play sometimes take on a real meaning at once. Human society experiments many times in the field of play before the possibilities tested there become firm customs and habits, binding rules and regulations”²⁹. Through play, community life is “adorned with super-biological forms which give it greater value. By playing in this way, the community expresses its understanding of life and the world”³⁰.

Throughout history, there have been two absolute contradictory theses about play. “In the first case, plays are systematically presented only as a degradation of those activities of adults which, having lost their seriousness, fall to the level of harmless entertainment. In the second, the spirit of play is in the origin of fruitful conventions that enable the development of culture. It

25 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 377

26 *Ibidem*, 373

27 *Ibidem*, 372

28 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 15 – 16

29 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 344

30 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 47

encourages the development of ingenuity, sophistication and an ingenious spirit. At the same time, it learns loyalty to the opponent and gives an example of competition where rivalry does not survive the match. Through play, man creates for himself the possibility of breaking the monotony, overcoming the limitations, blindness and brutality of nature³¹. R. Caillois believes that this contradiction is difficult to resolve - the nature of play has not changed, but its social function has. "The transfer and the degradation they have suffered have taken away their political or religious significance. But that decline only revealed, distinguishing it, what play retained in itself, which is nothing but its structure"³². Authors who saw in play as insignificant and sympathetic degradation of meaningful activities, according to R. Caillois, did not notice that play and everyday life are constantly and everywhere antagonistic and simultaneous domains - which means that play is essential to culture³³.

We can see that from children's play through large cult-related play of primitive peoples to more advanced cultures, the laws and customs of everyday life have no value in the field of play - in play we are "others" and we "do" it "differently"³⁴. Significant formal features of play are its spatial isolation from everyday life within which its rules apply³⁵, and "awareness that something is 'done just like that'"³⁶. The player acts in a way that he produces an "illusion", an unreality, which has a fascinating, taming and enchanting power that is not opposed to the player but actually draws him in. The term 'player' is as ambiguous as the term 'plaything'. Just as it is a real thing in the real world and at the same time a thing in the imaginary world of illusions with valid circumstances only there, so the player is also a man who plays, and at the same time a man of 'role in play'. Those who play fall, so to speak, into their character roles, 'disappear' in them and hide their playing behavior with their playful behavior"³⁷. We produce the world of play in play. "In real actions, which, however, are achieved through magical production and meaningful power of imagination, we build in the community of play with others (or also sometimes in a completely imaginary coexistence with partners we imagined) the world of play limited by the rules of play and sense of representation - we do not remain opposite to it as an observer against the image, but we enter the world of play

31 Кајоа, *op. cit.*, 85

32 *Ibidem*, 86

33 *Ibidem*, 90 – 91

34 Хуизинга, *op. cit.*, 18

35 *Ibidem*, 24

36 *Ibidem*, 26 – 27

37 Е. Финк, *op. cit.*, 352

and have one role in it”³⁸.

Play was essential for the development and transmission of ancient Greek culture. There are two patterns of Greek culture expressed through the understanding of play: the Spartan and the Athenian pattern of play. The first pattern developed endurance, courage, self-confidence, obedience and loyalty through play, already in children from the age of seven, to become great fighters and warriors in later life. The second pattern expresses the effort to develop man in a balance of spiritual and physical abilities. “*The Olympic Games* were organized with the aim of publicly presenting the results achieved in the development of various skills, especially martial arts. Even wars were interrupted to hold the Olympics. True, fighting matches in ancient arenas sometimes ended with the strangulation of one of the participants, which shows that play was already understood as an expression of superiority and the desire for complete victory, and even through the process of eliminating opponents”³⁹. Compared to Hellenic, it seems that the ancient Roman society shows significantly fewer playful features, which have a predominantly sacral character of that society, although this is not expressed in luxury and colors⁴⁰. In the exclamation *bread and circuses!* (*panem et circenses!*), the element of play of the Roman state was clearly manifested. Plays were the foundation of the survival of Roman society, to which the people had a sacred right. Their original function was a solemn celebration for the chosen happiness of the society, but also the strengthening and consolidation of future happiness, through the sacred act⁴¹. In every city, the amphitheater occupied a very important place. In the last phase of the greatness of ancient Rome, the playful factor of Roman culture (inflated panegyric and empty rhetoric, superficial decoration in the fine arts) comes to the fore in literary and artistic works, without giving the impression of great seriousness. Life became a cultural game, in which holiness disappeared from the cult. Roman culture withered when Christianity tore it from its sacred base. The life of the Middle Ages was filled with play, but most of plays do not have a real cultural role (unbridled folk dance, knight tournaments, refined court game, etc.). Playing in medieval culture was associated with beginnings of chivalry and the beginning of feudal forms in general⁴². In the Renaissance, a self-conscious and isolated elite tried to understand life as part of perfect artistic play - a life modeled on antiquity, strong, deep and pure devotion to the ideal of

38 E. Финк, *op. cit.*, 356

39 Šijaković & D. Vilić, *op. cit.*, 240

40 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 159

41 *Ibidem*, 161

42 *Ibidem*, 162 – 163

plastic creation and intellectual research. Play was a complete spiritual attitude of the Renaissance - the culture in play is a subtle, fresh and strong pursuit of noble and beautiful form. The Renaissance awakens literary and solemn life. All this also applies to humanism, closed within the circle of consecrated and knowledgeable people, nurturing a precisely formulated life and educational ideal⁴³. In the examination of the content of play of the seventeenth century, the general stylistic feature of the baroque is emphasized, which is expressed in construction and sculpture, painting, poetry, and even philosophy, politics and theology. The need for exaggeration is inherent in the Baroque (for example, the fashion of luxurious men's suits, wigs), and we can understand it by considering more complete content of play of the creative impulse, which proves the importance of culture as the factor of play speaking particularly clear language⁴⁴. We also find an element of play in the next period of Rococo, in which style and fashion, play and art came very close to each other. In the play of motifs of elegant tendrils and twigs of a Rococo ornament, which, like musical decoration, obscured a straight line, the spirit of the eighteenth century sought a return to nature in a stylized form⁴⁵. The style and mood of European culture in the second half of the eighteenth century were born in play - neoclassicism (enclosing emotional and aesthetic life in the ideal sphere of the past without sharp outlines of mysterious and frightening characters and inspiration from the spiritual world of romance)⁴⁶. Already in the eighteenth century, the notion of utility and the civic ideal of well-being rose above the spirit of society, which was successfully strengthened by the achievements of the industrial revolution towards the end of the century. The spread of education and scientific reasoning became dominant. The natural fruit of rationalism and utilitarianism was, in a sense, an overestimation of economic factors, which killed the mystery and freed man from guilt and sin. In the nineteenth century, all mental efforts were directed against play in social life (the seriousness of culture). Realism, naturalism, and impressionism seemed to prevail in art and literature⁴⁷. Elements of play in modern society will be discussed in the following chapter. The term play is often expressed as the opposite of the word reality.⁴⁸ Reality

43 *Ibidem*, 164

44 *Ibidem*, 164

45 *Ibidem*, 168 – 169

46 *Ibidem*, 171

47 *Ibidem*, 173 – 174

48 Ancient Greeks used the term "what belongs to a child" for the field of play, but it is not something childish. Also, etymologically close to play are the notions of fighting and competition (agon - shows all formal features of play, and falls mainly within the framework

(we find the term in the area of the terms “zeal“, “effort“, “torment“) as the opposite of play is especially expressed in the Greek language and Germanic languages. In special cases, the notion of work is opposed to play, while reality can be opposed to jokes⁴⁹. “Regardless of the linguistic issues, if we take a closer look at the conceptual play-reality pair, we will find that both of these terms are not equal: play is positive, reality is negative. The content of the notion of reality is determined and exhausted by the negation of play: reality is non-play, and nothing else. On the contrary, the content of the term play is not determined and is not exhausted in any way by non-reality: play is something self-sufficient. The notion of play is of a higher order than the notion of reality. Because reality is trying to exclude play, while play can include the reality quite well“⁵⁰. The elementary realizations of human existence include play, which “distracts us from the ordinary and everyday ‘reality of life’, as it is revealed to us primarily in pregnancy and the hardships of work and struggle for power, we are sometimes taken to a deeper reality, an abysmal-cheerful, tragic-comic reality, where we see existence as in a mirror. Although human play always remains in a double self-understanding, in which “reality“ and “play“ seem opposites, and yet as such are abolished again, the man who plays is interested in mental self-understanding, in conceptual analysis of his winged, joyfully

of the ceremony). Huizinga, *op. cit.* 32 – 33 In Sanskrit, there is not a single word among the words for play that would express competition as such. Also, not even in ancient India. *Ibidem*, 34 In China, the semantic origin of the term play is in “accepting something with the attention of the player“ (engaging in something, finding pleasure in something, going crazy, joking, touching, looking, smelling, enjoying the moonlight, etc.), but it does not mean games of skills, competition, dice or the play. *Ibidem*, 34 – 35 Indians distinguish between children’s games in general (non-serious and organized) from play of semi-adults and adults that have erotic meaning (especially, illicit relationships). In Japan, there is a word for the function of play in general, which means playing in general, relaxation, fun, entertainment, outing, entertainment, debauchery, gambling, leisure, unemployment, playing something, representing something, imitating, and it is joined by its opposite term which means reality. *Ibidem*, 36 In Semitic languages, the word play contains both the meaning of play in the true sense and the meaning of “laugh“, “mock“. In Arabic, the term play means play in general, but it also includes teasing and nagging. In Greek, the function of play is expressed in a diverse and heterogeneous way, in Latin, one word ludus-ludere is a general term for play and playing, and it expresses the whole area of play – “children’s play, entertainment, competition, liturgical and stage performances, and gambling“. *Ibidem*, 37 - 38 The Germanic language group does not have a general word for play and playing, each of its branches uses a different word for play and playing (*Ibidem*, 39), but this term is used for the most serious weapon fighting and erotic play. *Ibidem*, 42 – 44

49 *Ibidem*, 45

50 *Ibidem*, 46

intoned realization.⁵¹

The connection between culture and play should be sought in higher forms of social play (the coordinated action of a group or a society or two opposing groups). Play of the individual, for himself, will be somewhat fruitful for the culture. And in the animal world, there are basic factors of play: playing together, fighting, presenting and showing, challenging, showing off, illusion and rules that limit it (black grouse dancing, decorating the nest, etc.). Cultures are preceded by competition and representation, they do not derive from it⁵². The elevation of play to culture is encouraged by its suitability to increase the intensity of life of an individual or group. The two forms we find everywhere in which culture appears *as* play and *in* play are sacred display and solemn competition⁵³. Closely related to play is the notion of victory (it only appears in play against someone else) - to prove one's superiority by the outcome of play, which can take on the appearance of superiority in general, from winning in play itself the gain becomes greater. Success achieved in play permanently brings reputation, honor, respect - they regularly belong to the whole group (which celebrates by shouting and glorifying). This is one important feature of play. In the importance of gaining victory (agonal instinct) we encounter the tendency to overtake the other, to be the first, and to be appreciated for it. Here we do not meet the thirst for power nor the will to power⁵⁴. Victory is something more than honor - there is a stake in play (a value of a symbolic or material nature or purely ideal)⁵⁵. The element of play has the most decisive place among the functions of culture. A system of completely identical notions and customs of an agonal nature, created independently of religious notions, dominated the life of early communities all over the world. This can be explained by human nature itself, its innate desire for higher (earthly honor and supremacy, victory over earthly) achieved through play⁵⁶, which proves the deep roots of agonal behavior in the very foundations of human mental and social life. As far as society allows, the urge to prove superiority is expressed in so many forms (in courage, endurance, strength, etc.). In any form, competition is essentially play, and its starting point is in that capacity⁵⁷. An active and extremely fruitful factor of play existed in the creation of all great forms of social life. As an

51 Е. Финк, *op. cit.*, 359

52 Huizinga, *op. cit.* 47 – 48

53 *Ibidem*, 48 – 49

54 *Ibidem*, 50 – 51

55 *Ibidem*, 51

56 *Ibidem*, 72

57 *Ibidem*, 98

impuls of society, there has always been play competition which filled life and encouraged the growth of various forms of archaic culture (developing a cult in the sacred play, giving birth to poetry in play, music and dance were play, wisdom and knowledge gained expression in dedicated competitions, the law originated from the customs of the social play, the regulation of conflicts with weapons was built on the forms of play, etc.)⁵⁸.

Roger Caillois presents the division of play according to what prevails in it - competition, chance, pretense or ecstasy: *Agon* (competition), *Alea* (*chance*), *Mimicry* (*simulation*) and *Ilinix* (vertigo, using play to cause confusion and anxiety in one's own body)⁵⁹. The dominance of one of the mentioned groups of play speaks about the essence, character and direction of the collective spirit and life. At the same time, they all can be divided between two sexes: *paidia* (uncontrolled fantasy, the original power of improvisation and merriment) and *ludus* (in which the spontaneous exuberance of *paidia* recedes, combines with the desire for optional difficulty, the desire to discipline archaic and capricious nature, requires more effort, patience, ingenuity and skill)⁶⁰. *Paidia* implies the original freedom, the need to relax, the desire for entertainment and giving free rein to the imagination. In order to come up with various civilizational plays, *paidia* teamed up with *ludus* (desire for optional difficulty). They present the moral and intellectual values of a culture, *paidia* and *ludus* contribute to a more accurate definition and development of culture⁶¹. "Paidia participates in every outburst of joy expressed by direct and unbridled movement, freely improvised entertainment whose unforeseen and free character remains the main, if not the only, cause of existence"⁶². The connection between *paidia* and different plays is obvious except for plays of passive anticipation of the decision of fate, while the possibilities of *ludus* are unlimited in terms of its connection with all plays.⁶³ "In general, *ludus* places arbitrary obstacles that are constantly renewed before the original desire for entertainment and amusement; it invents thousands of opportunities and thousands of schedules where, at the same time, the satisfaction of both desire to relax and the need that seems impossible to get rid of is found, to use unnecessarily their knowledge, value, skill and intelligence, without considering the power of self-control, ability to endure pain, fatigue, panic and fear. In this capacity, what I call *ludus* is the

58 *Ibidem*, 158

59 Kajoa, *op. cit.*, 65

60 *Ibidem*, 40 – 41

61 *Ibidem*, 55 – 56

62 *Ibidem*, 56

63 *Ibidem*, 58 – 59

element in play whose reach and cultural fertility are most noticeable”⁶⁴. In the basic categories of plays (*agon*, *alea*, *mimicry* and *ilinx*), *ludus* imperceptibly brings purity and content by disciplining *paidiae*⁶⁵. All these categories of play do not imply loneliness, but society, they all show socialized aspects, and with their breadth and stability they found their place in the community⁶⁶.

Agon is a group of plays that appears as a competition, as a fight, rivalry, which refers to one trait (speed, endurance, strength, skill, etc.), imposes discipline and perseverance, implies intense attention, constant effort, desire to win and specially adapted training, an effort to equalize the odds of the opponent at the beginning, and the triumph of the winner has a precise and irrevocable value (serves to emphasize the pure form of individual value) from which the motivation to play arises (athletics, boxing, billiards, fencing, football, chess, sports competitions in general)⁶⁷. *Alea* (Latin game with dice) implies all plays in the stark contrast to the *agon*, signifies and reveals the affection of fate, which puts the player in a passive position (has no influence on decisions), who risks his bet, the outcome of which is extremely uncertain (approaching mere chance). It is play with destiny - it is the only factor of victory (children's counting, betting, roulette, lotteries, ordinary, complex or with the transfer of dice, etc.), it denies work, patience, agility, qualification, it is “arrogant and overwhelming mockery of ability”⁶⁸. Both of these types of plays - *agon* and *alea*, are an attempt to replace the usual confusion of everyday life with ideal situations (the role of merit or chance in them seems absolute and indisputable, they impose the need for equal prospects for success or happiness, in which man withdraws from the world by making it different)⁶⁹. By turning oneself into something else one can escape from reality. This is matched by *mimicry* - play in which we “become a fictional person and behave accordingly”, where the subject, in order to believe in himself or for others to believe that it is not him but something else, forgets, disguises himself, temporarily rejects his personality in order to imitate someone else (children's imitations, delusion, puppet, miniature tools and weapons, mask, masquerade, theater, performing arts in general)⁷⁰. Additional areas of this type of play are imitation and disguise. They show all the features of plays - freedom, agreement, exclusion of reality, limited time

64 *Ibidem*, 61 – 62

65 *Ibidem*, 62

66 *Ibidem*, 69 – 70

67 *Ibidem*, 42 – 43

68 *Ibidem*, 45 – 46

69 *Ibidem*, 47

70 *Ibidem*, 47 – 48

and place, except for submission to inviolable and precise rules. It is a constant fabrication, concealment of reality and the illusion of another reality. One rule is that the player enchants the viewer, taking care that he does not reject the illusion due to some mistake⁷¹. *Ilinix* involves plays of ecstasy that are based on causing dizziness (looking for specific confusion, a moment of panic, getting into a kind of spasm, ecstasy, dizziness) and they consist of an attempt to shake the stability of perception for a moment and impose some kind of lustful confusion on clear mind, that erase reality, but with the undoubted features of play involved in it (body movements of dervish-turners and Mexican rulers, children's "dizziness", carousel, swing, waltz, fairground attractions, mountaineering, walking on a rope)⁷². Various activities can create pleasure and intoxication in a person (fast car driving, playing on children's swings, etc.), but the strength and brutality of this feeling were given by strongly constructed machines in the era of industry (devices found in fairgrounds and amusement parks)⁷³.

Elements of play are involved in many forms of non-playing life (for example, war adventures and knightly rules of play, jokes of the powerful on the political stage)⁷⁴. Outside the closed world of play, the principles that govern the various types of games (chance or skill, luck or demonstrated superiority) are manifested. "But it should be well borne in mind that they rule plays sovereignly, without resistance and, so to speak, as a fictional world without aspiration and matter, while in the confusing world of inextricable, real human relations, their actions are never isolated or sovereign, nor limited in advance, it entails inevitable consequences"⁷⁵.

Instead of conclusion - the degradation of play and the loss of features of play in modern society

Any mixing of play with everyday life leads to the dangers of distorting and ruining play. The phenomenon of "infecting" play with reality is a specific perversion of the principle of play. This perversion results from the absence of protection and control (pleasure becomes a fixed idea; escape becomes an obligation; leisure becomes passion, obsession and a source of suffering)⁷⁶. The

71 *Ibidem*, 49 – 51

72 *Ibidem*, 51 – 53

73 *Ibidem*, 54 – 55

74 Е. Финк, *op. cit.*, 375

75 Кајоа, *op. cit.*, 92.

76 *Ibidem*, 72 – 73

perversion of *agon* begins where the recognition of the judge and the judgment ceases - cruelty, desire for power, cunning; the perversion of *alea* is born with superstition, astrology, etc. ; the perversion of *mimicry* occurs at a time when disguise is no longer taken as such - alienation, doubling of personality; and *ilinx* is perverted in alcoholism and drugs⁷⁷. The cause of deviation in *agon*, *alea* or *mimicry* always mixes with ordinary life, when the driving instinct of play extends beyond the strict boundaries of time and place, without pre-established and irrevocable conventions⁷⁸. Plays of instinct (competition, pursuit of happiness, disguise, dizziness) need to be disciplined and institutionalized, otherwise they would have fatal consequences⁷⁹.

In modern society, pathological conditions and tendencies of individuals and groups are increasingly manifested in play. The number and content of games of chance are increasing every day. Media have contributed largely to their popularity and availability. They have turned from activities aimed at fun, pleasant relaxation, into a struggle for money and wealth, accompanied by increased emotional states of their admirers (frustrations, desires and hopes). These games are becoming a kind of "social disease". Sports games also show a high degree of negative social phenomena (their original meaning of developing a free and reliable personality is increasingly turning into a race for reckless success, violence in sports, hooliganism)⁸⁰. The nineteenth century was marked by the renunciation of many features of play of earlier centuries. This loss of forms of play in social life seems to have been offset by sport - a significant compensatory phenomenon, expanding its meaning in social life. However, by systematizing and disciplining play (elaboration of strict rules, searching for greater achievements, division of players into professionals and amateurs), the content of play is gradually lost in sports⁸¹. "In today's social life, sport is outside the real process of culture, and the process of culture is outside sport. In ancient cultures, competitions formed part of dedicated festivals. As sacred and beneficial activities, they were absolutely necessary. This connection with the cult has completely disappeared in modern sports. Sport has lost all sanctity, it no longer has an organic connection with the structure of society, even when it is prescribed by the regime itself. It is far more an independent expression of agonal instincts than a factor of a fruitful social meaning"⁸². Sport remains a barren function in which

77 *Ibidem*, 74, 83

78 *Ibidem*, 77

79 *Ibidem*, 82

80 Šijaković & Vilić, *op. cit.*, 241

81 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 177

82 *Ibidem*, 178

the old factor of play has died out, it has lost the best of its content, the mood has disappeared from play that has become too serious⁸³ The saying *bread and circuses!*, “has become over time synonymous with tired, worn out and sick societies, or societies overwhelmed by populism, a state of uncreative consciousness and without a clear perspective”⁸⁴.

In the modern sense, the temptation of play can be traced through its *relationship with work* - the opportunity to free work from all routine, stereotypical and tedious elements, to make it free, autonomous, unfettered and humane is provided by modern science, technique and technology, on the other hand, play becomes increasingly work, profession (brings success, earnings, profit)⁸⁵. There are more and more phenomena that oppose play’s tendency to become serious. “Activities whose reason is material gain, necessity or need, ie those that are not initially manifested in forms of play, subsequently develop significance that can be only called playful. The validity of this action is limited to one closed area, and the rules that govern it cease to serve the general purpose. In the first case it is a sport, so play is denied to seriousness but is still considered play; in the second, it is a serious business that turns into play but is still valid as something serious. Both phenomena include a strong sense for agon, which has prevailed over the world, but in forms that are different from the former”⁸⁶. Public competitions are encouraged everywhere by technique, publicity and propaganda - trade competition occurs with the market, the pursuit of records in the economy caused by comparative trade and production statistics, artistic production and performance are familiar with the element of play⁸⁷. In archaic periods, war was understood as a noble game because of respecting the rules of war. The characteristics of play were present in English parliamentary life, in American political customs and in French politics. However, today it is different - if we find traces of plays in the domestic politics of modern states, there is little reason for that in international relations. But there is no reason to exclude the notion of play from international relations, even though they have caused such great and extreme violence and danger⁸⁸.

83 *Ibidem*, 178

84 Šijaković & Vilić, *op. cit.*, 240

85 *Ibidem*, 242

86 Huizinga, *op. cit.*, 179 – 180

87 *Ibidem*, 180 – 181

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