

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITIES AND DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION



Belgrade, Niš 2024.

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Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITIES AND
DEMOCRATIC INTEGRATION**

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EDITORIAL PREFACE

This collection of papers contains the contributions presented at the international Conference on *Regional Development, Identities and Democratic Integration* which was held on October 6 and 7, 2023 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, organized by the Serbian Sociological Society and the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. In addition, several texts are included that were not presented at the conference but contribute to the thematic diversity and quality of the analysis of this important social topic.

The last few decades are characterized by the growing importance of various regional integrations. The region as a “complex spatial unit” (Ocić, 2002, P. 10) occurs at different territorial levels – supranational and international, encompassing economic, political, cultural, security and environmental aspects. At the supranational level, the region includes states, economic entities and civil society, and appears as an actor in relation to other regions in the international system, as well as in relation to the smaller units of which it is composed... The works of Vera Vratuša and Ljubiša Mitrović in this collection consider the problems of the region in the context of the global system, whereas Bujwid-Kurek and Susolia deal with cooperation and conflict at the supranational regional level. Bilyana Ivanova connects the global environmental problem with the implementation of environmental protection policy at the national and regional while Dragica Plečaš reminds us of the work of a Serbian lawyer and sociologist from the interwar period, Đorđe Tasić, for whom the “region takes shape in the space between the local and international community”.

At the subnational level, the region appears as a social-spatial entity between the local community and the state as an important factor in social development, but also as a level where social inequalities are clearly expressed. Uneven regional development is a complex problem conditioned by historical heritage, demographic, economic, social, political and cultural factors. Large regional differences have consequences for the entire society which fails to use all its resources efficiently. Inequalities undermine social cohesion and the principles of social justice. Vladimir Cvetković applies the combined resilience and fragility framework to explore regional disparities in Serbia, and Irena Petrović researches regional inequalities in the labor market of Serbia. Jasmina Petrović analyzes the educational structure of Serbia emphasizing the importance of studying “interregional, subregional, and intra-subregional differences in educational achievement”.

Although they represent territorial, economic and cultural units, regions are not homogeneous within themselves; they include, among other things, the regional

center and developed areas, as well as smaller settlements and underdeveloped areas, rural and urban areas. The research of intra-regional specificities and inequalities is important because regional centers and larger cities somewhat “improve” the values of statistical data for the entire region, where the extent of backwardness, underdevelopment and poverty of smaller municipalities, rural areas, and border regions remains “hidden”. These areas remain unrecognized within economic, social, cultural and other public policy measures, far from the attention of the public, exposed to the migration of young and educated people, with a feeling of hopelessness that discourages individual and collective initiatives to change the situation. Regional inequalities interfere with inequalities between rural and urban areas. Željka Manić compares the economic position of the rural and urban population in Serbia, Krstić and Miltojević examine the connection between the level of regional development and the position of female farmers, while Irina Trocuk on the example of Russia analyzes the criteria for the differentiation of the agricultural structure. Rural self-organization is the subject of two papers in this collection: Vinogradsky and Vinogradskaya analyze it starting from Shanin’s concept of expolar economy, and Gusakov describes a successful “atypical example” of village self-organization. Global development trends and problems do not bypass the village. Agriculture is both a victim and a cause of climate change, so Bilandžija and Bokan examine various social innovations and practices that turn agriculture towards local communities. Internet access and digital skills of the rural population of Serbia as a prerequisite for rural development based on advanced technologies are analyzed by Gordana Stojić.

Regional development implies the activity of various actors, and therefore it is connected with the identity and democratic participation of citizens. Regional identity consists of two components: regional identity (consciousness) of the inhabitants and the identity (image) of a region (as seen by the residents of the region and as seen by those outside the region) (Paasi, 1986). Both can be a stimulus or limitation for regional development. A positive image of the region and/or a strong regional identification of the inhabitants can be a factor that contributes to the political participation of citizens (at the local, regional and national level) and their action in the field of economy, culture and civic activism with the aim of developing the local and regional environment, or it can encourage them to migrate from their region. Ljubičić and Dragišić Labas in their work inform us about how those who “belong neither there nor here” (in this case, descendants of exiles) self-negotiate personal, family and collective identity and belonging. Vera Bačković analyzes how the city (Belgrade) ensures its recognition and distinction in relation to others through urban symbols. On the other hand, the historical dimension of identity is the subject of works by Đokica Jovanović, and Kristina Pejčević & Marina Nedeljković.

In the works presented in this collection, authors from different theoretical and methodological positions point to the specificities of regional research and regional development. Application of different levels of analysis, quantitative and qualitative methods, use of primary and secondary data, the analysis of phenomena in a historical and comparative perspective not only enriches our knowledge but also provides a foundation for thinking about solutions to various problems. Analyses

that link global, national, regional and local indicate that the policy of regional development cannot be aimed only at the redistribution of funds and mitigation of the consequences of underdevelopment, but must be an integral part of the overall social development of countries and the world. In several papers it is indicated that it must be regional not only declaratively but in its essence: to treat the region as a whole, to take into account the idiosyncrasies and potentials of the region, to be adapted to the regional features of the economy and population, to include all aspects of development and, in particular, for the region and its citizens to be actors of development. That is why participatory democracy and sustainable development are pointed out (Mitrović), “democratic integration through social, economic and political self-government at the local, national, regional and world level” (Žunjić) and the importance of the subjective factor – interest, motivation, attitudes and behavior of the inhabitants of the region (Ivanova). Among other things, it should be emphasized that this publication did not avoid discussions of some controversial and sensitive issues which require greater historical distance in order to become the subject of scientific debate. Although the editors, as well as the reviewers, were aware of the risk of their publishing, we have allowed the different viewpoints presented at the scientific conference to find themselves among the covers of this publication.

The editors of the collection would like to thank everyone who contributed to the quality of the published works. We thank the reviewers and authors of the papers for their efforts and understanding. We thank the conference participants whose papers were not published here, but who contributed to the discussions on important issues of regional development at the conference. We would like to thank colleagues whose suggestions contributed to the improvement of the quality of the works: Rade Šarenac, Mina Petrović, Srđan Šljukić, Marica Šljukić, Valentina Sokolovska, Olivera Marković Savić, Miša Stojadinović, Snežana Popić, Vladimir Boranijašević, Ivana Božić Miljković, Vesna Miltojević, Ivana Krstić Ilić, Nikola Živiću, Gorana Đorić, Danijela Gavrilović, Jelena Petković, Lela Milošević Radulović, Uroš Šuvaković, Snežana Stojšin, Vesna Trifunović, Branislav Stevanović and Jelena Božilović.

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PART ONE

REGIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IDENTITIES AND SELF-GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION IN VIEW OF THE CRISIS OF THE WORLD CAPITALIST ECONOMY SYSTEM

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Abstract

The author of this paper explores the social sources of unequal regional development or structural changes in society, economy, politics, and other spheres of social activity, in the local and transnational antagonistic class division of labour to creative planning and order issuing work functions, on the one side, and the manual or routine work functions of the potentially universal human activity, on the other. Antagonistic class division of labour is accentuated in societies where different population groups identify with particular ethnic, religious, cultural, political, racial, class and other characteristics and values, live concentrated in industrially underdeveloped regions, massively unemployed and having low personal incomes. The prospect of overcoming ensuing social disintegration within industrially underdeveloped regions, especially in circumstances of actual prolonged world crisis of capital accumulation, the author finds in democratic integration through social, economic and political Self-government at local, national, regional and global levels.

Keywords: regional development; identity; crisis of capital accumulation; integration; self-government

Introduction

The assumption of communicability and dialogue about the basic theses that I offer for discussion to my esteemed colleagues, on the topic of regional development, identities and Self-governing integration in the perspective of the crisis of the world system of capitalist economy, is an explicit formulation of the meaning in which I use the key terms from the title of this work, so as not to waste time on

terminological misunderstandings. During the process of this conceptual clarification, I will simultaneously try to point out the mutual connection of the mentioned title key terms, that is, of their social content, which simultaneously represents the main hypothesis of this work.

The World System of Capitalist Economy

The author in this paper applies the theoretical and methodological development research paradigm which was formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein, the first among several similarly thinking theoreticians. Wallerstein innovatively transferred the main focus of historical, economic, political, social and cultural development research from the nation state to the world as a whole. In the post World War II circumstances of the economic and political hegemony of the USA ruling class, owners of the majority share packages of transnational industrial, financial and military companies, on the theoretical, methodological and ideological plane co-existed with the hegemony of social development research paradigm formulated predominantly by Anglo-Saxon theoreticians in the capitalist “Western” world. This paradigm is known as the modernisation theory. Characteristic of modernisation interpretation of social and economic development is functionalist unilinear evolutionist gradualism which supposes the existence of successive development stages which seamlessly and inexorably follow one from another in all nation-states in the world, which find themselves in different development stages at one particular historical moment. One of the most famous such development interpretations was formulated by Walt Rostow. In his famous 1960 book, he enumerated the following “Stages of Economic Growth”: 1) traditional society, 2) preconditions to take-off, 3) take-off, 4) drive to maturity, and 5) age of high mass consumption. According to Rostow, in appropriate social circumstances, all countries will have to climb upward this same development path (Rostow, 1960/1991).

The main research framework according to Wallerstein should not be the nation-state but the entire world, hierarchically structured within the system of nation-states of the periphery, semi periphery and the center, depending on the strength of the local ruling classes in respective nation-states to defend the national market from the imperialist encroachment of ruling classes of stronger states, which are capable to “open” the markets of weak nation-states often by the use of military force. Local comprador bourgeoisie (Vratuša-Žunjić, 2007a) of weaker states in the semi periphery and periphery are satisfied to participate in the (neo) colonial exploitation of domestic populace. Concentrated external and internal exploitation structurally deforms domestic economy, reducing it to mono-cultural, agricultural, or mineral export at depressed prices to the industrially developed countries at the centre of the system of capitalist economy. This means that the balanced development of (neo)colonies is structurally barred, preventing them to climb up the Rostow’s “economic growth” ladder. The prerequisite for their real development are the anti-systemic social movements that fight against both (neo)colonizing ruling classes of nation states at the “center” or “core” of the world system of capitalist economy, on the one hand, as well as against their puppet local comprador bourgeoisie, on the other. An important stepping stone on this road is the establishment of the mutually

beneficial international division of labour and exchange with countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, whose ruling classes, statist national bourgeoisie, are as well becoming increasingly independent from the world system of capitalist economy dominated by USA and EU financial oligarchy (Wallerstein, 1974; Vratuša-Žunjić, 2018; 2019; 2022).

Social Development

In almost all European languages, the word “development” is associated with the group of verbs “to unfold”. The term development, therefore, originally implies the unwinding of something that already existed in a twisted, undeveloped form or state. The concept of development, i.e. the sequence of interdependent gradual or sudden structural changes in all spheres of social life, social relations, is inseparable from the value concept of progress. Development must be understood normatively, because otherwise it would be reduced to a series of changes in the external form. At the same time, development cannot be understood only quantitatively, as a mere growth, and also not purely formally, as a process of internal differentiation. The main purpose of the development of a society is, namely, to satisfy human needs. Underdevelopment therefore represents hindered development, historically created unfavourable circumstances that block the structural changes necessary to meet the needs of all members of society in an appropriate way. Development is, therefore, a sequence of interdependent structural, gradual or sudden changes in all spheres of social life produced by the determined-determining activity of people, aimed at preserving or reshaping the existing social relations, i.e. establishing new social situations and circumstances, most suitable for satisfying their needs. (Vratuša-Žunjić 1995; Vratuša-Žunjić, 2007b).

The meaning of the concept of identity comes from the interpretation of the meaning of the concept of development offered above, by which this author means that changes in the form and structure of what goes through the process of development, at the same time preserves the sameness, essential identity, unique characteristics of a human individual or social group, which they recognize as their own characteristics, their individual or collective individuality for life.

In this paper, we are interested in different variants of individual and group identity in the sociological sense.

Cultural identity, in the broadest sense of the common way of life of members of a human community, represents an important source of self-perception of individuals and groups, and refers primarily to the language and script used for communication within and between individuals in a given collective as well as between culturally close collectivities.

Constituent elements of cultural identity in the broadest sense imply identification with social groups such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, social class, generation, local region, gender. An individual acquires and dynamically changes, to a specific point, a respective cultural identity or several ones from birth to death. A key shaping role is played by social, ideological and historical solidarity or conflict

experiences acquired during the process of upbringing and education in the family, peer group, educational institutions, media, at the workplace and in free time.

The clarity of a person's cultural self-identification can contribute to its psychological stability and well-being. This clarity rests on the conscious search and achievement of knowledge of the key meanings of values, customs, attitudes, beliefs and practices of a given culture that are acquired through social relations in a given community, as opposed to mere immersion in them without significant awareness and questioning of this immersion. This clarity is important in the context of contact with other cultures that may have very different values, norms, customs, attitudes, beliefs and practices. Where cultural self-identification is weak, assimilation into another culture and the loss of one's own cultural identity, or even a negative attitude towards the culture of origin, occurs more easily. At the same time, the clarity of cultural self-identification must not be deformed into an arrogant and aggressive attitude towards members of other cultures.

The so-called subcultures, often antagonistic within the same culture, arise as a result of hierarchical class, ethnic, racial, national, gender, generational, regional and other special structuring of wider cultural groups.

Ethnic-national and racial cultural identities carry with them the greatest conflict potential in circumstances of conflict with members of other ethnicities, nations and races. The potential for conflict is particularly pronounced when various cultural groups occupy unequal, subordinate or privileged roles in the social division of labour, which affect access to goods necessary for satisfying basic needs and the development of individual and group capabilities.

The socially, economically, politically and culturally dominant classes of the colonizing societies know how to manipulate these differences by practicing the millennial experience that it is the easiest to rule over such divided social communities. Therefore, instead of coexistence, they preach mutual hatred and rivalries, which develop into armed conflicts during which colonizers strive to achieve their goals of conquering and exploiting the human and material resources of conquered communities, which are often divided within themselves along various lines of hostile division.

Regional identity or identification with the local, district, state or union of several states in which individuals or social groups live is, as a rule, closely related to cultural identities. It is specific to regions that they usually differ in terms of the level of economic, political, educational and cultural development. Economist Kosta Mihajlović is the progenitor of research into uneven economic regional development in Serbia. He translated his findings into the book "Regional Reality of Yugoslavia". In it, he deals with the unequally differentiated and internally disconnected economic structure, as a factor of uneven economic development, especially in poor regions with a high participation of agriculture and a small participation of industry and tertiary activities in the social product (Mihajlović, 1981).

A younger colleague, also an economist, Časlav Očić, continued these researches of uneven economic development. Due to the administrative divisions of everything,

including relevant statistical data, these studies necessarily analyzed regional development in the Procrustean bed of republican and provincial borders of the former Yugoslavia. He summarized his findings in the book "Economics of Regional Development of Yugoslavia". In his book from 1998, Očić emphasizes the aspect of national inequality in the specific Yugoslav conditions of a multinational, federally organized country, with distinct intra-regional and inter-regional differences in structure and level of development. These inequalities reflected themselves in the disintegration process. Since the mid-1960s, there has been a shift in emphasis in regional politics from national equality to the equality of republics and provinces. Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the province of Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia were classified as underdeveloped republics and a province. There was a strong tendency to equate the concepts of republics and provinces with the concepts of nation and nationality, regardless of the national and ethnic heterogeneity of most federal ex-Yugoslav units. The bureaucratic way of deciding on capital investments created the possibility of violating the material basis of national equality. Inadequate attention was paid to the existence of underdeveloped sub-regions in Serbia (especially in the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija region), but also in parts of southern, eastern and western Serbia), in the southern and western parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina with a part of Posavina, parts of Dalmatia, Lika, Banija and Kordun in Croatia, and in the northern mountainous parts of Montenegro. The politicization of regional development policy has also led to irrational behavior of state institutions at different levels of the historical development of statehood. Instead of having accurate information as the basis of rational developmental economic behavior and planning, as a prerequisite for integration and synthesis of partial interests, there was a rigid formalization of the decision-making procedure of reaching agreement through unprincipled compromises of territorialized administrative federal units. The closure of investments within republican borders, in the former Yugoslavia as an example of the contrast between developed and underdeveloped regions, led to the doubling of capacities at the level of the Federation. The disparity in the prices of agricultural and raw material products from the extractive sectors originating from industrially underdeveloped regions, on the one hand, and industrial products and tertiary and quarterly services originating from industrially developed regions, on the other, contributed significantly to the preservation of unequal economic regional development (Arghiri, 1972; Očić, 1998).

Thus, interregional relations were petrified in time by a reductionist interpretation of underdevelopment and the struggle of the republics and provinces for the status of the underdeveloped in order to obtain grants from the Federal Development Fund. Ignored was intra-republic and provincial regional unequal development according to various criteria, such as employment, the purchase value of the basic assets of the economy per working-age resident, participation of employees in the working-age population, social product and income per resident. According to all the mentioned criteria, it was observed that there are extreme differences between the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija and the Republic of Slovenia. Despite the proclaimed goals of interregional equalization through the division of labour,

integration, qualitative modernization of basic assets and workforce through investments in the means of production and employment primarily in industry, the oscillatory percentage deviations of the coefficients of development of underdeveloped and developed regions from the average values for the whole of Yugoslavia have been growing for longer periods. The closest to this average, but still below it, was the central Serbia, with an above-average participation in financing the fund for the development of underdeveloped regions. Slovenia, as the most industrially developed, thanks, among other things, to the history of domination of the neighboring industrially and culturally more developed Austria, was followed at a considerable distance by Croatia and Vojvodina, also previously parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. The most underdeveloped was and remained Kosovo and Metohija, an autonomous province within Serbia, as mentioned above, with the longest history of domination of the Ottoman Empire (Ibidem).

The conflict potential of the region's economic inequality is all the greater if social groups with different cultural, primarily religious identities live in them, given the centuries-old history of conflict between the conquering warriors of the Ottoman Empire of the Islamic faith and Arabic alphabet, on the one hand and the temporarily conquered Serb "raja", mostly farmers of the Orthodox faith and the Cyrillic alphabet, on the other. In Kosovo and Metohija and in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the longest historical legacy of Ottoman Empire domination, the distant descendants of former begs ethnically originating from Serb population, who were by force at the teenage abducted and trained to become administrators and military man for the Ottoman Empire, or who accepted the religion of the conquerors out of self-interest to remain feudal exploiters of Christian "raja" (infidels according to the occupiers), seem not to be satisfied with their participation in obtaining the best paid jobs in proportion to their participation in the total population, after the liberation from the Ottoman Empire. This dissatisfaction was one of the internal socio-cultural factors behind the outbreak of the bloody fratricidal war in 1991–1995 ex-Yugoslavia (Vratuša-Žunjić, 1997; Vratuša-Žunjić, 2002).

Based on the 1996 findings of the research "Possibility of survey research on the role of religion in the disintegration of Yugoslavia", this author formulated a prediction, which seems to be still valid in the springtime of 2024 when the author conducted the final reviewing of this paper, that the struggle for the establishment or preservation of national states, that is, the struggle for relative improvement of the subordinate, or preservation of the privileged position in the local and international class division of labour, in the medium historical span of time will be articulated in the terms of not only secular national ideologies, but also in the terms of the corresponding world religions of the ancestors of given ethnic groups, as an expression of their cultural, ethnic and national identity in the conditions of the worsening structural crisis of capital accumulation on a global scale (Vratuša-Žunjić, 1996).

The case of the underdeveloped municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa. Among the municipalities with the lowest average wages and other unfavourable

indicators of social, economic and educational development in Serbia are the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac with a majority Albanian population, close to the administrative line with the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija and the border with North Macedonia. The separatist-oriented Albanians in these three municipalities, ever since the Kumanovo Agreement in 1999, which ended the military conflict between the Serbian police and army against the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army trained and armed by US dominated NATO, ending in criminal NATO depleted uranium bombardment of Serbia (Vratuša-Žunjić, 1999), have been determined to help the declaration of independence of Kosovo and Metohija from Serbia. In this determination, Albanian separatists were having wholehearted military and other assistance from NATO countries led by the ruling class of USA. They organized the terrorist organization “Liberation Army of Preševo, Medveđa and Bujanovac (LAPMB)”, including the municipality of Medveđa with a majority of Serbian population, in the area they named “Preševska dolina” (The Preševo valley).

The name “Preševo valley” was used by the LAPMB leaders as an abbreviation for presenting a separatist request to the authorities of the Republic of Serbia, that this area be annexed to the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija, which should become a Republic internationally recognized by the USA financial oligarchy dominated “Collective West” (including Japan, Australia, South Korea and some other countries in the geographic East) for the purpose of joining Albania at a later stage. With this goal in mind, they waged armed battles in 2001 and 2002, well trained and more numerous than regular Serbian police. Serbian police almost completely lost control of the villages Dobrosin, Lučane, Končulj i Mali Trnovac (each and every one of these village names etymologically are derived from the Serbian language), which became notorious as centers of arms and narcotics trafficking and killing of Serbs in the raids against Serbian families. The LAPMB separatists were assisted by the former Kosovo Liberation Army, itself armed and trained by USA led NATO.

Since they failed to convince NATO to carry out direct military aggression on their side against the Serbian population and the special police of the Republic of Serbia, as Albanian terrorists and separatists have succeeded in Kosovo and Metohija, the political wing of the LAPMB signed an agreement according to which all Albanians who surrendered their weapons were pardoned, if they did not commit war crimes (Ristić, 2020). This agreement was again “guaranteed” by notoriously cheating “collective West” militarily organized into NATO.

Political leaders of the National Council of Albanians in Serbia, such as Jonuz Musliju, supported the unification of Albania and Kosovo in April 2017, but according to him, it would not make sense if Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa were not joined. Ivica Dačić then called on the “international community” – more precisely named “imperial condominium” as already noticed above (Johnstone, 2002) – to react (A.S., 2017). Dragan from Niš responded in the comments to the mentioned text with wise advice: “Well, give him a parliamentary seat or a ministerial chair, even without a portfolio, and we will be waiting for Rama

(president of Albania, note by V. Ž.) at the opening of the Niš-Priština-Tirana highway!” Obviously some Serbs learned to expect nothing from the hoped for integration into the European Union “fortress”, and began to search for a regional solution in the idea of “Open Balkans”.

Unsolved problems of unequal regional development, antagonistic ethnic and religious identities and insufficient social, economic, political and cultural integration of the Albanian population of this area within Serbia still persist. A lot of work is still needed to encourage local economic, political and cultural development, such as the development of roads and other infrastructure, investment in opening greater employment opportunities in domestic “smart factories” and small and medium-sized enterprises, in renewable energy sources, education, science and technology parks, so that both the minority and majority of local population of this region would be economically and socially integrated into the Republic of Serbia by peaceful means. A negative alternative is mass emigration of both Albanians and Serbs from the country, thereby creating a new national problem of the local lack of qualified labour force (Nastevski, 2022).

A special obstacle to the process of reducing inter-regional and intra-regional inequalities is seen in class-structured social differences that concentrate investments and development grants in the hands of ruling groups and their relatives in local regions, which are paid primarily by the poor in developed regions through regressive tax rates. Insisting on the gross social product as the most important indicator of development, conceals this unequal structure of production and distribution within local regions, both industrially underdeveloped and developed.

Strategies and Perspectives of Local and Global Development in the Direction of Democratic Integration

The aforementioned intra-republican and provincial economic and cultural differences during existence of Yugoslavia, in ethnically and religiously mixed environments such as Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, led to civil war conflicts 1991–1995. They were heartily fueled by interested locally absent (except in the form of influential ambassadors) foreign patrons of ex-Yugoslav comprador bourgeois ruling classes (Vratuša-Žunjić, 2007a) coming from “new foreign” countries, as well as from the “old” western capitalist countries interested in re-colonization of former countries of the so called “really existing socialism” (Vratuša-Žunjić, 1997). *These conflicts are culturally and religiously “coloured”, blurring class divisions within all ethnic and religious communities, and homogenizing these class-divided groupings within their own “nation” is understood as a supreme value.*

On the wider geographical plane we are witnessing the grouping of the most industrially developed Western countries of the world, including USA, Canada, European Union, integrating Greece and Turkey, more recently joined by former “people’s democracies” of Central and South/Eastern Europe and former military neutral European countries Sweden and Norway, continuing to militarily organize within NATO. Together with a number of “contact countries” and “global partners”

including Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, they continue to spread eastwards, towards borders of Russia and China, even though the rival military block from the time of the Cold War, Warsaw pact, dissolved.

On the other hand, most of the rest of the world, led by countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the so called BRICS countries (Vratuša-Žunjić, 2018), were officially joined in January 2024 by Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. They are rapidly developing economically and even overtake, as a group, according to some standard indicators of economic development, the group of seven former colonizing and current neo-colonizing powers led by the USA. By deciding to cooperate more and more with each other and to avoid the use of the US dollar as a means of payment, BRICS+ countries announce that the transnational companies based in NATO countries, which are managed by the financial oligarchy of transnational companies and banks, will find it increasingly difficult to maintain their dominance and extra profits from the over-exploitation of material resources and human resources of the rest of the world through economic blackmail, sanctions and military pressure. BRICS+ grouping of countries becomes ever more attractive foreign policy orientation for former colonies and semi-colonies who realize that they waited in vain to be integrated with the Collective West countries on terms of mutual benefit.

A major shift in international power relations is unfolding before our eyes. Mutually beneficial and equal cooperation and exchange of BRICS+ countries in local currencies is on the rise. It is strengthening resistance to transnational companies like Monsanto, which seek to introduce genetically modified varieties of plants and animals onto the land they bought at a low price. The application of the domestic experience of organic cultivation of plants and livestock, in harmony with the natural environment and not against it, is flourishing (Agriculture at a Crossroads, 2014).

At the root of the decline in the power of the transnational financial oligarchy is the systemic structural crisis of the capitalist mode of production, which manifests itself in the form of increasingly devastating contradictions of the limited private motive of reaping profits, i.e. the unpaid surplus labour of producers, on the one hand, and the potentially unlimited development of the material and human production forces of labour, on the other.

The transnational financial oligarchy, however, still has close personal ties with the holders of political, economic and military power in modern states, as holders of the monopoly of physical coercion. They still manage to corrupt local politicians and businessmen to pursue policies contrary to the interests of the majority of the people of their own countries. In the struggle for dominance, the transnational financial oligarchy incites war conflicts to profit from the production and sale of weapons (Carnegie Corporation of New York, s.a.).

Self-Governing Integration of the Population of the Underdeveloped and Developed Regions from Below

It is in the vital interest of the exploited and oppressed part of the people in the villages and cities of the world to turn the police, army and scientists into their own social allies in the defense from and fight against the exploiters and oppressors. When the exploited and oppressed achieve this, they will be able to resist being used as puppets whose strings are pulled by the financial oligarchy in its proxy wars against multicultural, multiethnic and multi religious nations such as Russia, which are leading the fight of the BRICS+ to replace the unipolar world order with a multipolar one.

Through self-organization and production of their own guiding vision of fairer social relations, the oppressed and exploited have a real chance to overthrow corrupt politicians who do not represent their interests, but their own interests of survival in privileged positions in society, in collusion with their financiers from the countries of the imperialist condominium (Johnstone, 2002) over former colonies. Across the planet, movements of armed people against the remnants of neo-colonialism, such as in Africa and the Middle East, are visible.

To be successful, the struggle against relations of exploitation and oppression must overcome the basic source of the class division of society to producers and managers. In the digital age of the twenty-first century, it is more relevant than ever to prevail over the class division of labour, which enables a monopoly over creative and planning work functions to a minority of the highly educated population, on the one hand, over the majority of labour force as a low-skilled low-paid commodity, on the other.

Only in conditions of real democracy, i.e. rule of the people, by the people and for the people themselves, from the bottom to the top of social institutions instead of usurpers of power by self-proclaimed representatives of the people, the driving motive of production ceases to be private profit and it becomes the satisfaction of human needs for the comprehensive development of physical and intellectual abilities of each person.

The fact is that the detailed, formally legally over-regulated structure of self-governing agreements and accords between economic and non-economic social entities and self-governments, from 1950 to 1975, did not succeed in eliminating unequal regional industrial and educational development, as well as culturally historically shaped intolerances. From the middle of the 1970s, namely, internal and external social relationships of restoration of neo colonized capitalism began to prevail again, which accelerated the growth of regional social development inequalities (Vratuša, 2012, 105–260).

However, some form of participatory direct democracy, which extends from the roots to the top of the social system, based on a dialogue and building consensus around conflicting interests, as well as on orientation of social actors led by the vision of the realization of common interests, exactly such self-management does represent an integral part of solution to the problems of unequal development,

unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, impaired immunity and psychical illness, environment pollution and war in economically less developed regions (Vratuša-Žunjić, 2023).

Sceptical dismissal of such vision as sentimental utopist blabbering, also presents another form of ideology – conservative in this case, which insists that social development inequalities are here to stay permanently as the expression of some natural law like Darwinian “survival of the fittest”.

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РЕГИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ, ИДЕНТИТЕТИ И САМОУПРАВНА ИНТЕГРАЦИЈА У ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ КРИЗЕ СВЕТСКОГ СИСТЕМА КАПИТАЛИСТИЧКЕ ПРИВРЕДЕ

Сажетак

Аутор овог рада истражује друштвене изворе неједнаког развоја или структуралних промена у друштву, привреди, политици и другим сферама друштвене делатности, у локалној и транснационалној класној подели рада на креативне планирајуће и наредбодавне радне функције, с једне стране, и на мануелне или рутинске радне функције потенцијално универзалне људске делатности, с друге. Антагонистичка класна подела рада је наглашена у друштвима чије се различите групације становништва поистовећују са особеним етничким, религиозним, културним, политичким, расним, класним и другим одликама и вредностима, живећи концентрисане у индустријски неразвијеним регионима, масовно незапослене и ниских личних примања. Перспективе превазилажења произлажеће друштвене

дезинтеграције унутар индустријски неразвијених региона, нарочито у околностима актуалне продужене светске кризе акумулације капитала, аутор проналази у демократској интеграцији кроз друштвено, економско и политичко самоуправљање на локалном, националном, регионалном и светском нивоу.

Кључне речи: регионални развој, идентитет, криза акумулације капитала, интеграција, самоуправљање.

REGIONALISM, PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The modern development of capitalism has sharpened class and regional inequalities and contradictions with special consequences for the position and development of the modern countries of the world's periphery and semi-periphery, to which the Balkans and Serbia belong according to the sociological characteristics. The paper first considers different concepts, models and practices of regional development, especially of the post-socialist societies in transition. The focus of the problematization is the importance of the concept and practice of regionalism for the implementation of the policy of balanced development, for the realization of participatory democracy (through the strengthening of local and regional self-government institutions) and sustainable development. In the end, the author presents the need for the formation of an Institute for Regional Development and a possible program of multidisciplinary scientific research in the development of Serbia as a modern democratic European country in which development is at the service of all its parts and the work of all the creative forces of society, and not only the political elites.

Keywords: regional development, inequalities in development, functional regionalization of Serbia, participatory democracy, sustainable development

Politics is too serious activity to be left only to politicians!
(Charles De Gaulle)

The people are their best managers!
(Svetozar Marković)

About the slogan: Bread and self-government!

From the workers' banner in Kragujevac

There is no sustainable development without changing the inequality by the real equality without discrimination.

(Thomas Piketty)

Introduction: About the Social Relevance and Scientific Importance of the Problematicization of the Topic

The issue of the regional inequalities, disproportion in development and their implications for the social and interstate relations has occupied sociological thought since its inception, especially after World War II, and more intensively in the last decade of the 20th and the two decades of the 21st century. Researchers of different profiles have dealt with it: from demographers, economists, political scientists, ethnoculturalists to sociologists. In the last three decades, it has been in the focus of conflictologists and geopoliticians, because this problem is also instrumentalized by geostrategic games for the destruction and rearrangement of political borders by numerous separatist movements. This is a part of the action of the great powers and the realization of a new strategy, geopolitical redistribution of resources (in the form of expansion and a new combination of geoeconomics, geopolitics, through encouraging the ethno-political game of "killer identities", i.e. encouraging and controlling regional conflicts), expanding the map of new conflict zones in the world, and leading the so-called proxy wars by neo-imperial actors in modern times.

Regardless of the political connotations and misuse of this issue by political actors and the forces of absolutization of the mega capital neo-colonial power, it is undeniable that this topic has its weight and scientific value as a subject in the modern science. This is why sociologists are increasingly dealing with it (in the ISA and EAS registers today there are special committees/sections for coordinating research in this area). Also, in the system of modern sciences, regional studies/regionomics is constituted as a transdisciplinary area of scientific research. Within the OUN, in its institutional organization of work, there is also a special research department that deals with this issue.

In the last three years, even at the Social Forum in Davos, a meeting of the neoliberal elite of scientists, businessmen and politicians, the importance of this issue has been increasingly emphasized, i.e. the unsustainability of growing regional disproportions between the global North and the global South was indicated, as a result and consequence of the asymmetric globalization in the world that led to enormous inequalities (from 1:30 after World War II to 1:300 in modern times). Such disproportions express the phenomenon of social Darwinization of social relations in the global world system: extreme polarization is at work, in which 256 world billionaires today have greater wealth than 50% of the world's population. Hence the appeals about the need for humanization, globalization, reform and change of the ruling model of capitalism, which generates unsustainable inequalities and conflicts in the modern world.

I Regional Inequalities and Their Implications in Modern Times

The problem of equality/inequality in social and regional development has always attracted sociology as a science of crisis and development. In particular, this issue was re-actualized in the so-called years of crisis and systemic transition: when systemic implosion, entropy and anomie arose in society and when, in this context, social actors engaged in the search for a new model of development and management, or renewed the primary matrices of the ethnoculture of social groups and the geoculture of the population living in a certain regional geospace.

Right now, we are living in such an epoch, stuck and torn between the processes of globalization, integration, but also rebalkanization/refeudalization of space in the global and regional development politics. In this context, geopolitical divisions seem to have become vampirized, and geoeconomy and geoculture are becoming instrumentalized either by great powers or separatist-secessionist groups as part of their global or narrow particularistic-ethnocentric interests and goals. We are faced with the revival of the neo-imperial geopolitics of resource allocation and conflicts based on that. One of the latest is the conflict in Ukraine, in which a proxy war is being waged between the great powers who want to conquer this space and move the borders of the new Yalta, and the power of NATO as an instrument of hegemony, to the East.

In modern science, sociology of development, and especially sociological theory and sociology of regional development, numerous theories/paradigms, as well as transdisciplinary sciences – regionomics have been crystallized. In sociological science, this problem was first considered within the framework of the theory of dependent modernization and the world-system theory; i.e. new forms of colonization and internal colonization. After World War II, several important projects were initiated and implemented against the background of the initiative of the UN and the World Bank for Development (among them the famous Brandt Report on the North-South Relations, for which the scientific report was written by a group of expert scientists, including Serbian economist Dragoslav Avramović). Also, numerous other experts, sociologists and economists dealt with this issue, such as: Jean Balandier, Alain Touraine, Michel Chossudovsky, Naomi Klein, Thomas Piketty and Branko Milanović. This issue was discussed at several ISA and EAS scientific conferences.

In the former Yugoslavia (SFRY), there were notable research studies of this problem by economists, namely by Kosta Mihajlović, Branko Horvat, Dušan Čalić, Eva Berković, Kasim Begić, Časlav Očić, Miodrag Nikolić, Ilija Rosić, Milorad Božić. Sociologists dealt with this problem: Zdravko Mlinar, Josip Županov, Silvano Bolčić, Stipe Šuvar, Rade Kalanj, Mihajlo Popović, Miodrag Ranković. In 1986, a consortium of Institutes of Social Sciences in SFRY was formed, and the implementation of the macro-project “Changes in the Social Structure and Class Being” began. As a part of this project, the newly formed Institute of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Niš implemented the theme “Regional heterogeneity of changes in the social structure”. The research was led by Ljubiša Mitrović, and the methodological consultant was Slavko Milosavljević from the

Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. This empirical research was conducted in the period from 1986 to 1990. The results of this research showed the following: that insufficiently developed municipalities are increasing in Serbia, that regional disproportions between the developed North and the underdeveloped South are increasing; that the most underdeveloped municipalities in the south of Serbia are Trgovište and Babušnica, and the most developed are the municipalities of Savski venac and Stari Grad in Belgrade. The Institute of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade will later continue to deal with this issue of the social inequality, publishing studies on social inequality and social mobility. This project was led first by Mihajlo Popović and then by Silvano Bolčić.

In the context of growing regional inequalities in Serbia in the 1990s, an initiative was launched at the University of Niš, by Mika Nikolić and Milorad Božić, for the establishment of the Institute for Regional Development which would systematically deal with this issue. Unfortunately, such an initiative did not receive the support of the University and local self-government.

In Serbia during the transition period, as the historian Marija Obradović writes in her study *Chronicle of the Transitional Cementery* (2017), from 1990 until today, social and regional inequalities and contradictions in development have been increasing, but they are covered up with political camouflage and redirected with pseudo-patriotic rhetoric about unity in the conditions of a state of emergency, in the era of conflict and the disintegration of the SFRY, and today with populism and the “drama” surrounding the status of Kosovo.

Regarding the organization of the economic and political subsystem in Serbia today, the model of dependent neoliberal modernization and multi-party representative democracy is followed, with a high degree of centralization of power and the internal colonial democracy in which the comprador elites of the government replace each other. The model is not democratized or reformed in the direction of the development of the legal state and socially sustainable development (based on the principles of a balanced regional development, social equality, participatory democracy and environmental standards). Instead of the functioning of the institutions and the realization of the European standards, “democracy without the people” (Duverger 1968), pseudo-multipartyism and populism are at work, emitting voluntarism in the economy and arbitrariness in politics as supreme arbitrators. All this has negative consequences for the modernization and democratization of society, which itself becomes suppressed, scattered and divided, with high tensions and hidden contradictions. Such a society is also faced with growing demographic problems, with social inequalities, regional disproportions, and is internally divided and potentially conflictual.

It is time for experts, before it is too late, to give their diagnosis and proposal of an alternative model of development and management: in which direction the reforms should go and who are the actors/carriers of the progressive social changes.¹

¹ About social change see: Sztompka, 1991; about different development strategies and actors in contemporary society see: Mitrović, 1996.

II Sustainable Development and Progress

The struggle for the sustainable development and progress of society (no matter what you call it: capitalist, socialist, mixed, entrepreneurial, transitional...) presupposes the unity of the rule of law and market economy, representative and participatory democracy, the construction of a new system of values, personal and institutional responsibility, without which there is no sustainable development and progress of society.

Today, the media public unquestionably exploits numerous concepts such as: modernization, sustainable development, political correctness, while their true essence is not precisely defined, the same way as the numerous terms which are “exiled” (Kuljić, 2018) from the sociological dictionary so as not to interfere with the professional reformers in completing the dishonorable restoration mission and the actors of the revision of contemporary history in this area.

The calling of the sociologists is to use the strength of their professional theoretical and methodological culture to critically question, problematize and investigate social reality and conscience, public knowledge about it, and to sift the truth from stereotypical, layman’s and ideological opinion/doxa through their “scientific sieve”.

Among those concepts that are interpreted superficially and controversially is the concept of a *sustainable development* which is defined differently and exploited in the public, without critical thinking and using the scientific apparatus, concepts and tools that modern science has come up with. This term came from the arsenal of the development of theory and scientific practice in modern ecology, and then it was extended to other sciences and forms of practice. It means that in learning and practical action one should take into account the relationship between parts and the whole, nature, society and man, humanity and other species, and that the concept of sustainable development is connected not only with ecology, but also with anthropology and sociology, planetary ethics, democratic political culture and responsibility, culture of peace. This also means that the measures, moves, actions of any subject of the society and at any level of social organization (institutional, personal and social actor) in planning and realizing development, must be harmoniously aligned with the interests of humanity as a whole, the public good and the survival of the planet. This categorical imperative requires a developed awareness and responsibility about the connection and mutuality of the actions of all actors, not only at all levels, areas and activities (companies, regions), and not only of one nation and region, continent, but also of all humanity and the planet as well.

Starting from the fact that we live in an era of liberated and rampant neoliberal market fundamentalism, individual and group egoism, which affirms the model of recklessness and intolerance, it is necessary to make a distinction between a particular corporate and a wider social interest. For, when something is useful for the company, it does not automatically mean that it is also good for the whole society, the community.

III Regionalism, Notion, Concept and the Function of Participatory Democracy

The term regionalism has a vague meaning. In colloquial discourse and usage, it means different areas of complex practice: from geographical, demographic, economic and developmental, to ethno-cultural, political and sociological meaning. That is why in scientific use it is necessary to methodologically sift and revalue this concept and term, i.e. to separate the truth from the current ideological stereotypes.

Unlike the current and stereotypical meaning, the integral notion of regionalism should synthetically express the rational forms of social practice in modern times which summarize the experience in regional development and the way of managing development, ranging from various forms of local and regional self-government to participatory-network management, as a form of functional organization of an open democratic society in which harmonious relations are established between the autonomy of the regional units and the integrity and sovereignty of the whole, i.e. respect for cultural differences and subcultural identities, regional and national identity, ethno-cultural identity of social groups, the population inhabiting one regional space.

In the contemporary theory and practice of the organization and development of the region, there are various distinct forms of regional organization, ranging from centralist to decentralized, from the form of unitary and bureaucratic centralization to the form of functional participatory democracy in which the unity between the autonomy of the parts and the democratic integration and unity of the whole is preserved.

In contemporary sociological and political literature (starting with P. Blumberg, R. Dahl) different forms, types and models of the regional organization of society and management of social development are discussed, such as: a) authoritarian-centralist; b) democratic-participatory model; c) polyarchy; g) micro-organizational (local); d) meso-organizational (regional); f) macro-organizational (integral model).²

The historical experience of Serbia in the 19th and 20th century illustrates the existence of various practices and movements in the regional organization, ranging from hypercentralist/bureaucratic administration to demands and practices of decentralization – development of participatory democracy and self-government in socialist Serbia and Yugoslavia. On various aspects and scopes of these forms of regional organization of society and the action of socio-political movements to realize those models, we find critical records and studies by historians and other scientists, especially by Vuk Karadžić and Svetozar Marković in the 19th century, but also by Slobodan Jovanović and Fedor Nikić from the first half of the 20th century, or Najdan Pašić and Jovan Đorđević after World War II.

In Serbia, since the 19th century, there has been an open conflict between two concepts and currents regarding its administrative organization and management: centralist-bureaucratic and decentralized-democratic (self-governing). This conflict

² See for example: Dahl, 1971, Dahl, 1999.

continued in Yugoslavia between the two world wars, between supporters of its internal organization and Banovina regional autonomy, as well as after World War II between centralists and autonomists. Self-management “softened” the conflict between these currents, but did not completely suppress it. First, from 1950 to the mid-60s in the form of workers’ self-management, while later it was extended to all other activities. It awakened the initiative and strengthened the power of producers and citizens, in order to later formalize and pave the way for the power and alliance of bureaucracy and technocracy and the decline of real power and workers in society.

Amendment reforms and constitutional changes in 1971–1974 under the slogan of “federating the federation” and building the so-called integral self-management in the one-party system of the socialism, opened space for the actors of disintegration processes that led to the crisis and implosion in the 1990s. In the collapse of the system, of course, the geopolitical games of the external forces are also involved with the aim of breaking the state which for a time became a model – a model of self-governance and non-aligned politics in the world. Milentije Popović once warned about the possible systemic causes of the implosion of the socialism and the internal factors of Yugoslavia’s disintegration – stressing that the strengthening of statism sooner or later gives rise to nationalism and generates ethno-political conflicts that first block, then disintegrate and collapse the normal functioning of the self-governance system, i.e. labour and civil participation, as well as that the forces of conflict and disintegration are strengthening with possible uncertain and catastrophic consequences.

In Serbia, during the 1980s and until 1992, Intermunicipal Regional Communities existed as a form of the regional self-government. 273 clerks were employed in them (a total of 9 in Serbia). With the abolition of the inter-municipal regional communities and the introduction of the district administration (1992) as a form of a decentralized state administration, the number of clerks increased to around 8,000.

Districts have become advanced institutions of the state administration whose dominant competences are the supervision and control of the implementation of laws and government policies on a certain territory. They are not a form of inter-municipal self-governing community in which citizens exercise their rights, developing various forms of self-governing initiative in the regulation of relations, designing and realizing development and democratic management. Numerous responsibilities of the former regions were centralized and transferred to state ministries, and the content of self-government in regulating relations in the districts was marginalized and suppressed.

If the district organization of government could be “justified” by the state of emergency in the country at the time of the disintegration of the SFRY, today, maintaining that model of the local and regional space management has become counterproductive. This is so because the hypercentralization of decision-making at the level of the Republic becomes a blocking factor, limiting the awakening and development of the initiative “from below” in practice. This problem cannot be

replaced by multi-party noise, populist voluntarism of the party and state leaders, no matter what authority they enjoyed.

Therefore, it is time in Serbia to reexamine both the hybrid neoliberal and statist model of development and management and to clearly define the project of building a rule of law, consistent realization of the principle of division and control of power, as well as the development of the unity of representative and participatory democracy. In other words, we need: a new organization of the economic and political system, in which local and regional self-government will play an irreplaceable role as a permanent and dynamic reservoir of a new labour and political energy “from below”, both in development policy and in the management and realization of the rights of citizens and the democratic public.³ Otherwise, the current multi-party representative democracy will degenerate “into a democracy without the people” (Duverger, 1968), into the possession of political parties and the so-called class of professional politicians.

Table 1. Share of South Serbia in the Republic of Serbia in 2012 (Serbia = 100).

Indicators	South Serbia	Nišava district	Toplica district	Pirot district	Jablanica district	Pčinja district
Surface (km)	15.8	3.1	2.5	3.1	3.1	4.0
Population	13.0	5.2	1.3	1.3	3.0	2.2
Employed	10.6	4.4	0.9	1.1	2.1	2.1
Unemployed	19.6	7.0	2.1	1.7	5.0	3.7
Income per worker (level $S=100$)	65.9	84.3	71.8	84.8	75.4	79.1
Gross value added	4.7	2.3	0.2	0.9	0.6	0.7
Income	5.9	2.6	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.1
Income per worker (level $RS=100$)	43.0	59.0	36.0	57.0	32.0	38.0

Source: Jakopin, 2013, p. 23.

If within the framework of the development of Serbia, Southeast Serbia is taken into consideration as a region, with its today's districts, it can be said that it belongs to the most underdeveloped part of Serbia, and according to some indicators, also of Europe. Economists have calculated that in 2000 the ratio between the most developed and the least developed municipality in Serbia was 1:19, and in 2005 it increased to 1:22, while today the ratio is 1:30 (Table 2). At the district level, it is 1:7, and at the level of the relationship between municipalities, it is 1:30. The predictions of the Regional Development Strategy of Serbia were to reduce regional disproportions. Unfortunately, these predictions did not come true.

³ The problems of regional organization of Serbian society and balanced regional development were discussed in proceedings by Živković, Milenković, 2010, Beljanski, Dimitrijević et al. 1994, Skenderović Čuk & Torbica, 1994.

Table 2. Regional inequality in Serbia in 2012.

Indicators	Region	District	Municipality
Income per inhabitant	2:1 Belgrade: South and East Serbia	2:1 The city of Belgrade: Toplica	9:1 Novi Sad: Doljevac
Rate of unemployment	3:1 South and East Serbia: Belgrade	4:1 Toplica: The city of Belgrade	5:1 Tutin: Belgrade
Demographic flux	(-16,3) : (+36) South and East Serbia: Belgrade	(-32,2) : (+36) Piot: The city of Belgrade	(-82,8) : (+62) Crna Trava: Novi Sad
Level of education	3:1 Belgrade: South and East Serbia	4:1 The city of Belgrade: Braničevo	2:1 The city of Belgrade: Malo Crniče

Source: Jakopin, 2013, p. 23.

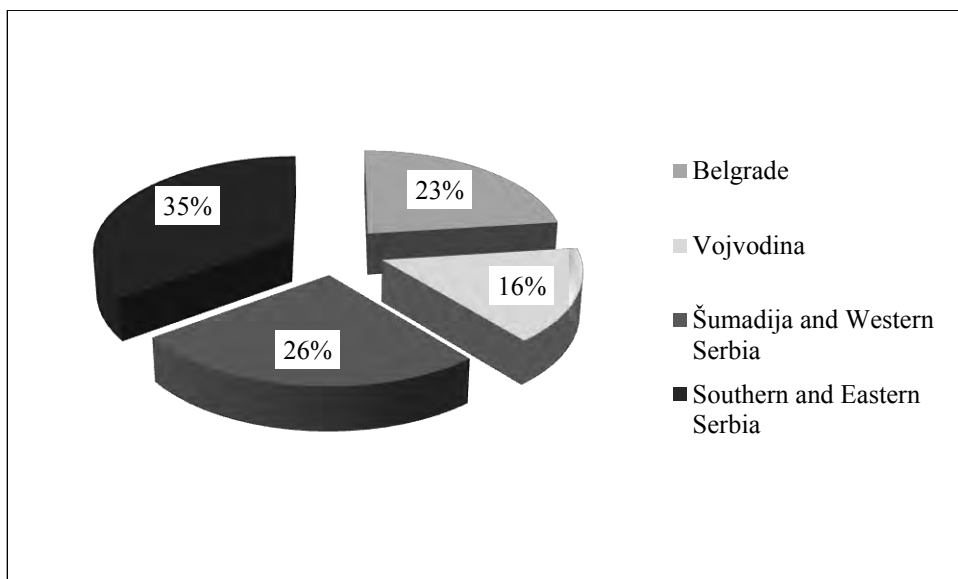
On the economic development map, southeast Serbia had the largest number of underdeveloped municipalities even before 1990, and hence a large number of guest workers who worked abroad (1970–1990), but then, it also had a few developed industrial centers (Niš, Bor, Pirot, Leskovac, Vranje). Unfortunately, that picture has changed radically and for the worse nowadays: large industrial systems have been destroyed, factories have been closed and sold off, and workers have been laid off. There are more and more unemployed people on the lists of the national employment services. Today, the region of the southeastern Serbia leads the way in external migration as well. According to the 2011 census, it has the most pronounced external migration when compared to other regions in Serbia (Table 3, Graph 1). The resulting data of the new census from 2022, unfortunately, will not change that situation for the better, but will confront us with new forms of demographic devastation in Serbia.⁴

Table 3. Representation of migrants according to the regions they come from (according to the 2011 census).

	Total population	Population abroad	Rate in %
Serbia	7 470 798	313 411	4.20
Bor	145 677	21 644	14.86
Zaječar	124 669	5 123	4.11
Jablanica	222 104	6 801	3.06
Niš	384 581	9 111	2.37
Pirot	93 611	1 394	1.49
Pčinja	162 709	4 237	2.60
Toplica	93 016	1 434	1.54

Source: Stanković, V. (2014). *Serbia in the process of the external migration*. Belgrade: SORS, pp. 106–107.

⁴ About demographic problems of Serbian society see: Mitrović, 2022.



Graph 1. Rate of migrants according to regions (in %).

Source: Stanković, V. (2014). *Serbia in the process of the external migration*. Belgrade: SORS, pp. 106–107.

Analyses by economists and sociologists reveal growing disproportions between districts and cities in Serbia. In the period of transition without social responsibility, deindustrialization was experienced especially in the regional centers in the southeast of Serbia: Niš, Leskovac, Vranje, Zaječar, Bor, Pirot, while development in Serbia was concentrated around two centers, Belgrade and Novi Sad, which grew demographically and economically.

Also, in terms of the socio-class stratification, a degenerate social structure is being constituted in Serbia, which is recognizable from the recent history of the world for dependent societies of peripheral capitalism. In them, producer groups and middle classes are marginalized, i.e. the losers in the transition grew, while social mobility was experienced by the layer of the new entrepreneurs, the comprador and nomenklatura bourgeoisie.⁵ The realization of the ideology and practice of the neoliberal feudalism, as a transition without social responsibility, opened up space for the rise of tycoons and mafia groups, who became rich overnight, experienced a boom and rise.⁶ They often hid behind the party booklet of the ruling coalition in order to protect their criminal dealings with pseudo-patriotism, causing great damage to social development, but also to the current government holders.

⁵ On the impact of uneven regional development on the quality of life in Serbian society, see: Stojić 2010, pp. 35–45.

⁶ About strata and class inequalities in transitional Serbia, see more in the studies Lazić 2011, Miladinović 2009, Antonić 2012, Obradović 2017 and Đorić 2023.

Concluding Considerations and Recommendations

1. The issue of the regional development, especially in the era of transition in Serbia, seems to have been suppressed from the focus of the sociological research, although in practice enormous inequalities and disproportions are visible between municipalities and regions in Serbia. They have numerous demographic, economic, social, cultural and political implications for the development of the Serbian society.
2. It is time to invite sociologists and other researchers in Serbia to constantly keep this issue in the focus of their research, and the Ministry and the Science Fund to support projects dealing with regional development.
3. Despite the evident growth of problems in regional development, they seem to have been bypassed and suppressed in the last 20 years.
4. In the last 10 years, in the Republic of Serbia, there were more “centers for stabilocracy” which foster an apologetic-conservative approach formed, than institutes and research groups for the study of regional and social development.
5. In transitional Serbia, the processes of growing social and regional inequalities, dependent modernization, internal colonization and the restoration of the society of peripheral capitalism are in progress (with the renewal of the class inequalities and the growth of disproportion between the North and the South, as well as the open question of the sovereignty in Kosovo and Metohija, problems of regional integration in the Balkans, and the unfinished European integration processes in the so-called Western Balkans).
6. Instead of multiplying propagandistic media services and para-analysts who care more about the political orientation of the public and the electorate, we need research centers that would help research the effects of the current strategy of development and management in our country and help build critical awareness and democratic public, and also new regional and democratic organizations of work, development and management in Serbia.
7. To launch the initiative for the formation of the Institute for Regional Development and Local Self-Government within the university community, i.e. regional centers in Serbia, which would help a scientific development planning; to deal with long-term development and action problems with multidisciplinary research on the numerous aspects of regional development.
8. The Serbian Sociological Society should warn the university and general public about the dangerous consequences of the marginalization of social and humanistic sciences in the society, because they are of the essential importance for the formation of the cultural identity of a person in the process of socialization, for the development of a critical public in society, the building of individual and collective self-awareness, and developing the ability to formulate alternative social development projects. Sociologists, as part of their vocation and profession and through their professional engagement, can help develop analytical power and critical potential in our society.
9. Although the European Union has a concept of regionalism and integration, unfortunately, in practical politics the Brussels administration is more driven by the geopolitical goals in the expansion of the Union. The “Open Balkans”

project is more a pseudo-substitute for mini-regionalism than a form of the integration of the Balkans in line with the slogan "Balkans to the Balkan peoples!".

Contemporary sustainable progress of society presupposes the affirmation of a different cosmology and practice of development and management of society. It requires a change in the social Darwinist strategy of the neoliberal development centered on profit as the supreme good and Machiavellian politics in which all areas are subordinated to the logic of the market and ruthless competition. In such a cosmology and practice, the God Mammon and the God Mars dance together, dragging all other values into the wheel and grinding them under their millstone. Such a society looks more like Hobbes's Leviathan in which man is a wolf to man, rather than a humane, solidary, rational and democratic societal community of mankind.

New generations should be educated and socialized on the unity of patriotism and philanthropy, they should adopt and preserve their national cultural identity, but also respect the cultural diversity of others, and the universal values of humanity, i.e. develop a planetary culture of peace and survival of all species on the planet.

Instead of egoism, a war of exclusivity, the supreme principle must become reciprocity and global solidarity, the ethics of active goodness, the religion of justice and charity. Only on those values can a new generation grow that will affirm the ideology and politics of a dialogue between different cultures and civilizations, the equality of all citizens and peoples of the world, the active peaceful coexistence of peoples and states in the modern world. In such a world, politics will once again become the property of citizens and the people, and not the monopoly of parties and populist leaders, regardless of their media rating and real merits for the public good.

Unfortunately, in modern times we are still far from such a society. It will take the efforts of many more generations to build an authentic multipolar democratic order of a just, solidary and responsible associative society, in which "the freedom of each individual will be a condition for the freedom of all". In which politics will not be the "art of illusion", nor the monopoly of politicians alone, but an instrument of civic participatory democracy in arranging one's own relationships, choosing and realizing the future according to common interests. Only in such a horizon of the future is it possible for the principle of reciprocity and solidarity to overcome particularistic egoism and exclusivity.

The point of my paper is contained in the plea that contemporary Serbia needs a radical change of development and management strategies and, in that context, the construction of a system of the functional regionalization as an instrument of participatory democracy for the awakening of labour initiative "from below" and control of the state. Such regionalization, as a form of local and regional self-government, would free the creative forces of the population in the development of the economy, in preserving the ecology and in other fields and activities. Such regionalism should not degenerate into a parastatal institution and the political

refeudalization of Serbia, which would not only nullify the positive effects of its actions, but also lead to the strengthening of disintegration tendencies that would block the efficiency of the state and the realization of its functions. Regionalism as a form of self-government and participatory democracy, on the contrary, should strengthen social and political cohesion, democratic integration and dynamic stability of the functioning of the global system of organization of the state and society.

As the experience of the district management organization of Serbia in the last 30 years has shown, it led to numerous restrictions on the local self-government, making them empty shells while strengthening the institutions of the bureaucratic administration over Serbia, which ultimately blocked its faster development and progress. The Serbian elite talks about the concept of the open Balkans. Such a concept presupposes the internal institutional reform of the administration itself in Serbia: through the development of the local and regional self-government and cities as factors in the processes of the internal democratic integration, European integration and globalization.

The European concept – *a region with a soul* – implies a new regional organization with respect for cultural and ethnic diversity, and consistent exercise of human civil and minority rights. Only in this context can Serbia grow into a modern, legal, democratic and social state, in which identities and regions are respected as equal actors in the realization of the community and unity in the state. Only such Serbia can become a real leader of the “open Balkans” and a role model; the inspiration of the reaffirmation and realization of the slogan of advanced leaders and movements from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, in line with the great anti-colonial struggle – the idea: *Balkans to the Balkan peoples!*, which even today can have a mobilizing role for a new development, security and liberation projects.

In the democratic model of the political and social organization of society, regional policy is not only an instrument of the center and political elites in directing regional development, but also advocacy for a functional development concept of the regions and regionalization of Serbia, which will release the creative energy and initiative of the citizens for the material and spiritual renewal and revival of Serbia. Such a conception assumes that regions have certain forms of economic independence and self-regulation within a single, but polycentric legal-political order.

Instead of the blacksmiths of the “false progress”, new “political bullies” who will rule Serbia arbitrarily and “obligatorily” as the new Serbian princes, Serbia, I underline, urgently needs a new, rational and democratic framework, a model of the regional politics that will be in the function of the:

- a) Release and further development of the country’s economic potential,
- b) Strengthening local self-government and building participatory democracy,
- c) Democratic integration of the multi-ethnic Serbian society.

Serbia can and must wake up “from below”, through the development of the local and regional democracy and the new libertarian order of the global society, not

through bureaucratic mechanisms of the centralizing power and strengthening control⁷.

Pointing to the need to review the development strategy and management model in our country and build a new concept of the regional sustainable progress, the Serbian Sociological Society invites its members to actively engage in all forms of professional engagement in order to learn, educate and strengthen democratic political culture in the processes of the transition and development and sustainable progress of the modern Serbian society.

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⁷ See more in Mitrović, 2008, pp. 157–158.

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РЕГИОНАЛИЗАМ, ПАРТИЦИПАТИВНА ДЕМОКРАТИЈА И ОДРЖИВИ РАЗВОЈ

Сажетак

Савремени развој капитализма заоштрио је класне и регионалне неједнакости и противречности са посебним последицама по положај и развој савремених земаља светске периферије и полупериферије, којима по социолошким обележјима, припадају Балкан и Србија. У раду се најпре разматрају различити концепти, модели и праксе регионалног развоја, а посебно постсоцијалистичких друштава у транзицији. У фокусу проблематизације налази се значај концепта и пракси регионализма за реализацију политике равномерног развоја, за остваривање партиципативне демократије (посредством јачања институција локалне и регионалне самоуправе) и одрживог развоја. На крају аутор излаже потребу формирања Института за регионални развој и могући програм мултидисциплинарних научних истраживања у развоју Србије као модерне демократске европске земље у којој је развој у служби свих њених делова и дело свих стваралачких снага друштва, а не само политичке елите.

Кључне речи: регионални развој, неједнакости у развоју, функционална регионализација Србије, партиципативна демократија, одрживи развој.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: NORMATIVE BASIS, ACTORS, DETERMINANTS⁸

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Abstract

The subject of the paper is the analysis of the normative basis on which the environmental protection policy at the regional level is based, the actors who implement it and the determinants that influence the achievement of the set goals. The purpose of the study is to present and analyse the legal basis that ensures the implementation of the environmental policy and, by outlining the social actors that implement it, to show that achieving positive results in the country as a whole is only possible with activity at the regional level. In order to do this, not only a well-developed regulatory framework is needed, but also consideration of the specifics of the socio-economic, cultural and ecological characteristics of the individual regions, as well as the environmental awareness and motivation of the population to implement pro-environmental behaviour.

In the course of the research, programmatic and regulatory documents are presented, the actors outlined in them with the powers and responsibilities given to them. Information was also used from a series of empirical sociological studies conducted over the past three decades – both nationally representative and comparative between regions with different environmental conditions. The conclusion of the analysis is that individual regions have a specific economic and ecological status, which determines differences in interests, motivation and attitudes for pro-environmental behaviour and regardless of the program and normative documents, the subjective factor is of key importance for the implementation of environmental policy.

⁸ Project: Personal and Institutional Strategies for Prevention and Management of Risks: Specifics and Determinants, funded by Bulgarian National Science Fund under contract KP-06-H55/9.

Keywords: regional development, environmental protection policies, legal basis, environmental awareness, pro-environmental behaviour

Introduction

The topic of the state of the environment has been in the focus of attention of scientists, politicians and society because of its existential importance in both global and regional contexts. The concern caused by the emergence of serious environmental problems focused attention not only on the economic development, considered until then as the main, if not the only, measure of the progress of society, but also on the state of the environment. The concept of sustainable development is naturally emerging and developing, in which equal weight is given to economic development, environmental protection and solving social problems. Moreover, proponents of the idea of strong sustainability put the focus on environmental protection, since “natural capital is limited and not replaceable with human and material capital”, “environmental sustainability” should be prioritized, because “favourable natural conditions for living are a key prerequisite for both economic and social stability” (Mantarova, 2010, p. 81).

A particularly acute problem facing humanity now is the climate change, leading to various extreme natural phenomena and even cataclysms. They have particularly bright projections at the regional and local level. Namely, the balanced development of the regions is of key importance for society as a whole and for its prosperity. That is why the formation and implementation of an ecological policy at the regional level, the coordination of the development of the regions with the protection of the environment, the regulation and the implementation of the roles of the various social actors, require special attention. The purpose of the study is to present the legal basis that ensures the implementation of the environmental policy and, by outlining the social actors that implement it, to show that achieving positive results in the country as a whole is possible only with activity at the regional level. In order to do this, not only a well-developed normative and institutional basis is needed, but also taking into account the specifics of the socio-economic, cultural and ecological characteristics of individual regions, as well as the environmental awareness and motivation of the population for the implementation of proenvironmental behaviour.

In the course of the proposed work, in addition to current program and normative documents, information from a number of empirical sociological studies is also analysed: a nationally representative study for the population over 18 years of age, from December 2022, with a sample size of 937 people; national surveys conducted in 1991 and 2001; research from 1998 with a typological sample, in which the selection of the regions is based on preliminary information about the state of the environment in them, using the administrative-territorial division of the country, three groups of regions were determined: heavily polluted (it includes Ruse and Burgas – sample volume 800 units); moderately polluted (Veliko Tarnovo and Pleven – 700 units) and slightly polluted (Blagoevgrad and Smolyan – 500 units); an express survey among 210 respondents in the Black Sea region from October 2023.

Regulatory Basis

The adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria from 1991 is indisputably the dividing line between two approaches to solving environmental problems in our country, namely, between a statist force approach and one based on the principle of separation of authorities and involving civil society. It marks the beginning of a new environmental strategy, based on the affirmation of the basic principles of protecting human rights and, more specifically, guaranteeing a healthy and favourable environment.

One of the first laws after the adoption of the Constitution is the Law on Environmental Protection, which outlines the foundations of environmental legislation in the country by defining the goals, strategies and general regulatory requirements of the state environmental policy, as well as the responsibilities of institutions and citizens in accordance with their constitutional rights and obligations. The law is based on the three leading principles established in modern environmental legislation and in accordance with the main directives of both the Council of Europe and the EU Council, namely: a) the polluter pays, b) prevention and protection from pollution, and (c) the public has a right to information.

The National Environmental Strategy 2021–2030 is currently in force. It is an integrated document that outlines the general understanding of positive change, the framework and direction of future development, but at the same time includes the characteristics of an operational document for action in the form of a “road map” to achieve the defined goals and priorities. The strategy identifies and prioritizes the key challenges related to environmental protection in the national context. It is a document that provides a reference framework for the preparation and planning of strategies and programs at different levels, allows for permanent and measurable indicator-based monitoring of effects and impacts, and motivates the integration of the principles of environmental protection in all management policies and initiatives. The strategy is based on the following principles: sustainable development; prevention and reduction of risk to human health; the priority of preventing pollution over the subsequent removal of the damage caused by it; public participation and transparency in environmental decision-making; citizens’ awareness of the state of the environment; the polluter pays for the damage caused; preservation, development and protection of ecosystems and their inherent biological diversity; restoration and improvement of the quality of the environment in the polluted and damaged areas; preventing pollution and damage to clean areas and other adverse impacts on them; integration of environmental protection policy into sectorial and regional policies for the development of the economy and public relations; access to justice in environmental matters. Along with it, a Five-Year Action Plan was developed with specific institutional, organizational and investment measures, deadlines, responsible institutions, necessary resources and sources of funding.

Special emphasis areas in the environmental policy in Bulgaria are climate, biodiversity and forests. In view of the changes in the climate registered on a global scale, already in 2014, Bulgaria has adopted a law to limit climate change. It should be especially emphasized that climate policy is a horizontal policy that affects and is

influenced by other policies both at national and European level. The main starting points for integrating environmental policy into other sectorial policies are:

- energy policy affects greenhouse gas emissions, air quality and energy security;
- agricultural policy affects land use, water management and food security and is affected by climate risks;
- transport policy is responsible for the generation of greenhouse gas emissions, but also influences urban planning, regional development and public health.

It is these statements that set the parameters of the policies and regulations in the relevant sectors, so as to minimize their negative impact on the environment.

As for the second emphasis – biodiversity, which is also directly related to regional development, an important role is played by the National Biodiversity Strategy 2030. It is aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the aim of which is to ensure that by 2030 biodiversity in Europe will take a recovery path for people, the planet, the climate and the economy, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. In the National Biodiversity Strategy 2030, threats are indicated, most often the result of human activity – non-ecological use of natural resources; destruction, fragmentation or pollution of natural habitats and habitats of species; invasion of invasive species; change of land ownership, etc. Ecosystems are most at risk, as several different but interrelated threats operate within them, as well as natural habitats subject to loss of floristic and soil diversity. Species with critically low numbers and/or limited reproduction, represented in small and remote populations, are also endangered. In relation to biodiversity, it is also based on the issue of ecosystem services – i.e. the benefits that humans derive directly or indirectly from ecosystem functions. These services preserve biodiversity and the production of ecosystem goods.

Special attention in the program and normative documents is given to the fact that the data on the ecological situation must be publicly available, so that the interested parties receive timely and adequate information necessary in the decision-making process, including in terms of both planned investments and their environmental compatibility.

Regarding the other emphasis directly related to regional development – forest protection, a National Strategy for the Development of the Forestry Sector in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period up to 2030 has been developed. This is a fundamental document that sets the vision and strategic framework of the state policy for achieving long-term and sustainable management of vibrant and productive multifunctional forests while maintaining sustainability and competitiveness of the forest sector, which is the basis for a higher standard of living in the mountainous and rural areas of the country. The sustainable development of the forest sector and continuity in forest planning is regulated in the Law on Forests, where three levels of forest planning are defined – national, regional and local, which is applicable through the National Strategy for the Development of the Forestry Sector, the Strategic Plan for Forestry Development sector and regional

plans for the development of forest territories, as well as at a subsequent level – forestry plans and programs.

National level policies, including environmental policy, find their projection in the regional policies, to the greatest extent are realized precisely at the regional and local level, according to the specifics of the conditions in the individual regions. Therefore, the regulation of the powers and responsibilities of one or other entities at this level is of great importance. With this in mind, a system of normative documents has been developed, in which the role of a wide range of social actors is regulated with a view to achieving intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth and high employment.

Environmental protection is invariably among the priorities in the National Strategy for Regional Development, in regional development plans and programs for strategic planning of local development. During the development and implementation of these documents, there is a close interaction between the regional development management bodies, economic entities, social partners and civil society. The main instrument for managing the municipality is the Municipal Development Plan, and the municipal council, the mayor and specialized directorates and departments in the local administration are responsible for its development and successful implementation. They partner with relevant professional guilds (landscape architects, urban architects) and with independent experts – ecologists. An Environmental Impact Assessment is required for every construction and industrial project. At the regional level, the responsibility for this is delegated to the directors of the regional environmental and water inspectorates; the directors of the basin directorates for water management and the directors of the national parks.

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As has been repeatedly pointed out, policies are implemented by social subjects, both individual and supra-individual. Therefore, their motivation and their actual behaviour is of utmost importance. Motivation and behaviour itself are formed in a dynamic interaction of interests, goals, values. This means that the state of consciousness of people, their judgments about the situation, about the actions of other social subjects, the awareness and hierarchy of their current and prospective interests, etc., is of key importance. The information of this type that empirical sociological research gives us follows to be monitored dynamically in order to be able to form an adequate environmental policy and mechanisms for its realization.

The environment is a topic that permanently excites society. After the highly negative assessments of its condition, “defined in the early 1990s by two-thirds of the adult population as a very serious and serious problem, this share shows a trend of significant and sustained decline” (Mantarova, 2014, p. 230). Indeed, according to objective indicators, now the situation is significantly better, but the fact should not be ignored that, especially in certain periods, in their everyday life, people face existential problems of an economic nature, and they not only come to the fore, but also push others out of sight with time-delayed consequences.

Although now the topic of the environment is not leading in public awareness, the sensitivity to its condition is preserved. It can be seen that about a third of the population shows a strong criticality towards the state of its main components, important for people's health.

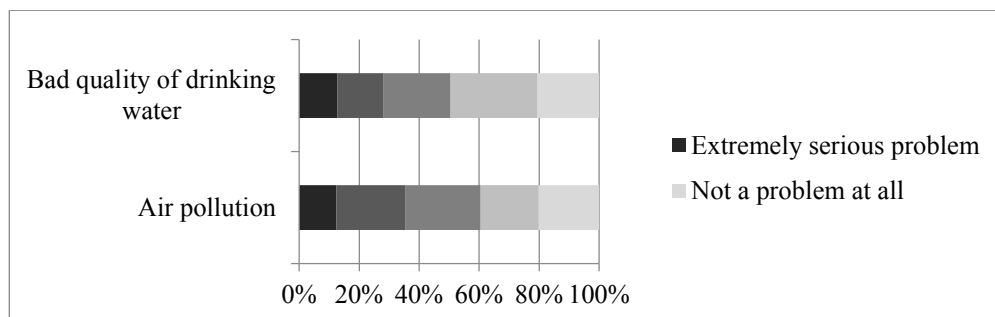


Chart 1. How severe are these problems in the locality where you live?

Source: Empirical sociological research *Prevention and Management of Risks*.

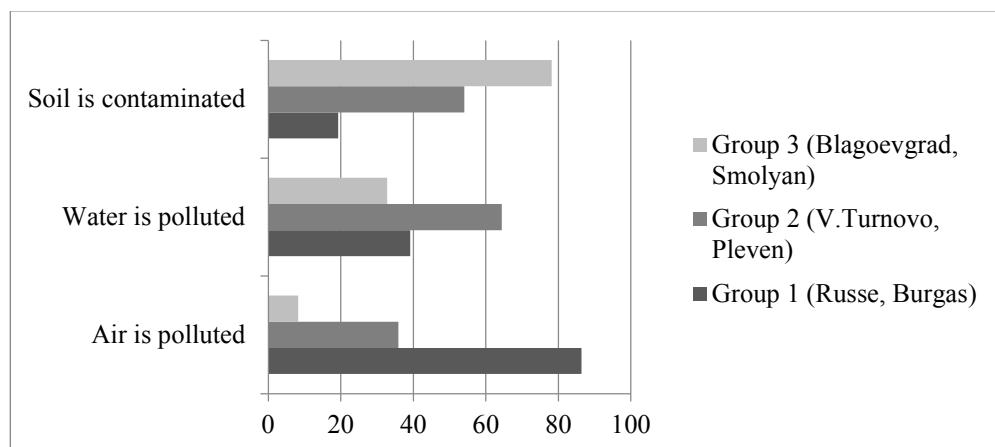


Chart 2. Assessment of the condition of the main components of environment.

Source: Research *Climate Change and Environmental Legal Awareness (Regional Discourse)*.

In this case, it is important to emphasize that at the regional level the picture is highly heterogeneous both in terms of objective conditions and subjective assessments and attitudes. This heterogeneity should be considered in the context of the strong regional differentiation observed in the last three decades, even regional polarization and marginalisation in the country. And “the marginalisation of territories is a prerequisite for prioritizing other problems and for neglecting environmental ones – both at the institutional, community, and individual level” (Mantarova 2020, p. 147). What has been said finds definite confirmation in the study of the regions with a typological sample, which highlights the differences between them and, accordingly, the dominance of problems of different nature. While in settlements of Group 1 (poor ecological status) polluted air is in the first place and is apparently a problem for almost everyone, polluted soil bothers the

people of Group 3, which objectively has the best characteristics. In Group 2, people most often complain about water pollution. This motley picture emphasizes the need to apply a specific concrete approach to solving environmental problems in regional policies.

The outlined substantial regional differences in the assessment of the state of the key environmental components are not, however, reproduced to the same extent in the opinions about the risk of damage to health. The shares of those who gave a positive answer to the question about the presence of a threat to health due to the state of the environment in the three groups of regions are relatively close. Apparently, a different sensitivity threshold has been established over time.

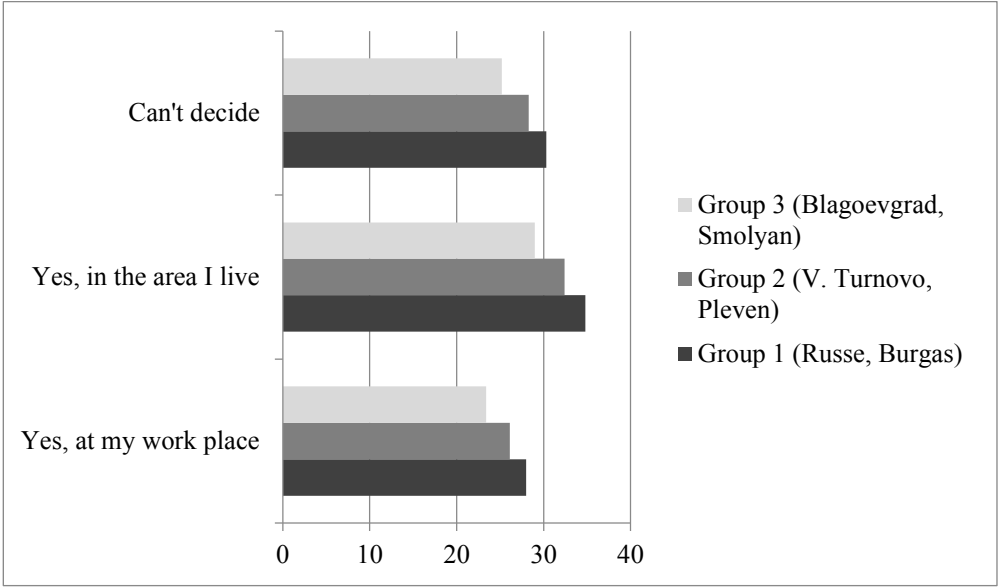


Chart 3. Is there a danger to your health due to a polluted environment?

Source: *Climate Change and Environmental Legal Awareness (Regional Discourse) Study*.

The research at the national level from the end of 2022 gives a general picture for the country:

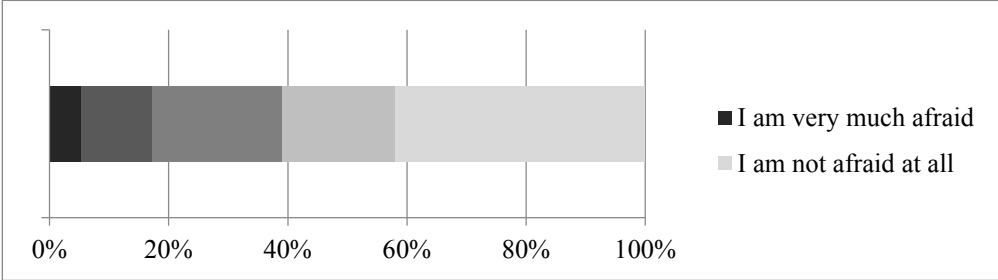


Chart 4. Are you afraid that environmental pollution may harm your health?

Source: *Empirical Sociological Research Prevention and Management of Risks*.

Although for methodological reasons there is no possibility of a correct comparison, it is still evident that there is a decrease in the number of people who believe that the state of the environment poses a health risk. As can be seen, on average for the country, the share of those assessing the risk as sufficiently significant is below the values for the settlements from the group with the best environmental condition at the end of the 1990s. This is undoubtedly the result of the objective improvement of environmental parameters.

However, when it comes to the risk to children's health, here the concerns are significantly greater. This can be explained both by the understanding of the greater vulnerability of the children's organism, and by the traditionally prioritized care for children and the known neglect of one's own health.

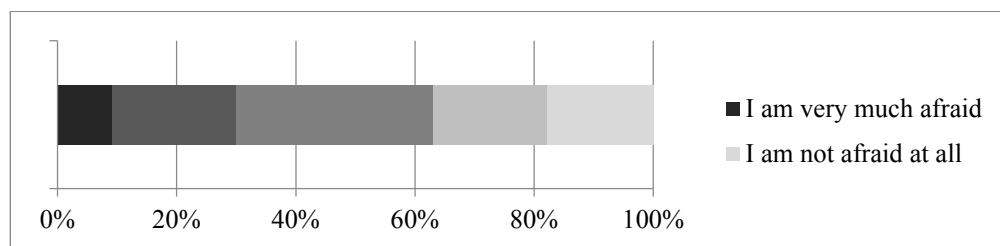


Chart 5. Are you afraid that environmental pollution may harm your children's health?

Source: Empirical Sociological Research *Prevention and Management of Risks*.

At the level that science and technology have now reached, it is quite possible to carry out economic development without damaging the environment. Naturally, at every level (from global to local) this has its price – both economic and social. Especially for some regions. In this sense, regional development is faced with the need to choose between different developments options, bringing to the fore one or another priority.

The information collected during the research shows the distribution of preferences.

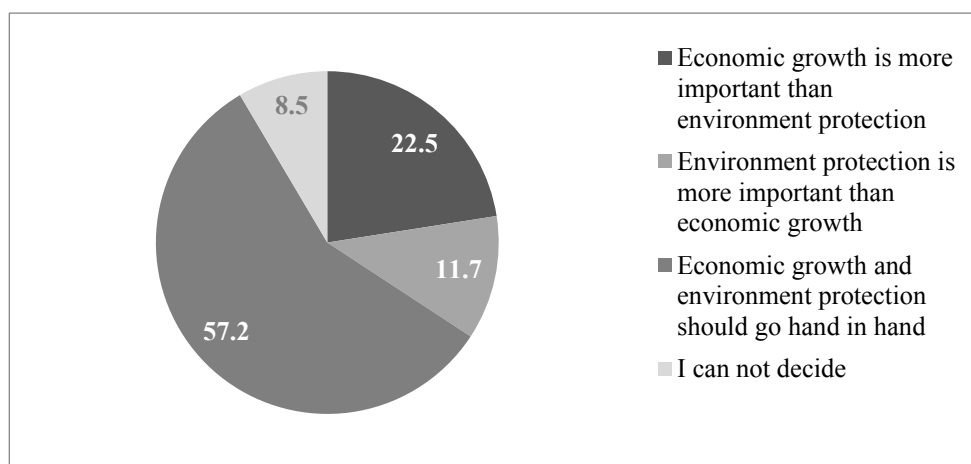


Chart 6. Which of the statements is closest to your opinion?

Source: Empirical Sociological Research *Prevention and Management of Risks*.

It can be seen that the opinion that economic development and environmental protection go hand in hand is strongly dominant. However, the fact that more than one fifth of the respondents give preference to economic development, and another 8% cannot determine their position, cannot be ignored. It is interesting to turn to studies going back in time, which show the variations depending on the spatial concretization of the question. Previous research shows the differences in positions when answering a general question and when specifying about one's own town. In the latter case, the solution of social problems (which could not be done without a stable and efficient economy) comes first, followed by economic development. Only about one fifth put environmental protection first. Less than one third (32.6%) of those who generally declared themselves to be a priority for environmental protection, maintain their opinion when it comes to the development of their own settlement. The remaining two thirds are distributed in an approximate ratio of 2:1 to "solving social problems" (46.2%) and "economic efficiency" (21.1%) (Mantarova 2014, pp. 269–270).

A question addressed personally to the respondents about their willingness to work in unhealthy conditions shows clearly noticeable dynamics of the positions over time. While in the 1991 survey, more than half of the respondents declared that they would in no case agree to work under conditions harmful to their health, in subsequent surveys, the proportion of those who answered this significantly decreased. At the same time, the percentage of those who stated that they would agree to work under conditions endangering their health if they were paid well or if there was no work, increased significantly. While in 1991 38.4% of a national sample answered that they would never agree to such a job, in 1998 (i.e. after almost a decade of severe economic crisis, impoverishment and collapse of the economy and hyperinflation in 1996–1997), only 15.1% expressed this opinion. Those who would agree for a higher salary of 7.7% became 33.3%, and those who would do so if they were unemployed – from 17.4% to 36.8% (Naumova, 2003, p. 481 et seq.).

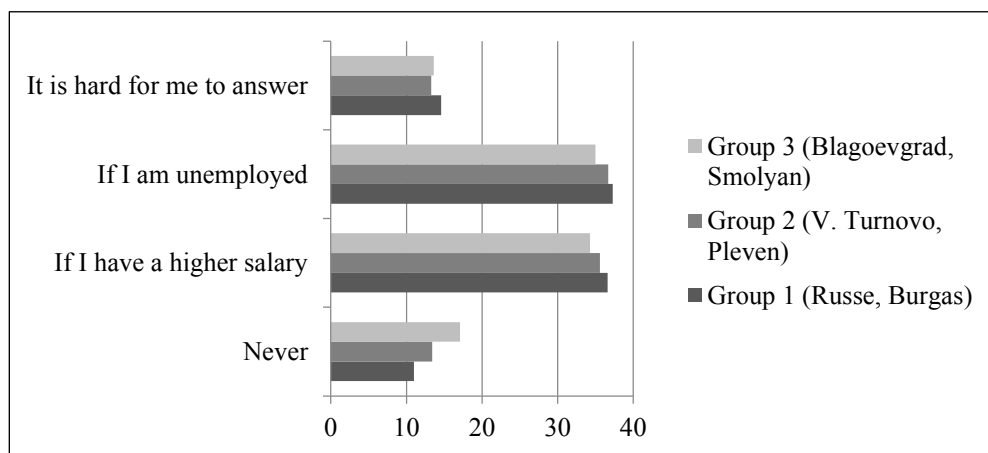


Chart 7. Would you agree to work under conditions harmful to your health due to a polluted environment?

Source: *Climate Change and Environmental Legal Awareness (Regional Discourse) Study*.

It is obvious that the harsh economic realities have changed the priorities and the hierarchy of values, and not in the direction of protecting human health and the environment.

At the same time, it can be seen that the difference in the ecological status of the settlement affects only the categorical unwillingness to work in a harmful environment. The lower percentage of those who gave this answer in settlements with poor environmental status is probably largely due to the habituation to work in such conditions, and they have come to be accepted, if not as normal, then at least as acceptable and/or inevitable. For the other options, the differences are insignificant. But the general conclusion is that health hazards are massively underestimated and there is a high willingness under the influence of economic factors to ignore them.

Economic factors and interests are key to the ranking of values and priorities and hence to behaviour. After emerging in the early 1970s and manifesting distinctly and sustainably for almost four decades, the trend of transition from material to post-material orientations was broken with the economic crisis of 2008. In its course, post-material values recede into the background, which categorically indicates the importance of the material factor, of the satisfaction of basic material needs when constructing the value hierarchy (Mantarova, 2014).

Similarly in our country – studies from 2010 and 2012 show that the issue of the state of the environment is moved to the periphery of the problems worrying society and recedes far behind unemployment and the economic situation. When social subjects are faced with a choice of an alternative nature, values and goals with a material orientation most often come to the fore, priority is given to solving the problems of today.

The theme of prioritizing economic or environmental benefits has many particularities. In each of the cases, the interests of different social entities collide, and they determine positions and behaviour. The abstract principled advantage of environmental considerations melts away when they are weighed against personal interests. There is a clash of interests – personal, group, society as a whole; momentary and prospective, etc. For example, coal mining gives work to tens of thousands, but at the same time damages the health of hundreds of thousands. Transport in old non-green vehicles is affordable, but it is a powerful air polluter, and replacement is expensive, and for some, prohibitive due to financial impossibility. Agriculture also creates environmental problems – the pursuit of higher yields and profits from crops is tied to the use of harmful pesticides, chemical fertilizers and GMO varieties.

The issue also has spatial dimensions. Research shows that people from mountain areas (and also young people, who are generally significantly more environmentally minded) who use ski facilities for both leisure and business are more tolerant of their construction in user-friendly places and withdraw further back the concern for preserving the mountain nature in an authentic form. At the same time, when it comes to the territorially remote sand dunes, their views definitely become signifi-

cantly more pro-environmental. The differences are even more visible when it comes to the use of own lands.

A current situation where there is a conflict of interest is related to the fate of coal mining and coal plants. The strong influence of interests, incl. existential, of those working there and their families is obvious, especially in the absence of clear and definite perspectives. The desire to improve the environment, to reduce the factors affecting climate change conflicts with economic interests. The closing of the plants has an undoubted positive environmental effect, but at the same time for those employed in them and in the related economic activities it means a lack of work, and for many energy consumers it means an increase in prices with the resulting consequences. Indicative of the ambiguous attitude is the information from an, albeit unrepresentative, survey from October 2023 – a third of the respondents (at the same time from areas that are not strongly directly affected) expressed the opinion that the plants should be closed only if jobs are provided to those employed in them.

The information on prioritizing economic and environmental results in agriculture is interesting. When researching in the two neighbouring regions in the north-east region – Dobrich (with mainly large-scale production and the largest producer of cereals) and Varna, the results are quite different. While more than three quarters of the respondents from the Varna region (76.9%) give preference to preserving the quality of the soil over obtaining greater yields, it is completely different in the Dobrich region – there are supporters of preserving the environment, although at the expense of a lower harvest, half (50.1%) of those who answered the survey.

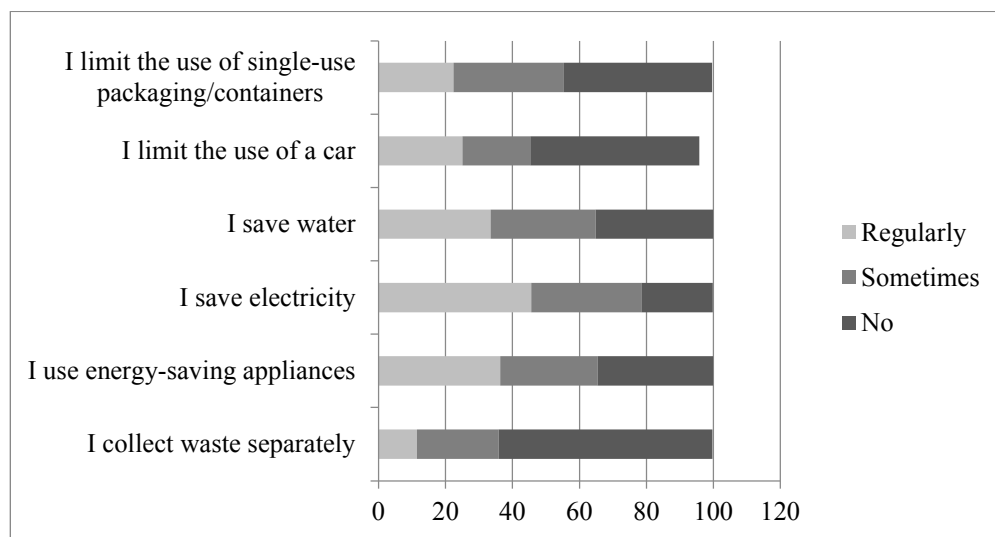


Chart 8. What do you personally do to reduce the harmful impact on the environment?

Source: Empirical Sociological Research *Prevention and Management of Risks*.

Given the declared dissatisfaction with the state of the environment and the significance of each one's actions, it is important to see what the actual behaviour of people is.

It can be seen that energy saving is most often declared. It must be said, however, that this is most likely due exclusively to economic reasons. Most likely, the same applies to saving water, especially considering the sharp increase in its price in the last few years, and the big difference in those giving such an answer now and ten years ago. The share of people who collect waste separately is disconcertingly low – only 11.5% do it regularly and a little more than 20% – sometimes.

Conclusion

The implementation of environmental and sectorial policies at both the national and regional levels is carried out by a wide range of individual and supra-individual entities. Regardless of the program documents and the legal regulation of the powers and responsibilities, the subjective factor is of key importance – the attitudes, the motivation, and the implementation of pro-environmental behaviour. Along this line, significant regional differences exist, determined by the economic and ecological status of distinct regions, by specific group and individual interests and priorities. The general conclusion is that in order to have pro-environmental behaviour, not only awareness and internalization of relevant values is needed, but also a certain level of satisfaction of material needs, as well as conditions for the realization of economic interests.

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ЖИВОТНА СРЕДИНА И РЕГИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ: НОРМАТИВНА БАЗА, АКТЕРИ, ДЕТЕРМИНАНТЕ

Сажетак

Предмет рада је анализа нормативне основе на којој се темељи политика заштите животне средине на регионалном нивоу, актери који је имплементирају и детерминанте које утичу на достизање постављених циљева. Сврха истраживања је да се презентује и анализира правна основа која обезбеђује имплементацију политике заштите животне средине и да, осврћући се на друштвене актере који је имплементирају, покаже да је постизање позитивних резултата у земљи као целини могуће једино кроз активности на регионалном нивоу. Како би до тога дошло потребан је не само добро развијен регулаторни оквир, већ и уважавање специфичности социо-економских, културних и еколошких карактеристика сваког региона, као и свест о животној средини и мотивација популације да имплементира про-еколошко понашање. У истраживању су презентована програмска и регулаторна документа, те наведени актери и њихова овлашћења и одговорности. Такође коришћени су подаци из серије емпиријских социолошких студија спроведених током протекле три деценије – национално репрезентативних и компаративних истраживања региона са различитим карактеристикама животне средине. Закључак анализе је да сваки регион има специфичан економски и еколошки статус који одређује разлике у погледу интереса, мотивације и ставова неопходних за проеколошко понашање, а да је независно од програмских и нормативних докумената, субјективни фактор од кључне важности за имплементацију политике заштите животне средине.

Кључне речи: регионални развој, политике заштите животне средине, правни темељи, еколошка свест, проеколошко понашање.

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF POST-YUGOSLAV
COUNTRIES IN CONTEXT OF BILATERAL
TREATIES/AGREEMENTS – MANIFESTATIONS OF MUTUAL
SYMPATHY OR A DIPLOMATIC NECESSITY
(REFLECTIONS)**

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Abstract

The main goal of the research titled “International Cooperation of Post-Yugoslav Countries in Context of Bilateral Treaties/Agreements – Manifestations of Mutual Sympathy or a Diplomatic Necessity” is drawing attention to the conclusion of bilateral treaties/agreements that regulate various issues. It is very interesting to see whether all countries that came out of the Yugoslav federation were equally interested in international cooperation, especially in terms of signing bilateral treaties/agreements. It is interesting to see which of the countries of the Yugoslav Federation has so far signed the highest number of bilateral treaties/agreements with “sister countries”, and which one is the least active in this area. Will the answer to these questions make it possible to determine “close,” “remote” or “very remote” mutual sympathies among these countries? Equally interesting is the notion on whether bilateral treaties/agreements show sympathy between states or are simply a result of diplomatic necessity. All post-Yugoslav countries will be analysed, i.e. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia/North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro (Kosovo will not be considered due to its problematic status). Two research methods were mainly used: documentation analysis and comparative method.

Keywords: post-Yugoslav countries, international cooperation, bilateral agreements

Introduction

Each country, in terms of international cooperation, usually has a number of bilateral and multilateral treaties/agreements signed. The same applies to post-Yugoslav countries, which after “leaving” the Yugoslav federation became independent countries, faced with deciding on their own foreign policy. Since the dissolution of their common home, which was a federation of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia (now North Macedonia), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, establishment of their mutual cooperation has been a part of their foreign policies. That is why it is very interesting to see whether all the countries that came out of the Yugoslav federation are equally interested in international cooperation, especially in terms of signing bilateral treaties/agreements. It is interesting to see which of the countries of the Yugoslav Federation has so far signed the highest number of bilateral treaties/agreements with “sister countries”, and which one is the least active in this area. Will the answer to these questions make it possible to determine “close”, “remote” or “very remote” mutual sympathies among these countries? Equally interesting is the notion on whether bilateral treaties/agreements show sympathy between states or are simply a result of a diplomatic necessity. A very interesting question is in which year was there the greatest interest in this type of diplomatic activity. All post-Yugoslav countries will be analysed, i.e. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia/North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, (Kosovo and Metohija will not be considered due to its problematic status). First of all, we will talk about international cooperation and foreign policy and then we will discuss post-Yugoslav countries, with special emphasis on bilateral agreements/treaties signed among them. At the end of the paper, there will be a summary where final conclusions from the analysis will be given. The chosen topic is not entirely new. Regarding foreign policy, there are many studies on history of agriculture in different countries, including post-Yugoslav countries; however, the research questions that this author asks are quite an original research scenario, which no one has elaborated well so far. Therefore, this paper fills out an unexplored research space, especially in the professional political science literature on the subject.

The work was completed mainly using the two research methods: documentation analysis and comparative method.

A Few Words on the Framework of Foreign Policies and International Cooperation – Selected Review of Theoretical Findings

International cooperation is the essence of foreign policy of every country and it consists, among other things, of concluding treaties/agreements between countries. Taking into account the number of parties to the treaty, international treaties are divided into bilateral and multilateral, while countries can also sign protocols, memoranda, joint statements, etc. It is not without significance which countries are in the sphere of interest when conducting the foreign policy. After all, this is proven by implementation of specific common interests in different spheres of policy. There is no need to convince anyone that a foreign policy is the result of the domestic policy of each country. If this is taken as an axiom, it means that by considering a

current foreign policy profile, the political preferences of those currently in power can be assessed. Therefore, foreign policy is part of the overall policy of each country. It is also worth noting that there is a close link between foreign and domestic policy, as well as the political and social system of a country. A country, understood as a political organization of society, is the main creator of foreign policy which is implemented through specialized bodies. At the same time, obviously, each country develops only in accordance with its goals and is guided by understanding of the national interest and the *raison d'état*. In that sense, I completely share the position of Ivo Visković, who stated that

among the many determinants of foreign policy, it is important to emphasize the determinants of the social ("domestic") system which include geographical determinants, demographic determinants, economic determinants, characteristics of a country, political characteristics of a country (Visković, 2018, p.14).

Many definitions of foreign policy can be found in the literature on this topic, and one of them is the definition of the American political scientist Joshua S. Goldstein, according to whom it "is a government strategy that gives direction to activities of a country in the international forum" (Goldstein, 1994, p. 95). Therefore, the essence of foreign policy is in the implementation of country's primary and secondary goals through its institutions and politicians, in specific international environment and existing situations, as well as the way in which the process of their implementation takes place, which is also closely related to concrete decision-making process. In that sense, it is important to point out that according to the *Vienna Convention of 1969* (UN, 2005), an international treaty, by definition, is concluded between countries, in writing, and governed by international law, regardless of whether it is embodied in one document or in two or more documents, and without regard of its specific name. Conclusion of international treaties is part of diplomatic activities, the purpose of which is, among other things, the negotiation of agreements, treaties, etc., which is undoubtedly the reflection of the art of negotiation. In the legal dictionary, different names are used to denote acts that have the status of international treaties – treaty, agreement, convention, pact, charter, protocol. These differences, as is well known, do not indicate a difference in content. Regardless of the name, all these acts, if they meet conditions stipulated by the *Vienna Convention* on contractual law, are considered international treaties. Namely, according to Article 2 of this Convention, an international treaty is any agreement between states concluded in writing and regulated by international law, regardless of its name and regardless of whether it consists of one or more acts that are interconnected. Paragraph 1, Article 2 of the *Law on Conclusion and Execution of International Treaties of the Republic of Serbia* (2013) contains a similar provision. Therefore, the name "international treaty" is a common name for all these acts, and its specific name derives from some specificity which, from a legal point of view, is not of decisive importance (for example, from the practice of a certain international organization, the situation in which it was adopted, the area which it governs, etc.). International treaties that have been confirmed and published in accordance with the constitution are an integral part of the domestic legal system. This means that they are considered part of

domestic law and that the presumption of *iura novit curia* or *the court knows the law* applies to them – just as the judge who knows about the existence of certain laws and knows their provisions, must also know about the existence of certain international treaties and know their provisions (Živković & Marjanović, 2019).

International Cooperation between Croatia and Slovenia through Example of Agreements⁹/Treaties¹⁰

Just like other republics of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia, from the moment it became an independent country, is working on forming its own foreign policy, which implies establishment of diplomatic relations, including signing of international treaties/agreements. Taking into account only bilateral international treaties that the Republic of Croatia has concluded with other countries, Croatia and Slovenia have a total of 136 signed documents¹¹ on mutual cooperation, among which there are 38 agreements and 18 treaties. The rest are cooperation protocols, decisions, memoranda, etc. As already mentioned, only agreements and treaties will be of particular interest in this paper. In relation to the above-mentioned, there are some interesting questions: in which period was the highest number of these documents signed and which spheres they are most often concerned with. The limited scope of the paper allows providing only a summary and not a detailed explanation.

The first four agreements between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia were signed even before the declaration of independence of these two countries. The first two were signed on 6 February 1992: the *Agreement on establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries*, and the *Agreement on economic cooperation*. The third was the *Agreement on the return and treatment of*

⁹ Agreement – means to agree on something, to understand each other, to agree on something. An agreement is a decision made by two or more countries, individuals or companies. The final decision of the agreement is a result of the negotiation process between various parties. In order for the agreement to gain more force, it is customary to formalize them in writing. In this way, all the agreed conditions will be collected and specified in detail. See: <https://hr.economy-pedia.com/11037999-agreement>

¹⁰ Treaty – Treaty is a consensual expression of will of two or more subjects aimed at achieving permissible legal effects consisting of creation, termination or change of certain legal relationship. Treaty is a bilateral legal transaction, i.e. it occurs only if there has been a consensual expression of will of two or more subjects, in contrast to unilateral legal transactions where legal effect is created by statement or on the basis of statement of will of one party. Treaties are most common in compulsory law, but they are also encountered in the field of labour, property, family and other branches of law. Basic classification of treaties is into consensual ones, which are created by agreement of the parties to the treaty, and real ones, which are created by handing over things from one party to another; then to formal and informal; and also to the named ones, which are provided for by law, and the unnamed ones, which are defined by law and do not have a specific name. If form of a treaty or other legal transaction is defined by law or agreement of parties as a constitutive element, that legal transaction must be concluded in that form or it will not produce legal effect. For agreements on future procedures to be implemented, see: <https://www.egzemplar.com/ugovori>

¹¹ The list of all concluded treaties between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia is provided here: *Overview of bilateral international treaties of the Republic of Croatia by country*. <https://mvep.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=21905&country=120&url=print>, pp. 1–34

exiles from the Republic of Croatia, signed on 9 March 1992, and the fourth was the *Agreement on the abolition of visas* from 15 May 1992. The *Agreement on the carriage of passengers and goods in international cross-border traffic* was signed on 14 July 1992. Only one agreement was signed in 1993. It was the *Agreement on establishment and competence of the body for identifying and marking the common border*, signed on 30 July.

Six agreements were signed between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in the following year, 1994. Three of them were signed on 7 February: The *Agreement on trade and economic relations and cooperation*, the *Agreement on employment*, and the *Agreement on cultural and educational cooperation*. Two agreements were signed on 8 July 1994: the *Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation* and the *Agreement on scheduled air traffic* between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia.

Only one agreement, the *Agreement on veterinary cooperation*, was signed on 13 September 1995. The following six agreements were signed in 1997: The *Agreement on railway traffic across the state border* on 2 April, the *Agreement on social security*, the *Agreement on amendment of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on the abolition of visas*, and the *Agreement on border traffic and cooperation* on 28 April; the *Agreement on the protection against natural and civilizational disasters* on 22 September; the *Agreement on international combined transport*, on 12 December; and the *Agreement on the encouragement and mutual protection of investments* on 12 December.

In 1998, the following two agreements were signed: the *Agreement on cooperation between the Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia*, on 22 January, and the *Agreement on timely exchange of information in the event of a radiological hazard*, on 22 April.

The *Agreement on cross-border police cooperation* between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia was signed on 6 November 2002.

Two agreements were signed in 2003: the *Agreement on cooperation in the field of defence* from 14 March, and the *Agreement on simplified border control in public and railway traffic*.

An agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia *on the handover and reception of persons whose entry or stay is illegal* was signed on 10 June 2005, as well as the *Agreement on Amendments to the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on Trade and Economic Relations and Cooperation*.

The *Agreement on cooperation between the Administration for Execution of Criminal Sanctions of the Republic of Slovenia and the Administration for the Prison System of the Republic of Croatia* was signed on 13 April 2007.

The *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on arrangement of military cemeteries* was signed on 12 May 2008.

The *Agreement on the construction of a road border bridge on the river Sutla at the interstate border road crossing Miljana-Imeno* was signed on 6 July 2010.

Eleven years later, only one agreement was signed – the *Agreement on the construction of a road border crossing for international road traffic at Kaštel (CRO) – Dragonja (SLO)* on 16 April 2021.

Table 1. Number of agreements concluded between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia in the period 1992–2023.

Year	Number
1992	5
1993	1
1994	6
1995	1
1996	0
1997	8 (including 1 administrative)
1998	2
1999	0
2000	0
2001	0
2002	1
2003	2
2004	0
2005	2
2006	0
2007	1
2008	1
2009	1
2010	1
2011	1
2012–2020	0
2021	1
2022	0
2023	4 (including 1 administrative)
Total	38 (including 2 administrative)

Source: Own elaboration based on the *Overview of bilateral international treaties of the Republic of Croatia by country*. See more at: <https://mvep.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=21905&country=120&url=print%201%E2%80%9334>

Four agreements were signed in 2023, including an administrative one: the *Agreement on construction of a road bridge over the Kamenica river between Obrež (Republic of Croatia) and Božakovo (Republic of Slovenia) on the Croatian-Slovenian border* was signed on 29 March. The *Agreement on cross-border cooperation in the provision of emergency health care* and the *Agreement on solidarity measures to protect security of gas supply* were signed on 14 July. The administrative *Agreement on cooperation in the field of emergency health care (concluded) between the Ministry of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia*, signed on 17 July (Ibidem).

Apart from these agreements, many treaties were also signed between these two countries. The first treaty was signed shortly after the declaration of independence of these two countries.

On 20 July 1992, a treaty between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia *on military pensions* was signed.

Two treaties were signed in the following year, both on 4 June 1993: a treaty between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia *on acceptance of persons at the common state border*, and the *Treaty on fight against terrorism, smuggling, drug abuse and organized crime*.

Four treaties were signed in 1994. Three of them were signed on 7 February: the *Treaty on international enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters*, the *Treaty on sea fishing* and the *Treaty between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters*. On 8 July, the *Treaty on extraditions* was signed. In 1995, only one treaty was signed, *on sea fishing*, on 5 June. In 1996, also just one treaty was signed, *on regulation of water management relations*, on 25 October.

Several individual treaties were signed between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia in the following years: the *Treaty on free trade* on 12 December 1997, the *Treaty on regulation of property relations*, on 8 October 1999, the *Treaty on regulation of status and other legal relations related to investment, exploitation and decommissioning of the Krško nuclear power plant* on 19 December 2000, the *Treaty on mutual assistance in customs matters* on 10 June 2005, the *Treaty on mutual protection of classified data* on 15 April 2011, the *Treaty on payment of overhead costs at border crossings* was signed on 13 May 2014, the *Treaty on Amendment to the Agreement between the governments on the introduction of joint official posts for conducting border control* on 23 January 2015 (Ibidem).

Considering the above, it should be noted that the highest number of agreements between Slovenia and Croatia were concluded in 1997 (8) and 1992 (5). In the years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2022, and in the period 2012–2020, no agreements were signed. As for the treaties, the highest number of them were signed in 1994 (4) and 2015 (3). No treaties were signed in the years: 1998, 2000, in the periods: 2002–2004, 2006–2012, and in 2016.

Table 2. Number of concluded treaties between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia in the period 1992–2023.

Year	Number
1992	1
1993	2
1994	4
1995	1
1996	1
1997	1
1998	0
1999	1
2000	0
2001	1
2002–2004	0
2005	2
2006–2012	0
2011	1
2014	1
2015	3
2016–2023	0
Total	19

Source: Own elaboration based on: *Overview of bilateral international agreements of the Republic of Croatia by country. A collection of international agreements. List of international agreements and international acts concluded between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Slovenia*, pp. 1–34.

Cooperation among the Post-Yugoslav Countries through Example of Treaties/Agreements

Regarding bilateral relations between the Republic of Slovenia and other post-Yugoslav countries, according to information from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, there are 49 agreements/protocols and memoranda of understanding currently in force (Republic of Serbia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bilateral relations: Slovenia). The first agreement *on trade and economic cooperation* between the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia was signed on 23 March 2001. An agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia *on police cooperation* was signed on 14 November 2012. On 1 February 2018, the last agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia *on employment of citizens of the Republic of Serbia in the Republic of Slovenia* was signed (Ibidem). In that sense, it is important to point out that current relations between Slovenia and Serbia are characterized by dynamic dialogue and successful economic and trade

cooperation (Ibidem). Slovenia is one of the biggest investors in Serbia. According to Slovenian statistical data, the Republic of Serbia is in the first place in terms of the volume of Slovenian investments abroad (Ibidem).

On 11 June 2003, the agreement was signed between the Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia “*on avoidance of double taxation in relation to income and property taxes*” (Ibidem). It is worth noting here that this was before Serbia and Montenegro became fully independent countries, which was the case three years later, in 2006.

From 1996 to 2016, a total of 53 international bilateral treaties were signed¹². The first agreement, when Macedonia became an independent state, was the *Agreement on regulation of relations and improvement of cooperation between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia*, signed on 8 April 1996 (Ibidem). In the period 1996–1997, a total of 9 agreements were signed; only one treaty was signed on 4 September 1996 between the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia *on avoidance of double taxation in relation to income and property taxes* (International bilateral agreements. Macedonia). Regarding agreements from this period, it is worth mentioning that they were concerned with issues such as: *customs cooperation and mutual assistance* (4 September 1996), *air traffic* (4 September 1996), *regulation of border railway traffic* (4 September 1996), *international road transport of passengers and goods* (4 September 1996), *mutual encouragement and protection of investments* (4 September 1996), *veterinary medicine* (24 April 1997), *plant protection and plant quarantine* (23 April 1997), *scientific and technical cooperation* (3 July 1997), *education, culture and sports* (3 July 1997) (Ibidem, p. 1).

In the period 2000–2010, a total of 7 agreements were signed and, on 23 February 2001, only one treaty, between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia *on location and description of state border*. The topics of agreements concluded in this period were: *social security* (29 December 2000), *preservation of cultural monuments in Belgrade and by the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Skopje* (4 March 2005), *cooperation in the field of defence* (10 June 2009), *economic cooperation* (22 July 2009), *regulation of border traffic regime* (18 September 2010), *handover and reception of persons whose entry or stay is illegal* (4 October 2010) (Ibidem, p. 3, 4). An agreement between the ACG and the Republic of Macedonia *on the protection of the Serbian and Montenegrin national minorities in the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian national minorities in Serbia and Montenegro*, signed on 6 July 2004, seems very interesting (Ibidem, p. 3, 6).

In the period 2011–2016, a total of 13 agreements and 3 treaties were signed between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia.

¹² There are various documents: agreements, treaties, protocols, programs. See: *International bilateral agreements. Macedonia* <https://www.mfa.rs/sites/default/files/inline-files/makedonija.pdf>

The treaties were signed on the same day, 29 November 2011, and they were: a treaty *on mutual enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters*; a treaty *on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters*, and a treaty *on extradition* (Ibidem, pp. 4, 5).

Agreements from this period were concerned with issues such as: *travel of citizens of the two countries* (3 October 2011), *police cooperation* (30 November 2011), *security, food and veterinary medicine* (3 February 2012), *phytosanitary cooperation* (3 February 2012), *employment of family members of staff of diplomatic and consular missions* (18 February 2013), *mutual recognition of public documents on acquired education and professional, academic and scientific titles* (21 February 2014), *exchange and mutual protection of secret data* (28 February 2014), *mutual recognition of driver's licenses* (18 July 2014), *joint use of diplomatic and consular offices of the two countries* (15 September 2014), *establishment of border procedures for the railway border crossing Preševo-Tabanovci* (16 February 2015), *economic cooperation* (16 February 2016) (Ibidem, pp. 4–6).

Regarding the process of European integrations, the *Agreement on cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia regarding the process of accession to the European Union*, signed on 18 February 2013, deserves special attention (Ibidem, p. 5).

Regarding cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and other post-Yugoslav countries, the following can be stated: Bosnia and Herzegovina signed 19 treaties and 16 agreements¹³ with the Republic of Croatia in the period 1995–2003, among which the most interesting are the following: A treaty signed on 24 March 1995 *on economic cooperation*. On 14 March 1996, *on determination of border crossings*. Two treaties were signed on 11 May 1996: the *Treaty on implementation of the Agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina ensuring the passage of Croatia through territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, and the *Treaty on implementation of the Agreement ensuring the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina access to Jadran through territory of the Republic of Croatia*, dated 3 July 1999, relating to the state border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia. Treaties between these two countries that were concluded in 2000 are the following: *on cooperation in handover and reception of persons whose stay is illegal* (27 July 2000), and on the same date, *on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters* and the *Treaty on social security* (04 October 2000). Also, the *Treaty on free trade* (19 December 2000). One treaty was signed in 2001, *on determination of border crossings* (6 April 2001). In the next year, on 17 June 2002, the *Treaty on joint locations at border crossings* was signed. On the same date, the *Treaty on cooperation in fight against terrorism, drug smuggling and organized crime*, on 23 July 2002, the *Treaty on amendment to the Treaty on encouragement of mutual investments*, on 18 December, the *Treaty on cultural and sports cooperation*. The following two treaties were signed on 5 March 2003: the first one *on border traffic and cooperation*, the second

¹³ For details: https://www.mvp.gov.ba/vanjska_politika_bih/bilateralni_odnosi/medunarodni_ugovori/prema_drzavama/Default.aspx?template_id=16&s1=1213&id=7768

one *on mutual abolition of visas*. A treaty between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia *on cooperation in the area of victims of war in BiH who were members of HVO (Croatian Defence Council) and their family members* was signed on 23 December 2005, and it is in my opinion of particular significance.

Two agreements were signed on 26 February 1996, namely: an agreement between the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Government of Croatia *on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters and on the mutual enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters*. On 30 March 1998, the *Agreement on establishment of an interstate council for cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia* was signed. On 24 March 2000 an agreement was signed *on regulation of cross-border rail transport*. On 27 July 2000, an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Government of the Republic of Croatia *on cooperation in handover and reception of persons whose stay is illegal* was signed, and on 1 June 2001, the *Agreement on cooperation in protection against natural and civilizational disasters* was signed. On 11 December 2001, the *Agreement on return of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina* was signed. On 17 July 2002, the *Agreement on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters*, and the *Agreement on border traffic and cooperation* (5 March 2003) and the *Agreement on mutual abolition of visas* (5 December 2003) were signed. The *Agreement on succession between Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro* was signed on 29 June 2001¹⁴ and it seems to be quite significant and interesting for the post-Yugoslav political reality.

Regarding treaties/agreements signed between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Slovenia, based on the previously mentioned source, 4 treaties and 9 agreements are indicated. On 1 October 1992, an agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia *on establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries* was signed. Two treaties were signed in 2001 and two in 2002. On 30 May 2001, agreements between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Slovenia *on mutual development and protection of investments*, and *on free trade* were signed (3 October 2001). On 5 April 2002, two treaties were signed: one *on mutual enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters* and the other *on extradition*. Among agreements of great importance are the *Agreement on establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries*, signed on 1 October 1992, and the *Agreement on Succession Issues of the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* signed between the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Macedonia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia¹⁵ on 29 June 2001 in Vienna (Dimitrijević, 2013). This Agreement, in my opinion, is of great importance for the post-Yugoslav reality.

The *Agreement on development cooperation* was signed on 8 September 2003. Among the comparably interchangeable agreements, it is also worth mentioning an

¹⁴ All mentioned treaties and agreements can be found at the same online resource.

¹⁵ That was at the time when Serbia and Montenegro was still a single country.

agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Slovenia *on mutual assistance in customs matters*, signed on 7 April 2003 (Ibidem).

Taking into account relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, according to the same source, the following can be stated: 6 treaties and 5 agreements were signed. The *Agreement on free trade between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Macedonia* was signed on 20 April 2002, *on social insurance* on 17 February 2005, and *on regulation of mutual property and legal relations* on 13 September 2005. On 27 January 2006, the agreements *on mutual enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters* and *on extradition* were signed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also signed 4 treaties and 8 agreements with the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (when that was a single country). On 26 May 2004 the *treaty on avoidance of double taxation in relation to income and property taxes* was signed, while two treaties were signed on 24 February 2005: the first being *on mutual execution of court decisions in criminal matters*, and the second *on legal aid in civil and criminal matters*. Additionally, I think it is important to emphasize, among others, agreements such as: *on cooperation in the field of defence*, signed on 24 February 2005, *on the return of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro*, from 6 October 2003. An agreement signed on the same day *on mutual enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters* also seems very interesting and important (Ibidem).

Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that the relations of post-Yugoslav countries are specific, and this specificity of relations with “sister” neighbouring states, which until recently were in one common country, the FRY, is today a very important determinant in those relations. It is important to underline that there are still many unresolved issues among the post-Yugoslav countries, among others: borders¹⁶, position and rights of minorities, etc.¹⁷ We can conclude that regarding the relations we were discussing there is no single rule about their formation and significance of consequences, but that they all depend on a specific country and specific time¹⁸ (political climate). What could be concluded based on available data, (collecting of which was not an easy task as it may seem, because these data are dispersed and are

¹⁶ I already wrote about this topic, see: Bujwid-Kurek, 2013, pp. 209–219; Bujwid-Kurek, 2018, pp. 126–137.

¹⁷ Among other things, the Republic of Serbia still has numerous problems at the bilateral level, first of all with the neighbouring Republic of Croatia. In this context, the relations between two countries are still burdened by lawsuits before the International Court of Justice (Croatian lawsuit for genocide and Serbian lawsuit for expulsion of Serbs from Croatia), Croatian recognition of independent Kosovo, the status of expelled Serbs from Croatia and the demarcation of the two countries along Danube. New business circles from Serbia indicate the unfavourable and unequal position of Serbian large capital in Croatia. This quote is from: Dimitrijević, & Stojanović, 1996, p. 22; Đukanović & Lađević, 2009, p. 356. See also: Four problems of Serbia and Croatia, 2009, p. 1, 5.

¹⁸ See more about this topic in Visković, 2018, p. 12.

not deposited in uniform records)¹⁹, is the following: the highest number of treaties/agreements were signed in the initial period after the declaration of independence of these countries. These documents are mainly concerned with the establishment of diplomatic relations between countries, economic cooperation, abolition of visas, customs cooperation and mutual assistance, regulation of border rail traffic, and legal assistance in civil and criminal matters. It can also be noted that there were periods when a number of treaties/agreements were signed, and there were also periods in which no such documents were signed. An explanation that justifies this situation is not simple, so I leave this question for further scientific consideration. However, it can be claimed that the interest in establishing cooperation between individual countries undoubtedly depends on their current leaders and their political preferences. It is completely understandable that in the decade after the declarations of independence, there was the greatest interest in establishing bilateral cooperation between countries, because the proximity of these countries demanded it by itself (for example, Slovenia and Croatia), which, in my opinion, resulted more from diplomatic duties accompanied by diplomatic caution, which is completely understandable, then from nurtured mutual sympathies. This is nothing new, it is a common principle in international relations, and does not only apply only to post-Yugoslav countries.

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ПОСТЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКЕ ДРЖАВЕ У МЕЂУНАРОДНОЈ САРАДЊИ У КОНТЕКСТУ БИЛАТЕРАЛНИХ УГОВОРА/СПОРАЗУМА – МАНИФЕСТАЦИЈЕ УЗАЈАМНИХ СИМПАТИЈА ИЛИ ДИПЛОМАТСКЕ НЕОПХОДНОСТИ (РЕФЛЕКСИЈЕ)

Сажетак

Као главни циљ истраживања, под насловом „Постјугословенске државе у међународној сарадњи у контексту билатералних уговора – манифестације узајамних симпатија или дипломатске неопходности, јесте скретање пажње на међусобно закључивање билатералних уговора/споразума којима се регулишу разна питања. Веома је занимљиво да ли су све државе издвојене из југословенске федерације подједнако заинтересоване за међународну сарадњу, посебно међусобним потписивањем билатералних уговора/споразума. Занимљиво је која од земаља југословенске федерације има до сада највише потписаних билатералних уговора/споразума са „сестринским државама”, а која је најмање активна у овој области. Да ли ће одговор на таква питања омогућити да се утврде „блиске”, „далеке” или „веома далеке”

симпатије ових земаља једне према другој. Исто занимљиво је да ли билатерални уговори/споразуми доказују симпатије међу државама или произилазе из дипломатске нужде. Анализираће се све пост-југословенске државе: Словенија, Хрватска, Босна и Херцеговина, Македонија/Северна Македонија, Србија, Црна Гора (Косово неће бити разматрано због проблематичног статуса). Коришћене су углавном две методе истраживања: анализа докумената и компаративни метод.

Кључне речи: постјугословенске државе, међународна сарадња, билатерални уговори.

UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to define Russia's role in the Ukrainian conflict. According to the author, this was an attempt by Russia as a hegemon to integrate Ukraine into its own sphere and even turn Ukraine into a satellite state. The main research question was formulated as follows: "What was Russia's role in the Ukrainian crisis?". Russia's foreign policy after 2000 was aimed at strengthening its position as a regional Eurasian power. Treating the post-Soviet area as its sphere of influence, Russia has over the years sought to give itself a special right to decide on the entire area as the sole hegemon in this region. Ukraine, therefore, has been treated as a key state for Russia's interests in the post-Soviet area. Internal political changes and Ukraine's geopolitical turn to the West in 2013–2014, became, in effect, the impetus motivating Russia to revise the post-Cold War international order, taking into account Ukraine's place and role in its orbit. To this end, the Russian authorities have used not only political but also economic and military tools. A glaring example of this was the war in the Donbass, which culminated in the Russian-Ukrainian full-scale war of 24. 02. 2022. The article will therefore attempt to analyze the above-mentioned issues as a manifestation of the assertive foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The main research objective of this article was to assess Russia's involvement and role in the Ukrainian crisis. The following methods were used: decision-making, systemic and case study. Due to the nature of the Russian Federation's actions, the author also relies on the theory of political realism as the most useful for this case among other international theories.

Keywords: war, conflict, Russia, Ukraine, international relations

Introduction

After Vladimir Putin became president of the Russian Federation in 2000, the new Russian government embarked on a large-scale process of reorganizing the state, its economy, its armed forces and its place in the international structure. The new president's ambitious plans included not only overcoming the economic crisis of the 1990s and transforming Russia into a modern Asian tiger, but also transforming Russia into a world power, insofar as the country had been relegated to the role of a regional power after the collapse of the Soviet Union. So, since then, the Russian government has been taking various measures to restore its lost position, including rebuilding its sphere of influence, which encompasses the former USSR and some of the former Eastern Bloc countries. One of the countries within Russia's sphere of interest is Ukraine. Even after independence (in 1991), Kiev remained influenced by and hugely interdependent on Moscow for decades. However, at one point in its history, the Ukrainian people decided to move closer to Western Europe (2013–2014), which was perceived by Russian elites as a threat to their own stability. While for most Russians, Ukraine is a natural part of Russia's sphere of influence, since the mid-17th century Ukrainian lands either remained dependent on Russia or were a part of it. Ukraine also had great importance and relevance in the former Soviet empire, as it was the republic where most of the Soviet industry, raw materials of strategic importance (namely coal) were concentrated and was a foundry of talents (in Russian – кузница кадров). On another note, the broad territory of Soviet Ukraine was an important transit route for the transportation of Soviet energy resources to Western Europe and other Eastern Bloc states. In addition, the republic's geographic location was crucial from a geopolitical point of view, as controlling Ukrainian territory allowed the Kremlin authorities direct influence over the Balkans, Central European states, Turkey, in addition to facilitating Russian policy in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. After the collapse of the USSR, Russians often question and undermine the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian people, viewing them as an ethnic subgroup within their own nation. These anti-Ukrainian beliefs and revisionist attitudes, ingrained in the Russian mentality, largely determine the direction of Russia's foreign policy toward Ukraine. The goal of this policy is the total destruction of the autonomy and subjectivity of the Ukrainian state, which is, after all, a part of the international geopolitical community. Russia's geopolitical doctrine, formulated by Alexander Dugin back in the mid-1990s, openly states: "Ukraine's sovereignty is such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, in principle, it can easily provoke armed conflict... The existence of Ukraine within its current borders and with today's status as a "sovereign state" is tantamount to dealing a terrible blow to Russia's geopolitical security, which amounts to an invasion of its territory. The continued existence of a unitary Ukraine is unacceptable." (Dugin, 2000). Therefore, keeping Ukraine within the Russian sphere of influence was and is one of the priority issues for Moscow, and any pro-Western aspirations of Ukraine were and continue to be perceived by Russia as a potential threat to its own power.

2014: Crimea

Reacting to the political changes in Ukraine named as Euromaidan in late 2013–2014, in February 2014 the Russian authorities started supporting separatist speeches in southeastern Ukraine and Crimea, which according to most researchers is considered the beginning of a Russian hybrid war waged against Ukraine. After “Black Thursday” on February 22, 2014, when 70 protesters were killed by sniper bullets in the central street of Kiev, President Viktor Yanukovich (as well as members of his team) decided to escape from the country to Russia. In his place, the speaker of the parliament, Oleksandr Turchynov, became the temporary acting president (Resolution of the Parliament of Ukraine No 764-VII of 23 February 2014). However, the Kremlin declared the revolutionary events unconstitutional (Declarations of the Russian Foreign Ministry concerning the events in Ukraine of 27.02.2014). A bit later, V. Putin called the events in Ukraine a coup (Interview with V. Putin, 2014). After that, the Russian authorities smartly used the political instability to achieve their own geopolitical goals. On February 26, Russian troops seized media and communications facilities, the airport in Simferopol, the Belbek airport in Sevastopol and a ferry crossing in Kerch. This was soon followed by the Russian Black Sea Fleet blockading naval bases where Ukrainian warships were stationed, and Russian special forces, along with illegal armed groups calling themselves the “Self-Defense of Crimea”, blockaded Ukrainian military check-points. In March, the self-proclaimed head of Crimea’s Council of Ministers, Sergei Aksionov, building on this unlawful decision, appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to help “ensure peace and tranquility” in Crimea (Cosgrove, 2020). On the same day, the President of the Russian Federation sent a proposal to the Federation Council to introduce Russian troops into Crimea. Both chambers of the State Duma voted in favour of sending Russian troops into Ukrainian territory and Crimea in particular. Starting on 1 March, more than 10,000 Russian troops began large-scale military operations to block Ukrainian military bases throughout the peninsula, seize administrative buildings, control transport routes and other strategically important facilities. Immediate entry and seizure of all war facilities proved impossible, despite the betrayal of Ukrainian naval commander Dmytro Berезovsky. However, after almost a month of siege and military operations, Ukrainian military facilities in Crimea were captured. Two-thirds of the units’ personnel betrayed Ukraine and went over to the Russian side (Gisem & Martyniuk, 2019, p. 211). The buildings of the Parliament of Crimea and the government of the autonomous republic were seized “under protection” by unmarked soldiers, the so-called “zelenye cheloveciki”. On 11 March 2014. The Supreme Council of Crimea and the Sevastopol City Council adopted the Declaration of Independence (Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol of 11.03.2014). According to the Declaration, if, as a result of the referendum, the people of Crimea decide to join the Russian Federation, Crimea will be declared a sovereign republic and, in this status, will ask the Russian government to be admitted to the Russian Federation as a new entity on the basis of an appropriate interstate agreement. On 16 March 2014, the Crimean parliament decided to hold a referendum on the status of Crimea, in contravention of Ukrainian

law. Despite a decree by the acting President of Ukraine, O. Turchynov, to suspend the decision of the Crimean Parliament, despite the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, which declared the referendum incompatible with the Ukrainian Constitution, and despite the disapproval of the UN Security Council, the referendum was held. In the face of a boycott of the referendum by Crimean Tatars, the presence of a large number of armed Russian soldiers and mass falsifications, the referendum in Crimea reportedly reached more than 1.2 million completed ballots (equivalent to 83.10% of the total number of voters), of which 96.77% voted 'for the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation' (Protocol of the Commission of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on holding the Crimean referendum on the results of the referendum of 17 March 2014.). Already on 18 March 2014 in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed Republic of Crimea S. Aksyonov, Chairman of the newly formed State Council of the self-proclaimed Republic of Crimea V. Konstantinov and a representative of the separatist leadership of Sevastopol, Russian Federation citizen O. Chaly signed the so-called agreement on Crimea's accession to Russia. On 20 March 2014, the State Duma of the Russian Federation officially approves the annexation of Crimea legislatively. A wave of celebrations was held in Russia to mark the annexation. And a Russian Ministry of Defense introduced a medal "For the return of Crimea" (Order of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation No 160 on 21.03.2014). Russian President V. Putin, in accordance with the historical line propounded by the Kremlin, presented the annexation of Crimea as a return to the motherland, suggesting that Crimea had eternally belonged to Russia.

The United States and the European Union refused to recognize the results of the referendum, condemned Russia's actions and imposed sanctions on Russian companies and officials, freezing their foreign assets and imposing visa restrictions. On 27 March 2014 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014), and on 19 December 2016 condemned the Russian Federation as an occupier and aggressor (Resolution N75/192 adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 2016). Even later, on 2 July 2014 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe considered such actions by Russia as military aggression, unprovoked and based on completely unfounded assumptions and pretexts. It should be noted that the collective West did not get involved in the conflict on either side but merely observed by issuing diplomatic notes of protest. However, apart from the diplomatic boycott and the sanctions introduced, there was no other action from the key players (USA, France, Germany, China). It is noteworthy that no real steps have been taken on the part of the Ukrainian state to defend Crimea and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. One supposes that one of the reasons was the fear of direct clashes with the second world army and the poor preparedness of the Ukrainian army.

2014–2021: Donbas

At the end of March 2014, Russia begins destabilizing the rest of Ukraine and fueling separatist movements in the south and east with its own Novorossiia project.

In April 2014, the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (the so-called DRL and LRL) are proclaimed, while similar processes in Kharkiv and Odessa are disrupted by the patriotic majority of the Ukrainian population. The new republics, however, have not been recognized as states by Russia as a subject of international law. Neither Ukraine nor any other country in the world recognized the DPRK and LRL as states. They were later recognized as terrorist and separatist organizations, puppet quasi-states organized and armed by the Russian Federation which, with the support of the Russian military, illegally occupied and held Ukrainian territory. On 14 April, the authorities in Kiev launched an anti-terrorist operation, initially carried out by internal forces supported by military units to combat Russian saboteurs and mercenaries (Decree of the President of Ukraine No 405/2014 on 13.04.2014). Large-scale volunteer movements were being mobilized and military units – dobrobats (voluntary battalions) created. Meanwhile, the total number of illegal armed groups formed by Russia in eastern Ukraine exceeded 15,000, with Russian tanks, artillery and many rocket launchers. Up to 50 militant camps were established both in Russia and in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The main centers of militants were located in the cities of Donetsk, Lugansk, Slavyansk, Horlivka, Makiivka, Snizhne (Soroczynska & Gisem, 2019). In June 2014, Petro Poroshenko, having won the early presidential elections, immediately signed the economic part of the association agreement with the EU (EU–Ukraine Association Agreement on 27.06.2014), which forced the Russian authorities to get going. As a result, hostilities entered the active stage. As a result of these clashes, most of the Donbass has been liberated from terrorists. Slowly moving from west to east, Ukrainian armed forces regained control of the cities of Slovyansk, Kramatorsk, Artemivsk (now Bakhmut), Dzerzhinsk (Torets) and Debaltsevo by mid-July 2014. However, they failed to release all territories. In addition, the situation was complicated by the fact that Ukraine did not control much of the state border with Russia, so the terrorists regularly received support from the Russian side. At the end of the summer, a direct intervention by Russian troops with strikes from behind and shelling across the state border radically changes the situation and led to huge losses of Ukrainian defense forces near Zelenopillia and Ilovaysk. On 25–28 August, Russian troops occupied Novoazovsk, 44 km from Mariupol, a city with strategic importance for the land connection with Crimea. Significant casualties among Ukrainian forces, the threat of Mariupol's capture and the breakthrough of Russian forces into the Zaporizhia region to create a land corridor to Crimea forced the senior Ukrainian leadership to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. Under the mediation of the leaders of Ukraine (Petro Poroshenko) Russia (Vladimir Putin), France (François Hollande) and Germany (Angela Merkel), the so-called 'Normandy format', the war was stopped by the signing of the Minsk agreements, the first of which was signed on 5 September 2014 (Minsk Protocol, 2014). The situation allowed the Kremlin to directly influence the situation in Ukraine by blackmailing it with war and peace. One of the conditions for a ceasefire by the militants was the adoption by the Kiev authorities of the law "On the special order of local self-government in some districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (Law of Ukraine No 1680-VII "On the special procedure of local self-government in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions"), which was later adopted by the

parliament of Ukraine. This situation demonstrated Russia's regained position and political power in the international arena. The participation of the Russian Federation in the negotiation process became a signal to other players – the question of the geopolitical layout of the world cannot be discussed without Russia. However, the conflict did not end there. In the winter of 2014–2015, Russian troops began fighting for Debaltsevo, an important transport and communication hub between Donetsk and Lugansk. Active hostilities were ended again in February 2015, thanks to the mediation of the French and German leaders. A new Minsk Protocol (Minsk Package of Measures, 2015) was signed. This has cemented Russia's importance to international order and security, and above all in Europe. In the period 2015–2021, the war conflicts continued, having acquired the character of a positional war. Attempts at a peaceful settlement, initiated by the new President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in 2019, failed to produce the expected results (Conclusions of the Paris Summit, 2019). At the same time, the Minsk contact group negotiations were not interrupted throughout these years. The only significant success of these meetings and pressure from the international community was the release of most captives and prisoners of war. However, some prisoners were still being held by the separatists. A large group of Ukrainians were also imprisoned in Russia, giving it another bargaining chip in the negotiations.

However, the Russian Federation's influence inside Ukraine began to slowly wane, as the conflict caused many deaths, economic and financial losses. Approximately 7% of Ukraine's territory has been occupied (Crimean Peninsula and some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions). OHCHR estimates the total number of conflict-related casualties in Ukraine from 14 April 2014 to 31 December 2021 to be 51,000–54,000; about 14,200–14,400 were killed and 37–39,000 injured. 1.5 million people were forced to evacuate and leave their homes. The country lost 15% of its GDP and 25% of its industrial potential (including 80% of its natural gas fields and 10% of its port infrastructure). Inflation was 25% in 2014 and it rose to 43.3% in 2015 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2019). At the beginning of 2015, foreign exchange reserves had almost tripled to USD 5.6 billion (National Bank of Ukraine, 2019). The national currency, the hryvnia depreciated, quickly reaching a fivefold drop in value (National Bank of Ukraine, 2015). The situation stabilized just in 2017. Economic growth was only recorded in 2018, when GDP grew by 3.5%. These facts also show how serious the effects of the ongoing conflict were on the Ukrainian state. The military action initiated and supported by Russia in the Donbass, and the aforementioned series of ventures were aimed at destabilizing Ukraine, undermining the government in Kiev, with the end result of reducing Ukraine's chances of further integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The situation created more opportunities for Russia as a player on the European continent, while at the same time increasing its political influence in the world. The destabilisation of another state in order to increase the security of your own and the pursuit of a balance of power evidence a calculated Russian strategy, which should be viewed precisely through the prism of political realism.

Preconditions of the War

As recently as December 2021, official Moscow handed over two documents to the US delegation, containing draft agreements on security guarantees between the Russian Federation and the United States and an agreement between the Russian Federation and NATO. In these documents, the Russian authorities specified their expectations for a revision of the existing security order in Central and Eastern Europe. It was intended that these documents de facto restored the legal state of affairs prior to 1997, when the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation” was signed. The drafts included Russian requirements on: 1) not to expand NATO, primarily to the area of former Soviet republics; 2) not to establish military bases, stop placing troops and conducting activities of a military nature on the territory of Ukraine, as well as other Central and Eastern European countries considered to be Russia’s sphere of influence, not belonging to the North Atlantic Alliance; 3) the designation of a buffer zone at the borders of the Russian Federation and the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), which will be excluded from military exercises and activities at the level of tactical and operational activities; and most importantly 4) the withdrawal of allied troops deployed in the areas of the countries that joined NATO after 1997, after the signing of the Founding Act of 1997 (Project of Treaty between the Russian Federation and the USA on security guarantees, 2021). Russia also stated that the possible accession of Ukraine to NATO and the expansion of NATO further east “posed a threat to its national security.” So the aforementioned concentration of troops near the Ukrainian border, and the pressure exerted on the West, was intended to convince Western leaders of the determination of the Russian government’s intentions. In this way, Moscow set a condition for the international community (namely the collective West): the only possibility to stop the war in Eastern Europe is for Western leaders to accept the Russian ultimatum and make concessions in the area of security to the Russian Federation. However, this ultimatum was not accepted. So on 15 February 2022, State Duma voted to ask President Vladimir Putin to recognize the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in Ukraine as independent states. As early as 21 February 2022, Russia officially recognized the two self-proclaimed quasi-states in eastern Ukraine, the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic, as independent states (Decrees on the Recognition of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Recognition of the Luhansk People’s Republic). Shortly after signing the act of recognition of the independence of these territories, V. Putin also signed the treaties ‘On friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance’ between these ‘republics’ and the Russian Federation. After which, the Russian President ordered the deployment of Russian troops to Donbass as part of what Russia called a “peacekeeping mission”. On 24 February 2022 Russia launched a new stage in the conflict against Ukraine – a full-scale offensive. Namely, at 5 a.m. on 24 February 2022, V. Putin officially announced the launch of a ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine, supposedly for the “demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine” (Appeal of the President of the Russian Federation, 2022). According to reports from US intelligence services,

Russia's plan was to do the following: achieve air dominance within the first 12 hours, paralyze communications, encircle Kiev and force the Ukrainian government to flee within 48 hours, and then establish a puppet government after 72 hours. Former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich had to be appointed as president of the state (Winiecki, 2022). With the establishment of a puppet government, Ukraine would become a satellite state of Russia. This would also create all the possibilities to 'incorporate' Ukraine into the already existing union state of Russia with Belarus, under the name of the Union State (In Russian "Союзное государство"). By the way, a similar scenario of events has already occurred in history, precisely such a pattern and course of events preceded the creation of the Soviet Union in 1920s (read more: Subtelny, 2000, pp. 383–402).

"Special Military Operation"

"Special military operation" was in fact the beginning of a regular invasion of a sovereign state. Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border near Kharkov, Kherson, Chernihiv, Sum and Chernobyl, entering from the territory of Russia, Belarus and the temporarily occupied Crimea. The Parliament of Ukraine unanimously approved the imposition of martial law (Law of Ukraine № 2102-IX, 2022), and the armed forces of both countries began regular combat with each other. It was accompanied by clashes between infantry, armored forces and bombardments. The first days of the conflict did not bring the Russians any spectacular successes, but they greatly united the Ukrainians in their resistance against the invaders. A breakthrough in the operations to date came when, as a result of Ukrainian resistance around Kiev and losses sustained on supply routes, the Russian command decided to withdraw all forces directed at Kiev to their starting positions at the end of March 2022. In doing so, the actions of the Russian side were characterized by brutality towards Ukrainian civilians (Press release from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022). Thanks to the consolidation of the Ukrainian authorities and people, and the support of Western countries, Ukraine resisted the Russian attack and began to expel foreigners from Ukrainian lands step by step from mid-March. By the end of April 2022, the Armed Forces of Ukraine had completely liberated a significant part of the occupied territories – Kiev, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv and Sumskiy regions were freed from the occupiers (Clark, Hird & Barros, 2022). During the summer of 2022, heavy battles were fought on the frontline, with no serious changes for the positions of both sides. It was not until 6 September 2022 that Ukrainian forces launched a counter-offensive, resulting in the successful redemption of the Kharkiv region (Stepanenko, Hird, Mappes & Kagan, 2022). In response to the Ukrainian army's success, on 21 September Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a partial mobilization in the country (Decree On the Announcement of Partial Mobilization in the Russian Federation, 2022), which covered some 300,000 people. A few days later, on 30.09.2022, following internationally unrecognized referenda in the occupied Ukrainian lands, Russian President V. Putin announced the annexation of the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk and Kherson regions to Russia (Agreements on the admission of the DNR, LNR, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions to Russia, 2022). The mobilization carried

out by the Russians in September was supposed to strengthen the positions of the Russian army and change the situation at the front in Russia's favour, but it did not have the desired effect, and the war continues. So it is too early to assess any of its consequences for both sides and for the world. However, it seems that today Russia finds itself in an inconvenient position. Paradoxically, the actions of the Russian Federation have consequently led to an unprecedented increase in support from Western countries for the idea of Ukraine's membership of the EU and NATO, and a consolidation of Ukrainians and pro-Russian sentiment has lost ground to a historic minimum. The Russian authorities have plunged into this war and so far have no vision of how to emerge victorious. It is difficult to forecast how the situation will develop further. Even if hostilities end soon, it is difficult to determine how the Russian authorities will continue to behave towards Ukraine and its other neighbors. A significant change in strategy and redefinition of the Russian Federation's foreign policy objectives seems an unlikely scenario.

Summary

The research shows that since the end of the Cold War, Russia has sought to rebuild its lost superpower status by undertaking multidirectional activities. This has resulted in disintegration and destabilization activities in areas of former Soviet states, considered by the Russians to be their sphere of influence. One of these states has been Ukraine. Since the beginning of the 21st century, in pursuit of their geostrategic goals, the Russian authorities have consistently pursued a well-thought-out foreign policy aimed at destruction of the Ukrainian state's autonomy and subjectivity. The Russian Federation played a direct role in the occupation of Crimea in 2014 and the armed conflict in the Donbass 2014–2022. By increasing pressure on Ukraine, Vladimir Putin sought to force Western countries to recognize not only Russian demands on the government in Kiev, but also Russia's position as the hegemon in this part of the world. Research indicates that by using military intervention in Ukraine in February 2022, the Kremlin hoped to realize strategic interests leading to the de facto legitimization of the restoration of Russia's sphere of influence. One of the aims of the aggression was to establish a puppet government in Kiev, and then transform Ukraine into a satellite state or even include Ukraine as a component part of a new Alliance (Ukraine, Russia, Belarus). But the Kremlin has miscalculated. The opposition of the Ukrainian people to the aggression, the consolidation of the Ukrainian people and power, the economic and military support of Western countries to Ukraine have allowed the Ukrainian state to repel the Russian attack, not to lose its independence and sovereignty. Moreover, from the beginning of spring 2022, step by step, Ukraine's armed forces began to liberate Ukrainian lands from Russian occupiers. Along with this, Russia has so far failed to achieve its political goals either globally or regionally. Paradoxically, the armed aggression of the Russian Federation has consequently led to an unprecedented increase in support from Western countries for Ukraine's membership of NATO and the EU, the consolidation of Ukrainian society, and pro-Russian sentiment has reached a historic minimum. Russia is immersed in the Ukrainian war and so far has no plan on how to emerge victorious. Analyzing the nature of the Russian

Federation's actions, the author emphasizes that the use of the theory of political realism is the most useful in the given case. It is basically a continuation of the Soviet strategy which was based on the use of force, the creation of conflicts in the world and the pursuit of a balance of power. Today a significant change in strategy and a redefinition of the Russian Federation's global foreign policy objectives seems to be an incredible scenario.

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УКРАЇНСКА КРИЗА И РУСКА ГЕОПОЛИТИЧКА НАДМОЋ У ПОСТСОВЈЕТСКИМ ДРЖАВАМА

Сажетак

Главна сврха овог рада јесте да идентификује и утврди улогу Руске Федерације у украјинском сукобу. Према ауторовом схватању то је био покушај Русије као хегемона да интегрише Украјину у своју сферу и коначно претвори Украјину у сателитску државу или чак укључи Украјину као саставни део нове алијансе (Украјина, Русија, Белорусија). Дакле, главно истраживачко питање је формулисано на следећи начин: „Каква је била улога Русије у украјинској кризи?” Империјална спољна политика Русије после 2000. године није била усмерена само на обнављање позиције у међународној арени, изгубљене услед распада СССР-а, већ првенствено на јачање њене позиције евроазијске регионалне силе. Третирајући постсовјетски простор као подручје свог утицаја и посебних интереса, Русија је годинама настојала да себи да посебно право да одлучује о целом простору као једини хегемон у региону. Украјина је због тога третирана као кључна држава за интересе Русије на постсовјетском простору. Унутрашње политичке промене и геополитичко окретање Украјине Западу 2013–2014. били су подстицај који је мотивисао Русију да ревидира постхладноратовски међународни поредак, имајући у виду место и улогу Украјине у својој орбити. Руске власти су у ту сврху користиле не само политичка, већ и економска и војна средства. Очигледан пример за то је био рат у Донбасу, који достиже врхунац од 24. 02. 2022. када постаје руско-украјински рат пуних

размера. Дакле, у раду ће бити анализиране наведене теме као манифестација асертивне спољне политике Руске Федерације. Главни истраживачки циљ овог рада био је да се процени умешаност и улога Русије у украјинској кризи. У циљу провере хипотеза и одговора на главна истраживачка питања, аутор је користио анализу процеса доношења одлука, системски приступ и студију случаја.

Кључне речи: рат, сукоб, Русија, Украјина, међународни односи.

A DISCUSSION ON REGIONALISM BY ĐORĐE TASIĆ

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Abstract

The research on the actuality of the content of Đorđe Tasić's treatise "On regionalism and economic regionalism, especially in France" which is analysed in this paper, should have served to create the conditions for an appropriate participation in the commemoration of the eightieth anniversary of the death of this exceptional jurist who asserted himself by the way he connected law and sociology. His sociological understanding of the historical development of various regional phenomena and movements in the world, as well as his need to place all his research in the appropriate framework of legal science, created conditions for the development of an authentic approach to regionalism, which was based on the belief in the integrity of the world and on the idea of the possibility of its regionalization based on the universality of the international order.

Tasić insisted on the scientific understanding of regionalism and on its sustainable development within the evolution of administrative law. The discussion about it appeared initially in the magazine "Archive for Legal and Social Sciences" (Volume for October 1930, pp. 257–270), and then in a separate book entitled "Three Treatises from Public Law", which was published in 1931. The research described in this report shows that this discussion has not been used to a sufficient extent and that it could help us in solving current problems because it contains answers to many open questions.

Keywords: Đorđe Tasić, area, region, regionalism, regionalization of the world

Introduction

In recent times, there are tendencies to place the beginning of the development of regionalism in the second half of the twentieth century and to talk about old and new regionalism from that perspective (Longley, 2021). In this context, regionalism is most often associated with the political, economic or social development of certain geographical areas (region) where loyal and homogeneous population lives, bound by a common ideology and culture, and aiming to achieve common goals with regard to improving the quality of life. In connection with such a notion of regionalism, at least for the audience that remembers longer, there is an interesting question of continuity with all earlier narratives about regionalism, because the existence of such narratives is quite certain. What is also certain is the persistence of research on different regional phenomena in which regionalism is defined pictorially like

the fingerprint, which is sometimes not visible at the first sight, but which is present and manifests itself subtly, through nuances and the spirit of plurality in overall creativity (Marić, 2015, p. 10).

Full compliance with the estimation that “these nuances and diversities are the main features of enrichment of universal civilization” (Marić, 2015, p. 10) leads to the need for deeper reflection on the concept of regionalism and related concepts. Thus we come to the discovery that we often use terms like area, region and regionalism with a deep conviction that we all know their exact meaning. But they surprise us with the depth of the impossibility of understanding their definitions, which are continuously multiplied, and from which sometimes arise the “most significant differences” (Veljković, 2023, p. 5). Diverse geographical, historical, political, economic, social, cultural, legal, ideological and many other moments and interests are mixed, and many of them are still not recognized enough. So, for example, one meaning of regionalism is interesting, which is obtained by “devolution of the powers of the central state to local political-representative bodies” (<https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/regionalizam>). It touches or is similar to different concepts which claim that “the regional state is a special form of state between the federal and the unitary state” (Pajvančić, 2009, p. 16) or with an effort to prove “that the first European regional state was the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1921–1939)” (Pavlović, 2012, p. 503). All these concepts rely on the tradition of believing that “the regional state must rest on democracy” (Jovičić, 1996, p. 144) and that it is “by its very essence linked to the idea of decentralization” (Jovičić, 1996, p. 145). These are some of the many interesting examples around which discussions are held about the division of jurisdiction between central and local administrations. All of them usually lead to differences in the understanding of regionalism. Through the differences “an abundance of definitions of the region in the economic sense emerges” (Popović, 2003, p. 62), and regionalization has become the topic of the day at all levels of government, from the local to the international community, as well as in everyday life and in academic circles.

The idea to look at the issue of regionalism from the point of view of Đorđe Tasić (1892–1943), who thought about these topics for the past century, came from an

authentic need of the author of this paper to contribute to the commemoration of the eightieth anniversary of his death, and from the fact that in his scientific legacy there is a treatise called “On Regionalism and Economic Regionalism, Especially in France”. This paper argues that in this treatise lies the foundation for his vision of regionalization of the world, which was fundamentally different from all attempts at global unification of the world before and after his call “to build the new world of peace and solidarity in which there will be no place left for force and arbitrariness” (Tasić, 2002, p. 93). This was the vision based “on the universality of the international order” (Tasić, 2002, p. 67), which he linked with the request “to carry out as just as possible division of duties and burdens” (Tasić, p. 257; Tasić, 1931, p. 58). The first part of this paper is dedicated to this vision, followed by the presentation of the content of the indicated discussion, which was founded in it.

On the Vision of Regionalization of the World by Đorđe Tasić

In regionalism Tasić saw a social movement “which promises to gain importance in one way or another in the administrative organization of individual states” (Tasić, 1931, p. 3). His expectations from that movement were connected with the “problem of the regional international law”, current at that time, and it arose in connection with question “whether international law is one and the same for the whole world (universal) or, should it always be viewed in relation to the environment in which it is developed and applied (regional)” (Blagojević, 1940, p. 31). He knew that this question could not lead to a real solution, because it “is not just a matter of opinion and free will” (Plećaš, 2023, p. 521). That was the reason he was looking for answers on the other side. He found them in the space of international relations for which he showed how they could move in different directions, towards solidarism or towards individualism. He advocated the solidarity approach to the development of the international relations with the active promotion of international legal consciousness, which strengthens international unity, because he believed “that the international community must be universal” (Tasić, 2002, p. 66). He joined all of this with the request “to carry out as just as possible division of duties and burdens” (Tasić, p. 257, Tasić, 1931, p. 58) and he advocated for the federalist formula, which, according to him, “is the only formula that would faithfully reflect international reality” in which “the aspirations to expand the borders of the international community coexist with the aspirations to narrow them” (Tasić, 2002, p. 66).

The universality of the international community that Tasić wrote about, however, is not the same as the universality for which today it is rightly pointed out that it cannot be the basis for solving “questions that arise on a theoretical and practical level considerations of regionalism” (Ćorić, 2011, p. 99). This is the very essence of Tasić’s objection to the universalism or regionalism dilemma, because he showed that there is no real alternative in it and that the solution to the problem of regional law cannot be reached through it. The regionalization of the world, according to him, has obviously become one universal phenomenon which appeared spontaneously as a natural response to the double tendency of the simultaneous expansion and contraction of the borders of the international community. His region became a meeting place for these conflicting tendencies from which new sources of a

movement are formed through which the existing complexity of the world is further increased. He was convinced that regionalism develops proportionally outside and inside, both within the framework of national law in the state and in the framework of international law in the international community. This is something that explains his commitment to the federalist formula in international relations. But it is also why he believed that the political unity of the people within a state is the basic condition for the development of its international relations. That's why his thesis on the necessity for the international community to be universal is in no way contradictory to the claim that states "are different in their origin and duration, in their ethnic, cultural, economic and other segments" (Ćorić, 2011, p. 100). Furthermore, it can be argued that his commitment to the universality of the international community is precisely based on these differences between states, because they are, among other things, the basic condition of the international division of labour from which comes mutual dependence and solidarity.

Tasić's Discussion "On Regionalism and Economic Regionalism, Especially in France"

The discussion "On regionalism and economic regionalism, especially in France", by Đorđe Tasić, which begins with a brief review of the regional organizing of the most important countries in the world, first appeared in the journal "Archive for Legal and Social Sciences" (Volume for October 1930, pp. 257–270), and then also in the separate book entitled "Three Treatises from Public Law" which was published in 1931. It consists of fourteen pages of printed text, organized as a single unit in which there are no chapters with special titles. And yet, nine separate moments are clearly noticeable in its structure. Together, they follow the logic of gradually zooming in on the perceived problem, which resembles a well-known and popular principle from the field of ecology today: "Think globally, act locally!" Here it is applied to the analysis in parts of the discussion, which is expected to further complete the picture of his vision of the possibility of regionalization of the world based on the universality of the international order.

In the first part of his discussion, Tasić briefly presents the situation of regionalism in Austria, Prussia since before the World War I, England, United States of (North) America and Latin countries, especially France, Spain and Italy. He shows that in each of these states there is a distance between the local and the state levels of administration. Dealing with specific examples from the mentioned countries, he identifies the problem of the existence of the differences in the organization of certain "state or self-governing units of the middle level" (Tasić, 1930, p. 257; Tasić, 1931, p. 58) in all of them. Thus, he illustrates the reasons why such arrangement of the states became one universal phenomenon which affected the whole world, and through that he explains the existence of different modalities of regional arrangement in all of those states, as well as in the world as a whole.

An insight into various ways of solving the problem of the distance between the state and the municipality through the organization of the middle level units showed him unequivocally that the processes within the framework of regional movements

often fall short of expectations. He saw that there was no harmony between different processes in connection with the increase in the number of models of territorial autonomy or local self-government which are not always entirely new. The old patterns were often renewed in them. It seemed to him that this fact was particularly noticeable in the Latin countries, and for that reason, in the second part of his discussion, he particularly concentrated on the analysis of the situation in France and Italy. The situation in those countries pointed out to him the continuity of the development of certain tendencies, which changed throughout history in accordance with different political motives. Reasons for something like that he, like many others at that time, attributed to the nature of the national spirit and the historical circumstances in which certain nations formed as separate parts within humanity as a whole. He found out that a more serious affirmation of the regional movement in France and in Italy began only after complete national consolidation and after reaching the appropriate level of political unity. The various regional movements that took shape in those countries under the conditions of appropriate political unity, according to the results of his research, took on very special characteristics, especially in France, which remained prone to centralism in which "there is always a way to embed one institution firmly into the cadre of the central administration" (Tasić, 1930, p. 259; Tasić, 1931, p. 60).

The third part of his discussion was entirely devoted to the analysis of the situation in France. In it there was the "consistently and strictly implemented system of centralization", which was "built from above, rationally, in one move" and which played "an important historical role of creating national unity" which "emerged from the fusion of various races and peoples" (Tasić, 1930, p. 259, Tasić, 1931, p. 59). He was especially fascinated by the evolution of that unity, which inspired him to look for the similar phenomena in other countries, and he found them in a different form. He basically agreed with the views of the regionalists of his time that regionalism is a social force "that emerges from social relations" (Tasić, 1930, p. 262, Tasić, 1931, p. 63), but in that relations, with a lot of similarities, he also found disagreements in the expectations of regionalists, as well as in the demands of various other reformers. He pointed out their mutual overlaps and misunderstandings "in the basic question" (Tasić, 1930, p. 262; Tasić, 1931, p. 62) and he warned of the fact that experimentation in this area "can be expensive and cause mess" (Tasić, 1930, p. 262, Tasić, 1931, p. 62).

Because of all of the above, in the fourth part of his discussion, Tasić opted for the affirmation of the scientific approach to the problem of regionalism. Starting from the basic thesis of all regionalists "that natural development inevitably leads to regionalism and that the facts are such that it is difficult to imagine development in any other direction" (Tasić, 1930, p. 262; Tasić, 1931, p. 62), he came to the analysis of the relationship between the economy and the university, which revealed to him the long-term importance of the emergence of university funds and the establishment of polytechnic institutes based on them. He explained how they became a driving force of the development of new business centres and how the development of regionalism enabled the advancement of provincial universities. He especially drew attention to the importance of the fact that these faculties, as well as

the sciences that are studied therein, “were placed to the service of economic life by receiving financial assistance from certain interested organizations or self-government bodies” (Tasić, 1930, p. 264; Tasić, 1931, p. 65).

The fifth part of Tasić’s discussion refers to his concept of administrative regionalism which, according to him, “can be characterized as integral to a number of other regionalisms”, as opposed to special regionalisms within which areas formed “only with regard to cultural and the social side” (Tasić, 1930, p. 265; Tasić, 1931, p. 66). Starting from various factors of social life, from which the need for the development of regionalism arises, he rebuked reformers that they were “satisfied with regionalism only in one aspect” and then he placed in front of all of them, including the regionalists, a delicate question of the problem of the border, or rather “the link between of the integral regionalism and of the special regionalisms” (Tasić, 1930, p. 265; Tasić, 1931, p. 66). He believed in the universal connection and the wholeness of everything in the world and he set before administrative regionalism a difficult task of the comprehensive integration of all the special types of regionalism.

In the sixth part of his discussion, Tasić tried to show how in modern conditions economic regionalism has become the most important type of special regionalism and how “the division according to geographical criteria does not have to coincide with the division according to economic criteria” (Tasić, 1930, p. 26; Tasić, 1931, p. 67). He followed the changes in the field of administrative legislation over the years, as well as the relations between the economy, science, universities, courts and politicians. He had a good insight into the origin and evolution of various chambers of commerce and he especially emphasized their attempts “to create certain communities of a regionalist character” (Tasić, 1930, Tasić, p. 267; 1931, p. 67). He considered that all that was a significant contribution to the development of the regional movement, and he emphasized, as a basic characteristic of economic regionalism, the aspiration “to find specific economic centres, in which specific economic bodies will work, which will have enough power to be able to run their affairs on to a broader base and independent of the department” (Tasić, 1930, p. 266; Tasić, 1931, p. 66).

In the seventh part of his discussion Tasić drew one interesting parallel between France and Germany. Using the example of Germany, he proved that even the movement towards the unitary state can be based on a certain type of regionalization, which emphasizes the process of industrialization and in connection with it that “the economy and the administration do not match” (Tasić, 1930, p. 268; Tasić, 1931, p. 69). In this regard, he showed unambiguously that both states “are prone to regionalism”, although in France “the movement towards decentralization and economic regionalism” is dominating, while in Germany “the movement towards a unitary state, organized in a decentralized manner” is present (Tasić, 1930, p. 269). Obvious differences between them, as well as their inclination to regionalism which erased the old political boundaries within territorial divisions and established new demarcations of an economic nature, he used for additional affirmation of the need for a scientific and technical approach to this phenomenon, regarding which he pointed to the solutions for flexible forms of decentralization

and interconnection of economic areas in Germany, to which the administration gradually adapts in a way that does not jeopardize “the possibility of changing borders from case to case” (Tasić, 1930, p. 269; Tasić, 1931, p. 69).

The importance that Tasić attached to the experience of Poland, which he chose as an example to illustrate the thesis about the spread of the regionalist movement to other countries outside the metropolitan area of the European superpowers, is particularly interesting. He devoted the eighth part of his discussion to that. He briefly mentioned some of the most important moments that became the subject of his wider interest, and in connection with which he obviously intended to engage in a deeper analysis. Information about “the Congress of the Polish Union of Cities”, from which the request was made “that regionalist principles be respected when building cities”, as well as information about “the Congress for Administrative Law” at which “the proposal was received that the entire activity of administrative and self-governing authorities in the province built on regionalist foundations”, as well as information about the effort to save the Polish village from excessive urbanization, are the part of the story of understanding his need to study “the regionalist peculiarities” of Poland (Tasić, 1930, p. 269; Tasić, 1931, p. 70), which have not been completely lost even to this day.

Finally, last but not least, in the ninth part of his discussion, where he rounded off the story about his understanding of regionalism at that moment, Tasić uncloaked his real intentions regarding this problem, which he dealt with even before the publication of this treatise, and which remained in the focus of his interest even after that, until the active participation in the negotiations regarding setting forth the text of the Decree on Banovina Croatia (Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, number 194-A-68/1939) and to the death during the Second World War, about which, as well as about his fate as a whole, “today there is no ultimate truth” (Ristić, 2023, p. 82). By studying experiences of others in the way that was presented in this paper, he was trying to find solutions to the problems of his own environment, which were connected with the Law on the Name and Division of Administrative Areas of the Kingdom “from October 3, 1929” (Tasić, 1930, p. 270; Tasić, 1931, p. 71), which, among other things, and in accordance with the king’s proclamation of January 6, 1929, repealed the Law on Regional and County Self-Government of April 26, 1922. That law changed the official name of the state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which thus became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and many other changes were introduced in connection with which there were consequences that multiplied numerous divisions, although the intention of the legislator, at least nominally, was aimed at establishing unity. The fact is, however, that in this part of his discussion, as well as in the whole treatise, Tasić does not refer specifically to all these details that are listed here. He did not even mention the name of the aforementioned law and did not particularly insist on any of the changes that it introduced, and it introduced a lot of things, including arranging of the general administration “by banovinas, regions and municipalities” (Niketić, 1933, p. 5), through which the traces of the previous county government disappeared. Instead of all that, in this part of his discussion, he insisted on the possibility of insight into positive examples, which he previously presented. Emphasizing in particular the importance of the

example of French political unity, which developed a special “aspiration for the regionalist organization” (Tasić, 1930, p. 269; Tasić, 1931, p. 70), he pointed out the presence of certain regularity in the development of human society. He showed how this regularity was manifested through mutual relations of political, economic and legal moments in the realization of the regionalist aspirations and he proved that was the main reason for his interest in the need to “approach the study of economic areas in our country as soon as possible and as seriously as possible” (Tasić, 1930, p. 270; Tasić, 1931, p. 71).

Conclusion

The review of Tasić’s discussion “On regionalism and economic regionalism, especially in France” testifies to the fact that the roots of regionalism are much deeper than it seems at first glance. The unsustainability of the concept according to which regionalism is an accompanying phenomenon of globalization from the second half of the twentieth century is one great topic, which indicates the need to preserve tradition, and related to this also the need for the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary study of the continuity of the entire existence. Today, it is the need on which survival of each human being, as well as humanity as a whole depends. Tasić was aware of this and it is reflected in all his notes which were always imbued with the idea of unity and integrity of the world, and there are so many of them that there is no place for their presentation in this paper of limited scope. Therefore, this observation is just one small contribution to the creation of a unique picture of his overall undertaking with reference to the possibility of the regionalization of the world based on the universality of the international order. That picture reflects his willingness to progress slowly, by means of diligent work. For he believed his work will contribute to the survival and development of humanity as a whole, as well as all its parts, because the world is a whole in which each part affects all others in proportion to its position or share in the total distribution of burdens and benefits. He insisted on the scientific understanding of regionalism and on its sustainable development within the evolution of administrative law, which was his constant theme, both in analyses dedicated to solving administrative issues, and in all other segments of his overall dealing with the problem of the state, because the question of good governance is the essence of that problem.

Borderline in that sense, his discussion on regionalism, considered in this paper, testifies to the essence of a special attitude that influenced the further course of his scientific career, as well as the various tendencies of spatial, urban, geostrategic and geopolitical development of the society in which he acted as a significant representative of the scientific community of the time. In this regard, it is certain that it would be significant to carry out a more thorough analysis of its position within his entire scientific legacy, because only on this basis an appropriate conclusion could be drawn about its real value, both for the time when it was created, and in relation to the possibility that it is still current, especially in the light of the need to look more fully at the circumstances of the neglect of its existence in connection with the problems for which it was published, which are certain to have survived to this day.

Tasić's ability to present such a complex phenomenon as regionalism through an extremely concise presentation of the importance of middle-level administrative units throughout the world, indicates one extremely elastic concept of the region, which is gradually formed in accordance with the growing complexity of phenomena. Placed in the center of the dispute about jurisdiction between the state and the municipality, his region takes shape in the space between the local and international community, which spontaneously changes its dimensions in accordance with changing conditions of the insufficiently harmonized elements of universal existence. This universal existence, which in his vision of the regionalization of the world leads to the development of an integral concept of administrative regionalism, opens up the possibility of knowing a certain regularity, as he believed it could not be arbitrary.

The fact is that he did not deny the geographical origin of concepts such as region, regionalization or regionalism, as well as the territoriality of the municipality and the state or the spatiality of the international community. Though, the circumstance that he specifically warned of the possibility of differences arising in the process of regionalization, arising as a result of the application of various criteria, such as administrative, economic, personal or territorial, cannot be ignored. This is something that speaks in the support of the thesis that in the development of regionalism, especially economic, he found a lot that can no longer be reduced to the territorial movement of borders between peoples and states. He showed that this type of regionalism moves the boundaries in a functional sense, and he was inclined to look for the source of regionalist phenomena, as well as all other phenomena of the modern age, in the progress of technology. The speed of modern traffic began to change the old boundaries of personal ties between tribal communities, as well as various territorial restrictions, which were based on the tradition of acquired rights from the time that preceded the American, French and October revolutions. He was aware of this and that is why in regionalism he looked for solutions for the development of international legal consciousness and for the possibility of coexistence of old and new peoples and states. He believed that this is one of the conditions for sustainable development in the world which cannot progress without it.

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ЈЕДНА РАСПРАВА О РЕГИОНАЛИЗМУ ЂОРЂА ТАСИЋА

Сажетак

Истраживање актуелности садржаја расправе Ђорђа Тасића *О регионализму и економском регионализму, посебно у Француској*, које се анализира у овом раду, требало је да послужи за стварање услова за одговарајуће учешће у обележавању осамдесете годишњице смрти овог изузетног правника, који се афирмисао начином на који је повезао право и социологију. Његово социолошко схватање историјског развоја различитих регионалних појава и кретања у свету, као и потреба да сва своја истраживања смести у одговарајуће оквире правне науке, створили су услове за развој аутентичног приступа регионализму, који је настао на основу веровања у целовитост света и

на идеји о могућности његове регионализације, која је заснована на универзалности међународног поретка.

Тасић је инсистирао на научном разумевању регионализма и на његовом одрживом развоју у оквиру еволуције управног права. Расправа о томе појавила се у часопису *Архив за правне и друштвене науке* (свеска за октобар 1930, стр. 257–270), а затим у посебној књизи под насловом „Три расправе из јавног права”, која је објављена 1931. године. Истраживање описано у овом извештају показује да ова расправа није у довољној мери искоришћена и да би нам могла помоћи у решавању актуелних проблема, јер у себи садржи одговоре на многа отворена питања.

Кључне речи: Ђорђе Тасић, област, регион, регионализам, регионализација света.

PART TWO

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF REGIONAL INEQUALITIES IN SERBIA; PERSPECTIVES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FRAGILITY AND RESILIENCE – A VIEW AT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Despite criticism, the Fragile States Index and its variations used by a number of international organisations and policy makers remain in widespread use. With one of the indicators specifically addressing uneven regional development, the question is how, and to what extent, can the concept of fragility be used to explore regional development variations in Serbia?

The first part of the paper provides an overview of a scope and contexts in which the concept of fragility is used. Discussed are epistemological and practical implications for research and analysis, on the one hand, and for influencing institutional arrangements and development policies on the other hand. Taking into account both formal and informal institutional frameworks we look into the link between national, regional and local levels where fragility and resilience are manifested. It is pointed out that the concept of fragility implies a structure, and as such requires a sibling concept of resilience to be used with, for better analytical and practical clarity.

The second part of the paper applies the combined resilience and fragility framework to explore regional disparities in Serbia. The focus is on social and institutional aspects as underlying conditions for (de)population trends, and the livelihood prospects as the economic driver of the observed trends. The paper concludes with a remark on analytical and policy benefits and limitations of the approach discussed.

Keywords: resilience, fragility, regional development, livelihood

Introduction

The terms *fragility* and *resilience* have over the past few decades taken one of the central places in the discourse of organizations involved in international development (Nay, 2013, p. 326). The phenomenon to which the term fragility particularly refers and the numerous processes that characterize it have resulted in a specific methodological-interpretative framework, or variations that individual organizations develop or adapt for their own needs. Many organizations involved in international development have, at least in general, embraced the analytical and research framework that this conceptualization offers as one of the basic instruments of international policy, planning processes, and activities. Among the organizations that rely on the paradigm of fragility and resilience and use some form of fragility index or fragile states index are The Fund for Peace, World Economic Forum (WEF), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Bank (WB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and World Health Organization (WHO). The first such index, the Fragile States Index by the American organization The Fund for Peace, which has come into use globally, initially arose from the need to better understand societies and states affected by or under the threat of conflict. This, as well as other similar indices, is now much more widely used not only at the international and national levels but also within national frameworks.

In this paper, we will examine to what extent the concepts of fragility and resilience can be applied to describe and analyze the situation in Serbia when it comes to variations and inequalities in regional development, and potential consequences at the local, regional, and national levels. In the first part of the paper, we will briefly discuss the emergence and history of the fragility index, with several examples of its application by international organizations, including geographical and thematic areas. In the conclusion of the review, we will highlight relevant epistemological and practical implications for research and analysis on the one hand, as well as potential impact and scope concerning development policies and institutional arrangements on the other hand. The paradigm based on the conceptual pair of fragility-resilience suggests that the focus of analysis and interpretation must, explicitly or implicitly, be on the identification of systemic structures whose fragility is manifested through concrete elements and their resilience to influences that may jeopardize parts or the entire system. Ultimately, we are interested in what the aforementioned paradigm can tell us about regional disparities in Serbia, from the perspective of life prospects and the link with (de)population trends.

The History of the Fragility Index and Contemporary Outcomes

The Fragile States Index (FSI) originated from the initiative of the Fund for Peace, an American non-governmental organization established in the late 1950s in the context of the Cold War and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. With the changes that followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the focus of the Fund for Peace shifted towards “understanding and addressing issues of violent conflicts, state

fragility, security, and human rights”.²⁰ Although the organization is closely associated with the US administration and international organizations and issues in which the United States sees its own strategic interest, it is analytically important to distinguish between the political-ideological and the “technical” domain of the organization’s work. The difference between these two domains, for the purposes of this paper and without delving into details, is that the political-ideological domain primarily relates to the initial intention and motives, and ultimately activities aimed at promoting and achieving a specific political-ideological goal on one hand. In practice, this often means that “there is very little room for anything other than the European and/or Western standard against which all non-Western nation-states, old and new, can be observed” (Kalra & Saxena, 2021, p.107). On the other hand, the technical component refers to a set of research methods and an analytical-interpretative framework aimed at collecting empirical data and analysing relationships as the basis for development policies. The method, or actually more of an approach that has crystallized over the past decades and can best be described as bottom-up, relies on existing data and materials as secondary sources, which are then combined with primary data collected for the purposes of the index.

The Fragile States Index currently includes 178 countries, relying on a multitude of available sources, quantitative and qualitative research, content and context analysis, and even anecdotal observations about each of the countries or territories. The collected data are integrated and triangulated, and the obtained results and scores are verified before the final index for each country is formed. Finally, the resulting index is not the ultimate outcome but rather a basis for further analysis and research by indicating potentially aspects, fragility points, for a specific country. This analytical-interpretative framework relies on four groups of indicators: cohesion, economic, political, and social. Since the analysis involves a large number of sources and various types of data and information, research teams are extensive, and numerous experts as teams cover a wide range of expertise. Additionally, since a large part of the material consists of secondary sources that do not necessarily provide the amount of data necessary for reliable analysis, or data on some of the key issues or domains do not exist at all, research-expert teams in some cases compensate for these shortcomings with assessments and approximations based on their own expertise.

The FSI is based on the Conflict Assessment Framework (CAST), with which it shares methodology as well as the goal – to determine the degree of a state collapse risk and the consequences for project implementation in the field. Although the Index is primarily an indicator of the risk of institutional-political collapse and conflict, the value of the twelve basic indicators with numerous sub-indicators lies primarily in the information related to the context of project implementation. The multidimensionality of the index, necessary for a comprehensive and reliable indicator of conflict risk at the national level, on the other hand, allows, by analyzing

²⁰ The overview of the FSI that follows is based on the content available at: <https://fundforpeace.org/about.html#our-history> & https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fund_for_Peace

only specific indicators, a focus on particular aspects and specific issues, communities, or geographic areas, which is important for projects targeting a specific and narrow problem.

Focusing on and limiting to a smaller segment of the social system may seem simple at first glance. However, such a focus does not eliminate the question of choosing relevant indicators, a problem it shares with the fragility index. The question researchers face is where to set the boundaries, or which indicators represent liminal indicators beyond which the epistemic and utility value does not justify the effort required for processing them. Authors from various research positions and interests rely on different definitions of fragility and resilience, which in general brings richness of perspectives, but in particular cases can also pose a problem when the focus of research is on one field or segment of social activities. Research and analysis in the field of resilience of healthcare systems in conflict and fragility situations illustrate this very well.

As an illustration, we can look at a systematic review of the scope of definitions and usage of the concept of resilience in the context of healthcare systems. The review indicates that even with a relatively small number of studies, less than forty, there is reliance on two relatively broadly accepted theoretical frameworks as well as specifically defined theoretical positions with governance, healthcare workers, service provision, availability of medical products and supply chains, infrastructure, as central concepts (Truppa et al., 2024). On the other hand, a systematic review, also in the domain of healthcare systems, of the concept of fragility finds that, generally speaking, the existing work can be classified into three dimensions: the level of observation on the states-local communities; emphasis on stressors not necessarily related to conflict or governance; and focus on the healthcare system or community resources and their interrelation. Additionally identified are several themes: in relation to security-related stressors; in relation to various stressors causing chronic fragility; challenges related to financing and governance of healthcare systems; related to the population and the wide range of negative impacts to which a specific population is exposed; and inter-domain stressors, where problems at the points of contact and interaction between healthcare systems and communities are observed (Diakonu et al., 2020). One way to overcome, or more precisely incorporate, variations in the concept of resilience is to insist that the concept should not be seen as a measurable outcome but as a phenomenon that emerges from identified resources and interactions that have measurable results (Witter et al., 2023). It can also be said that such a proposal is already largely implicitly accepted at least by part of the professional community because research or analytical activities anyway tend to focus on measurable and concrete resources and interactions of actors in the healthcare domain. However, when it comes to the concept of fragility, things are somewhat more complex because in addition to the points where it is manifested, as a lack of resilience, fragility implies existence of a more complex system or structure, and defining it requires relying on a higher level of abstraction that would encompass the diversity of structures and different interests in the phenomenon. Nevertheless, probably a more significant factor as to why the

concept of fragility in the context of societies and social systems cannot be built solely ‘from the bottom up’ is the history and development of the concept itself.

For instance, the World Bank explicitly states how the definition of fragility, more precisely *fragile and conflict-affected situations*, has evolved with the understanding of the developmental challenges encountered by the World Bank in the field. The revision in 2011 for example arose from the need to harmonize the definition with the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank, with which it collaborates on development projects (World Bank, 2024). The World Bank’s collaboration in the international development sector does not end with these two mentioned organizations, it also includes collaboration with the UN and its agencies, as well as other organizations active in the sector and regions of interest (WHO, 2021; Eisentraut, 2020). Similar to the Fragile States Index, the World Bank’s definition is primarily focused on conflict as the context for implementing development projects. It is worth noting that although this definition pertains to situations, it essentially relies on structural, relational, and contextual indicators, like the Index itself.

On the other hand, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) relies on its own definition of fragility: “Fragility is a combination of exposure to risk and insufficient capacity of the state, system, and/or communities to manage, absorb, or mitigate those risks”.²¹ The OECD introduced a multi-dimensional fragility framework in 2016, which includes six dimensions: economic, environmental, human, political, security, and societal, with 57 indicators, 9 or 10 per dimension. In addition to characteristics by dimensions, the OECD scale also measures intensity, so the latest report identified 60 fragile contexts²², of which 12 are in a state of extreme fragility (OECD, 2022). The World Economic Forum (WEF) also relies on OECD reports, as well as reports from other organizations it collaborates with that use the methodology of the World Bank.²³ As an international platform and club for economic co-operation at the global and general level, the primary focus of both the World Economic Forum and the OECD is on the economy and economic development. So, the methodology on which the OECD relies provides more detailed information on the conditions relevant for project implementation, while conflict is placed in the background as just one of the consequences of fragility and lack of resilience. On the other hand, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses the OECD definition and methodology with six dimensions²⁴, but with a holistic approach in which economic development and the building of economic and trade relations are just two general components, while others include basic functions of governance, justice, security and human rights, and women’s leadership (UNDP, 2024a; UNDP, 2024b).

²¹ Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-fa5a6770-en.htm>

²² The data is available at the interactive portal: <http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/overview/0/>

²³ For more details see: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/07/fragile-states-2018-OECD-robert-muggah/> and <https://www.weforum.org/communities/gfc-on-the-new-agenda-for-fragility-and-resilience/>

²⁴ More detail available at: <https://www.undp.org/crisis/breaking-cycle-fragility>

The Fragile States Index, the World Bank methodology, the OECD methodology, as well as numerous organizations that either rely on or develop frameworks for assessing and analyzing the fragility and resilience of states and societies, cannot be viewed solely as methodologies originating “from the bottom up”. Each of these organizations has a mission, vision, and strategic plans (or equivalents) that partly define research and analytical problems, the structure of approaches, and indirectly the results and outcomes as parts of a functional cycle where the results are used to better plan activities in specific contexts. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve any consensus on the criteria for defining fragile states (Michailof, 2013, p. 125). Additionally, inherent conceptual limitations and poorly formulated assumptions, mostly from a Western perspective, regarding the concept of fragility and failed states, obscure the usefulness of these terms for research, leading to an increase in the use of the term resilience in the discourse of international organizations. However, it is questionable to what extent this shift will affect the promotion of local development policies (Nay, 2013, p. 338). Finally, by describing the state through indicators, reduced to numbers, the complexity of historical, political, and social development, or inherent instabilities, which are equally observable in both developed and underdeveloped states, may get removed from analysis. The idea of the state, mythical in its essence, is juxtaposed with fragile states, which are seen as a threat to actors in the international community, forcing fragile states to follow development paths and paradigms that they should not necessarily adhere to (Saeed, 2020, p. 784). An interesting perspective on the interconnectedness of fragility as an inherent characteristic of the democratic order on one hand, and the resilience of the constitutional tradition on the other hand, can be found in the case of Finland, a country known as one of the most stable in the world, in the work of Rainio-Niemi (Rainio-Niemi, 2019), who also suggests that historical determinism as a paradigm should be rejected in favour of determining historical constellations. Instead of the inevitability of historical development paths, which is easy to “establish” *post hoc*, research and analytical interest and social intervention should be directed towards events and constellations that are contextually grounded and characterized by a high degree of probability of achieving a desired result.

The historical dimension of the use of the concepts of fragility and resilience, as well as associated methodologies, still points to the fact that both concepts and methodologies have undergone a process that gives them institutional grounding and legitimacy backed by (sometimes questionable) results within interventions based on them. The fact that these terms and conceptual frameworks are widely used today is confirmation that they have successfully stood the test of time. The paradigm based on the fragility-resilience pair, as one of the, conditionally speaking, institutions of the international development sector, has no clear boundaries and is not rigid but subject to questioning and changes resulting from the accumulation of knowledge, development of the technology of social interventions, and changes in the strategic goals and outcomes of the organizations that use them. While acknowledging the epistemological shortcomings and limitations, the concept of fragile and resilient states and societies cannot be avoided as one of the research approaches, even if only as an acceptance of the fact that it is used, developed, and promoted by the

most influential collective actors in the international sector without indications that this will change in the near future. By redefining and using the concept of fragility and resilience, there remains, however small, the possibility of improving some of the negative aspects of the paradigm.

Where Does Serbia Stand?

Serbia ranks 92nd on the Fragile States Index²⁵, and indicators showing deterioration in recent years include divided elites, intra-societal division, brain drain, human rights, and the rule of law. However, apart from these indicators, the country has seen significant improvement over the past fifteen years, which is not surprising given that Serbia entered the new millennium directly from wars, political and economic oppression, and international sanctions. With the political transition after the elections in 2000, many of the causes of the poor state of affairs were eliminated, resulting in gradual and overall improvement, as reflected by the indicators. The extent to which, for example, human rights and the rule of law (indicator P3, FSI), which indicate improvement in these areas over the past fifteen to twenty years, accurately describe the factual and material situation, implementation, rather than just the improved formal-legal framework in the country can, as pointed out in an OECD document, be questioned: “data-driven legislation should connect information, knowledge, and expertise creation with indicator verification, real use in decision-making, and regular review of data obtained through implementation” (Tunyan & Goetz, 2024, p. 127). The in-depth analysis of institutional, formal and legal structures and practices is beyond the scope of this work, but recommendations from the mentioned document point to significant deficiencies characterizing Serbia in that segment, indirectly affecting the issue of difference between formal and actual.

Serbia is not included on the OECD list of fragile states. However, a multi-dimensional review of the Western Balkan countries (OECD, 2022) indicates three strategic priorities for Serbia: strengthening education and skills, fostering social cohesion, and transitioning to green energy. Specifically, one of the identified priorities is education and training for teaching staff, investment in education, and modernization and improvement of the curriculum, i.e., educational programs tailored to modern needs and the labour market. Regarding social cohesion, recommendations for Serbia include better integration of citizens from marginalized groups on one hand, and better integration and coherence of social services on the other, all within the context of active labour market policies and cooperation between the public and private sectors. Finally, green development and recovery primarily focus on energy production and consumption and reducing carbon dioxide and monoxide emissions (Ibidem).

Finally, the World Economic Forum classifies Serbia as a country at an elevated risk of conflict (WEF, 2024c, p. 24) due to the complex relationship and political deadlock with Kosovo. On the other hand, in another report, Serbia ranks slightly

²⁵ Data presented here can be found at: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>

above the world average when looking at four pillars, innovation, inclusiveness, sustainability, and resilience, combined. The world average is a relative measure, so indicators in this range do not necessarily signify good conditions or context for economic development. Nevertheless, as an indication, it is worth noting that looking at resilience Serbia's score is slightly above the world average, though some indicators provide interesting insights into potential problems for social and economic development. Besides demographic structure, with unfavourable old vs young ratio, the entire category related to the institutional system indicates that social polarization, perception of corruption, and the legitimacy of the state are the biggest burden for Serbia (WEF, 2024b, pp. 207–208).

The above-mentioned sources indicate that despite the trend of improvement in recent years, Serbia is still marred by issues in some segments. In all three reports, social polarization, or the lack of cohesion, both among elites and citizens, is an area where deterioration is noted. Ethnically heterogeneous states are more fragile than those with a homogeneous population (Michailof, 2013, pp. 121–122), and although Serbia is relatively ethnically homogeneous, polarization and fragmentation along political-ideological lines can lead to similar fragility that multi-ethnic or multi-religious societies face. Another group of problems is related to the demographic and educational profile with an unfavourable ratio of old to young, a relatively low level of education and skills, and the so-called brain drain, all of which have an impact on economic development and prospects. Finally, at the level of the institutional system, the rule of law and the perception of corruption indicate that Serbian citizens perceive their immediate living environment negatively, resulting in dented state legitimacy. These are indicators that relate to Serbia as a whole, and the question arises as to how and to what extent they are relevant as indicators of characteristics related to regional development. They, of course, can be taken as regional indicators only if they can reveal comparative characteristics of the region. For example, low birth weight, a data point that allows insight at multiple (national, regional, local) levels of observation, combined with life expectancy at birth, are good bio-indicators of social fragility because, in combination with composite indicators such as the Prevailing Vulnerability Index (PVI) and the Susceptibility Index (SI), they represent good biological predictors of social fragility—according to this index, Serbia is a country of low fragility (Sarmiento, Sarmiento & Jerath, 2017). In short, only data²⁶ that describe local or regional territorial units can give us insight into the characteristics of a region and be statistically verified. On the other hand, abstraction through quantification, as mentioned earlier, has the inconvenient consequence to overlook a large amount of information, thereby eliminating significant analytical and interpretative potential. Finding a good balance, either by combining qualitative and quantitative data, or by a solid theoretical-interpretative framework that would enable the interpretation of quantitative data, is a way to solve or mitigate the aforementioned problem.

²⁶ Data, as used here, refers to quantitative while information indicates qualitative type.

Regional Development in Serbia, Fragility and Resilience

Unequal regional development as a concept and how it is used in this work relies on the observation that it is “more of a worldview than a ready-made theory of the world” (Peck, Werner & Jones, 2023, p. 1395). Fragility, on the other hand, and not only in the context of regional development, implies the existence of some structure that is under threat of partial or complete collapse, providing a view at a region as a complex structure. Thus, the definition of structure “in terms of cause and effect where systemic components are interconnected to result in systemic behaviour; as well as the rules, laws, protocols, procedures, policies, and incentives that govern these interactions” (Monat & Thomas, 2023, p. 7), with all its shortcomings, can help us as a good starting point. On the one hand, we have system components, connections between these components, and on the other hand, as a result, causal relationships and predictability of the processes characteristic for the system. The World Bank states that regional fragility can be linked to four structural constraints: local authorities do not collect enough revenue leading to budgetary systems and responsibility for the provision of public services; secondly, there are constraints imposed by central administration on local authorities leading to interregional inequalities; erosion of responsibility as a result of overlapping provision of public services between national, sub-national, and local levels; lack of technical resources leading to the dependency of local administrations on the central government when it comes to public services (Lanzona, 2024, p. 2). Finally, to step out of the limited framework focused on the formal institutional order and state administration, another indicator of resilience at the local and community levels should be included, that is the ability of communities for self-organization (Petrova & Korosteleva, 2021, p. 125). Structures and models of behaviour, as well as expected outcomes of actions, are equally applicable to formal and informal levels, and very often formal and informal models are closely linked in a single functional structure. One such example is marriage, which is a legally regulated formal institution on one hand, but culturally determined, through gender norms, an informal institution, so that even within the national system differences can be observed based on geographical, ethnic, or religious grounds.

The definition of fragility and resilience as characteristics of a system, or a network of interconnected elements that establish a structure for behavioural models, indicates that these two concepts are part of a specific perspective driven by some assumed and desired effects on formal and informal institutions. In the context of regional development addressed here, we are directed towards administrative as geographic units in the way they are defined at the national level in Serbia, and the population inhabiting these regions. This calls for at least a brief review of the formal framework for regions and regional development in Serbia. Petrović offers an insightful overview of regional development policy in Serbia: the changes in 2000 brought decentralization and strengthening of local administrations, and the Constitution from 2006 introduced regional development as one of the core government responsibilities; in 2009, a regional development law was adopted dividing Serbia into five regions, and in 2012 the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government was established, which was abolished with the formation of

the new²⁷ government in 2014 (Petrović, 2020, pp. 48–50). The evidence of the change of the state policy focus can still be found online, where under the framework of the Development Agency of Serbia, there is a ‘Regional Development’²⁸ portal containing an overview and data for the period from 2010 to 2014, where the last year for which data exist coincides with the abolition of the Ministry of Regional Development. On the other hand, on the current portal of the Development Agency of Serbia²⁹, regional development does not even have a dedicated section or a page, and is covered only in documents in sections Laws, Sub-legislative Acts, and Annual Work Program³⁰, indicating a clear change of focus from decentralization and regions as economic units to centralized and sectoral policies of economic development. Unfortunately, in this work, we cannot directly address potential impact that this transition has, but highly relevant for Serbia is observation that a large part of the instability in fragile areas stems from regional inequalities, and autocratic governments that do not empower regional institutions are ineffective in responding to fragility challenges (Lanzona, 2024, p. 19). One way to apply resilience and fragility as conceptual frameworks is through research of trust in transactional and economic relationships (Molm, Schaefer, & Collett, 2009), which can also be applied to the recent shift in focus of the Serbian government. Examining differences in the levels of trust and perception among residents of regions, within communities, and towards the broader national context can shed light on whether and to what extent trust plays a role in regional inequalities by affecting economic relationships.

Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia³¹, reveals that the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia had the lowest GDP per capita, while the Belgrade region had the highest, being the only region where GDP per capita exceeds the national average. This data alone can be taken as confirmation that balanced regional development, aside from being declared as a priority, is not high on the list of government priorities since 2014. The Southern and Eastern Serbia region is marked by geographically somewhat unfavourable characteristics, especially compared to the northern parts of the country. Hilly terrain may hinder communications, transport and economic development, but this argument can hardly be taken as valid in Serbia because among the least developed municipalities are places like Bela Palanka, Žitorađa, Vladičin Han, Preševo, which are located on major, not only national but also international road and railway routes. Accessibility of the terrain is unlikely to play any role in the disparities in regional development in Serbia. Although economic underdevelopment may not necessarily be the cause or indicator of fragility in a region or locality, demographic trends resulting in depopulation indicate fragility because they lead to the breakdown of social networks and

²⁷ The new government was formed by the same political actors from the nineties, joined by a number of the ‘pro democratic’ figures.

²⁸ Available at: <http://www.regionalnirazvoj.gov.rs/Pages/Default.aspx> (Accessed: 04.05.2024)

²⁹ Available at: <http://www.ras.gov.rs/> (Accessed: 04.05.2024)

³⁰ Available at: <http://www.ras.gov.rs/o-nama/dokumenti> (Accessed: 04.05.2024)

³¹ Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/media/3698/g201826001.pdf>, p. 20 (Accessed: 04.05.2024)

impoverishment or partial disappearance of informal institutional and behavioural structures.

The demographic structure, looking at emigration especially, is both a manifestation of regional fragility and a contributing factor to fragility. Considering that depopulation is a trend typical for Serbia as a whole, the indicator of regional fragility, as well as smaller territorial units, is contextual. Compared to the national average, Western Serbia, Šumadija, Southern, and Eastern Serbia are noticeably below the national average³², indicating significantly faster depopulation in these regions compared to Belgrade and Vojvodina. In comparison with data from 2011³³, it is evident that the trend of negative migration in Vojvodina has been halted, which is not the case for the regions in the south. A closer look at migration data reveals two trends: migration to urban centers in Serbia in general on one hand, and migration to the northern part of the country on the other. If we compare this data with the data from the Serbian Business Registers Agency on total incentives for regional development according to the type of financial incentive and territorial targeting, it is clear that regions and areas with the lowest investments generally coincide with parts of the country experiencing the highest negative migration.

Conclusion

Fragility and resilience are generally vague, imprecise concepts whose definition depends on the context and usage. Consequently, they can be applied to a wide range of social issues, especially in the context of social development. The basic subject of observation from the perspective of this functional pair is the social system as the carrier of behavioural structures that enable communities and individual members to plan activities with predictable outcomes, resulting in stable and, conditionally speaking, energy-rational social environments. The sources of data and information necessary for a well-grounded analysis would encompass a wide range of them, so a mixed-method approach as a research principle emerges as the most appropriate, including both qualitative and quantitative data. In the context of regional development, the conceptual pair of fragility-resilience can also be useful as a guide for comparative analysis of territorial social groups within a broader social and geographic area.

Although uneven regional and local development does not necessarily directly indicate fragility at the national or regional level, in the case of Serbia, data still indicate that regional fragility is a significant problem. One of the elements influencing fragility of the regions is administrative and developmental neglect. Migration trends within the country, at the regional and local levels, combined with investment indicators as incentives for regional development, indicate that not only is there a lack of significant administrative support for territories and communities,

³² Data available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/180701?languageCode=sr-Latn&displayMode=table&guid=f3447a52-2d6f-4616-af79-4644255d1984> (Accessed: 05.05.2024)

³³ Data available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/180602?languageCode=sr-Latn&displayMode=table&guid=41a1a8b7-6e37-49db-9196-a90b82a12758> (Accessed: 05.05.2024)

especially in southern Serbia, but these areas are also systematically deprived through underinvestment compared to the north of the country. The assessment that this is deliberate deprivation may seem too harsh at first glance, but the arguments presented in the paper, including the fact that regional development as a political and administrative strategy was practically abandoned in 2014, provide a solid basis for the claim. Looking at the problem at the national level, “it is useful to distinguish inclusive systems, those that provide everyone with a share and promote investment and development, from those that only distribute a portion of the rent to everyone to remain in power. The first category provides more stability than the second” (Michailof, 2013, p. 125). Unfortunately, Serbia likely belongs to the second category.

Official and publicly available data on Serbia indicate that regions and communities in the south, especially the southeast, can be characterized as fragile with a further trend of erosion of resilience to unfavourable socio-economic events. Indicators needed to inform development policy and secure improvements, at least in terms of administrative and investment aspects, exist; however, political will emerges as the primary factor in maintaining the unfavourable situation. The dimension that is lacking in this context relates to the structure of communities, what typically falls under informal institutions, and what official statistics and evidence do not cover: perception, worldview, values and life orientations, aspirations, as well as the motivation behind individual actions of members of these communities. Sporadic and anecdotal testimonies that can be found in the media may be indicative but are not informative or usable as a basis for political lobbying and planning for a better model of regional administration and development in Serbia. Understanding the causes of fragility in Serbia needs to be based on understanding the communities that are at risk. Allowing a region, area, or locality to remain without a population may indeed be the result of “economic reality,”³⁴ but leaving the fate of communities to higher powers of this sort inevitably leads to the destruction of local resources. Communities as networks of human relationships and cultural patterns, alongside weaknesses and fragility, also possess resources or, ultimately, answers that broader contexts cannot provide. Official records and statistics are important and valuable but insufficient resources when it comes to the problem of unequal economic development; hence, the argument that social research based on both qualitative and quantitative methodology has merits. The conceptual framework of fragility and resilience through the prism of regional development provides, albeit arguably fuzzy and flexible, clear enough guidelines and focus when it comes to context, objectives, research questions, and research structure.

³⁴ A syntagm often used to justify usually neoliberal ideological intervention or decisions and delegitimise alternatives.

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КРХКОСТ И ОТПОРНОСТ – ПОГЛЕД НА РЕГИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ У СРБИЈИ

Сажетак

Упркос критикама, Индекс крхких држава и његове варијације које користе бројне међународне организације и креатори јавне политике и даље су у широкој употреби. С обзиром на то да се један од индикатора односи конкретно на неравномеран регионални развој, питање је како, и у којој мери, концепт крхкости може да се користи за истраживање варијација у регионалном развоју у Србији?

Први део рада пружа преглед обима и контекста у којима се концепт крхкости користи. Разматрају се епистемолошке и практичне импликације за истраживање и анализу, са једне стране, и потенцијални утицај на институционалне аранжмане и развојне политике, са друге стране. Узимајући у обзир и формалне и неформалне институционалне оквире разматра се веза између националног, регионалног и локалног нивоа где се крхкост и еластичност манифестују. Истиче се да концепт крхкости подразумева структуру, и као такав упућује на коришћење сродног концепта отпорности, ради боље аналитичке и практичне јасноће.

Други део рада примењује оквир темељен на концептима отпорности и крхкости за истраживање регионалних диспаритета у Србији. У центру пажње су социјални и институционални аспекти као основни услови за (де)популационе трендове, као и животни изгледи као економски покретач уочених трендова. Закључак указује на аналитичке и практично-политичке предности и ограничења изложеног приступа.

Кључне речи: отпорност, крхкост, регионални развој, животни изгледи.

THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION IN SERBIA DURING THE CONSOLIDATION OF CAPITALISM³⁵

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is the analysis of the economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia during the consolidation of the capitalist order. The main objective is to determine whether there have been differences in the economic position of these social groups in the specified period, and the assumption is that they exist. The analysis is based on data from a survey conducted in 2018 on a representative sample of the Serbian population of 2,211 respondents. In addition, data from comparable surveys from 2003 and 2012 are used, and all three were conducted by the Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. First, the indicators of the basic dimensions of the economic position, i.e., income, property and consumption of the urban and rural population in Serbia are analyzed. Then the overall economic position was analyzed, which is expressed by a composite index shown in the form of an interval scale with five levels of economic position: lower, lower middle, medium, upper middle and higher material position. The analysis of the indicators of the basic dimensions, and the overall economic position showed that the economic position of the urban population in Serbia during the consolidation of capitalism is higher than the economic position of the rural population, i.e. that the economic position of the urban population is higher in all three time periods.

³⁵ This work was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia as part of the funding of the scientific research work of the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy (contract number 451-03-47/2023-01/200163).

Keywords: economic position, urban population, rural population, Serbia, consolidation of capitalism

Introduction

This study analyzes the economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia during the consolidation of the capitalist order, along with monitoring its variations over the last two decades. The main objective of this study is to determine whether there are differences in the economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia during the period of consolidation of capitalism, assuming that there are differences. The additional objective of this study is to analyze the economic position of these social groups over two decades, supposing that the economic position of the urban population is higher than that of the rural population, regardless of variations in the stability of the emerging capitalist order.

The analysis is based on data gathered in a survey conducted in 2018 with a representative sample of the Serbian population consisting of 2,211 respondents. Data were also used from comparable surveys conducted in 2003, on a sample of 2,997 respondents, and in 2012, on a sample of 2,557 respondents.³⁶ All three studies were conducted by the Institute for Sociological Research of the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy.

In the first part of the study, the term of economic position is clarified and operationalized. Relevant characteristics of Serbia's consolidation of capitalism are then outlined. The next part presents analysis of the indicators of economic position in its basic dimensions (income, property, and consumption). The concluding portion analyzes the total economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia.

Theoretical and Contextual Framework

Disparities in the distribution of material wealth reflect a systematic division of society, affecting the mobilization potential of members of social groups sharing similar living conditions (Lazić, 2011). Position in the reproduction of a given mode of social life is inseparable from the economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia, but also from their spatial resources. The term territorial capital encompasses local resources and implies "the development potential inherent to a place" (Petrović, 2014, p. 46). It refers to the ability of territories "to exploit and *create values* from their resources as collective actors" (Petrović, 2014, p. 47).

Economic position denotes access to material goods. In the surveys whose results are used in this study, the household economic position was measured through a composite index consisting of indicators representing dimensions of income from different sources (regular employment, pensions and disability insurance, sale of agricultural products, etc.), property (ownership of dwellings and their market value,

³⁶ The findings of the research from 2003 and 2012 will be summarized because they have already been the subject of analysis. For more details, see: Manić, 2015.

additional housing units, commercial properties, land, cars, etc.), and consumption (food, medicine, clothes and footwear, hygiene products, holidays). The composite index is a five-point interval scale, identifying lower, lower middle, middle, higher middle, and higher economic position.

The empirical data analyzed in this study were gathered during the period of consolidation of the capitalist order in Serbia (2018), whose characteristics are positive GDP growth rate, a low and stable inflation rate, employment rise, increasing income inequalities and improvement of the economic position of the population (Manić & Mirkov, 2020). The data are compared with those from two other time sections of the stabilization of the capitalist order in Serbia: the initial stage of introducing the capitalist order (2003) and the economic recession after the outbreak of the global economic crisis (2012). For the initial stage of introducing the capitalist order during the accelerated postsocialist transformation, there was peculiar economic growth and widening of material inequalities. The effects of the global economic crisis from 2008, as well as internal factors, were pronounced at the time of the 2012 survey (drop in GDP, high inflation rate, rise in unemployment, greater poverty), with deterioration of the economic position and increasingly pronounced social differentiation. During the period of consolidation of the capitalist order, the economic position of the population of Serbia improved compared to the period after the economic crisis, but not compared to the first years of accelerated postsocialist transformation.

The population of Serbia mostly lives in urban areas. According to population estimates by type of settlement in 2022, the urban population made up 62% of the total population, with a trend of growth (56.4% in 2002 and 59.1% in 2011) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023). In our country there is no official statistical definition of rural regions. Since the 1981 census, settlements have been just classified as urban or other (Bogdanov, 2007). The settlement is defined as urban according to the decision of the local authorities, for which the existence of an urban plan is sufficient. Settlements that are not covered by this criterion are classified in the other category. The population of rural areas in Serbia is older, the fertility rate is lower, migrations from rural areas are more present due to unfavourable characteristics of the labour market, limited access and low quality of both education and health services, underdeveloped infrastructure, difficult access to social and financial assistance, as well as growing peri-urbanization (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, 2022). Rural development in Serbia faces a number of related problems: unfavourable socio-demographic changes, unsuitable property structure, social exclusion and poverty, increased social inequalities, gender property inequalities, problematic agricultural cooperatives, values of the rural population (collectivist, ethno-nationalist, patriarchal), uneven development of settlements, municipalities and regions, non-competitiveness and insufficient productivity of domestic agriculture compared to other markets, ownership of agricultural land by foreign citizens, environmental problems and non-integrated rural development (Vujović, 2016).

Income of Urban and Rural Population in Serbia

According to the research findings from 2018, urban households have a higher total monthly income from different sources (regular employment, pensions and disability insurance, sale of agricultural products, additional income from regular or temporary employment, social transfers, scholarships, child allowances, and other social benefits, etc.) than rural households (Table 1). Only in the lowest income category (up to 499 euros) is the rural population more present than the urban population, while in the highest income category (over 10,000 euros) the rural population does not even appear. The distribution of income of these two social groups is almost the same in 2003 and 2012, except in the highest income category, with an increase in nominal values of the total monthly income per household in the analyzed period. The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in total monthly income of the urban and rural population in Serbia both in 2012 and 2018.³⁷

Table 1. Total monthly household income of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Income	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Up to 499 euros	78.3	90.3	56.5	73.1	42.7	57.9
500–999 euros	17.8	7.7	30.5	20.0	35.8	27.9
1,000–1,999 euros	3.2	1.3	8.9	5.6	17.0	11.7
2,000–9,999 euros	0.4	0.6	3.2	1.2	4.0	2.5
Over 10,000 euros	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.1	0.5	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

In 2018, respondents were asked whether the household can afford an unforeseen expense in the amount of 10,000 dinars to be paid from the household budget, including using a credit card and allowed overdraft. 36% of urban and 42.8% of rural households cannot afford such an unforeseen expense.

Research results on lower income of the rural compared to urban population in Serbia during the initial stage of introducing capitalist order, a period of economic recession after the outbreak of the global economic crisis, and consolidation of the capitalist order are not unexpected. Some of the long-term problems of the rural population are low income, standard and quality of life, an underdeveloped rural economy with insufficient investments, unemployment, vulnerable employment, inflexible and insufficiently developed labour market (Šljukić & Janković, 2015). Poverty is predominantly concentrated in rural areas. “If we look at the level of absolute poverty in the period 2011–2013, the percentage of the poor population is twice as high in rural compared to urban areas” (Šljukić & Janković, 2015, p. 246).

³⁷ In the survey from 2003, data on income were collected in the form of an interval scale. The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2012 and 2018 are: 2012 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 731.1612, std. deviation 3044.24994; rural population: mean 399.0884, std. deviation 852.73565; 2018 sig. = 0.002; urban population: mean 898.1121, std. deviation 2560.79492; rural population: mean 582.3713, std. deviation 683.06927.

Property of Urban and Rural Population in Serbia

We analyze the following aspects pertaining to the property status of the urban and rural population in Serbia: the ownership of dwellings and their market value, borrowing for housing unit purchase, the way of acquiring a housing unit, household appliances, additional housing units and their market value, ownership and market value of the commercial properties, possession of land, ownership and market value of a car.

The 2018 research shows that the ownership of housing units is more present in the rural population (93.6%) than among the urban population (84.6%) (Table 2). The findings from 2012 are similar, while in 2003 the differences between the urban and rural population were almost non-existent. However, in 2018, borrowing for housing unit purchase is more common among the urban population (4.7%) than among the rural population (1.8%). The difference between urban and rural population decreased compared to 2012, when this way of providing a housing unit was five times more common among the urban population than among the rural population.³⁸ According to the results of the last survey, tenants are also more often an urban (8.9%) than a rural (1.4%) feature, as in the previous two periods. The city is “a place of attraction for different categories of the population who are not able to ensure themselves (in the given system of relations) an appropriate housing status” (Hodžić, 2016, p. 567).

Table 2. Ownership of dwellings of urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Ownership of dwellings	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Owned by the household	63.8	64.8	83.0	91.9	79.9	91.8
Owned by the household, with a mortgage or loan			3.7	0.8	4.7	1.8
Owned by the company			0.3	0.3	0.1	-
Owned by the municipality/state			0.7	0.3	0.5	1.1
Owned by a relative or friend, used without compensation	26.5	31.7	5.5	6.2	5.7	3.8
Tenants	8.5	2.8	6.6	0.3	8.8	1.4
Something else	1.2	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Data about the way of acquiring a housing unit are available for 2018 (Table A1). The urban population buys almost seven times more often a socially owned dwelling, twenty-five times more often from an investor, and twice as often from the previous owner than the rural population. More than half of the rural population

³⁸ In the research from 2003, respondents were not offered an answer whether the housing unit owned by the household has a mortgage or a loan, is it owned by the company or municipality/state.

acquired a housing unit through construction, in contrast to a third of the urban population, and they more frequently inherited housing units (37.1% of the rural and 29.3% of the urban population). To sum up, the rural population, compared to the urban population, manages to settle the housing issue more often and without loans, through construction of a housing unit or inheritance.

According to the results of the 2018 survey, the rural population more often owns low value housing units than the urban population (Table 3). The urban population is more present in the categories of owners of medium and high value housing units than the rural population. The results of the 2003 and 2012 surveys are similar. The most pronounced differences between urban and rural population occur in the category of household's housing unit of high market value, which the urban population owned twice (2003) and five times (2012 and 2018) more than the rural population. The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the market value of the dwellings of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018.³⁹ Inequalities in the value of housing units are the result of the condition of the real estate market, i.e. higher real estate prices in Belgrade, larger towns and cities, but also of the privatization of socially owned dwellings in postsocialism, which brought to the urban population the ownership status of higher value apartments at low prices. Dwellings of urban households are also technically better equipped than rural households, both in 2018 and in previous years, although the differences decrease over time (Table A2).

Table 3. Market value of the dwellings of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Market value of dwellings	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Low (up to 39,999 euros)	55.6	82.8	41.2	76.4	47.4	76.7
Medium (40,000 – 89,999 euros)	34.5	13.0	40.2	20	36.6	19.4
High (90,000 euros or more)	9.9	4.2	18.6	3.6	18.0	3.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The 2018 research shows that the urban population owns an additional housing unit almost twice as often as the rural population, as in the previous two periods, with a change in the share of the owners. The number of owners of additional housing unit is increasing both in urban (18.1%) and rural (11%) populations compared to 2012 (12.2% of urban and 7.7% of rural population), but is lower than in 2003 (25.6% of urban and 13.1% of rural population). The explanation for the changes in shares could be a more stable economic situation in Serbia, both in 2003 and in 2018, compared to 2012, the year of the economic recession after the global economic

³⁹ In the survey from 2003, data on the market value of dwellings were collected in the form of an interval scale. The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2012 and 2018 are: 2012 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 57056.9322, std. deviation 80962.59685; rural population: mean 26985.7319, std. deviation 28480.05696; 2018 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 60898.7928, std. deviation 99445.76949; rural population: mean 28281.0417, std. deviation 35874.15986.

crisis, which affected the purchasing power of the population. According to the findings of the 2018 survey, the urban population more frequently than the rural population owns additional high market value housing units, as in the previous two periods (Table 4). The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the market value of additional housing unit of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2018, as well as in 2012.⁴⁰

Table 4. Market value of additional housing unit of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Market value of additional housing unit	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Low (up to 39,999 euros)	72.5	80.9	48.2	57.2	49.6	55.7
Medium (40,000 – 89,999 euros)	19.6	16.3	31.9	31.1	26.7	35.4
High (90,000 euros or more)	7.9	2.8	19.9	11.7	23.7	8.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The possession of commercial properties is also an indicator of the economic inequalities of the urban and rural population in Serbia. The urban population (5.5%) owns commercial properties more often than the rural population (4.4%) during the consolidation of the capitalist order. The difference between these two groups decreased compared to the period of the cyclical economic crisis, when the urban population twice as frequently (4.8%) owned the commercial properties than the rural population (2.3%).⁴¹ According to the 2018 research, there are no differences between urban and rural population in possession of low market value commercial properties (up to 39,999 euros), but the rural population more often owns commercial properties of medium value (40,000–89,999 euros), and the urban population of high value (90,000 euros and more) (Table 5). Six years earlier, the urban population also owned commercial properties of medium value more frequently than the rural population. The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the market value of commercial properties of the urban and rural population in Serbia both in 2012 and 2018.⁴²

⁴⁰ In the survey from 2003, data on the market value of additional housing unit were collected in the form of an interval scale. The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2012 and 2018 are: 2012 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 11347.42, std. deviation 129687.615; rural population: mean 2959.26, std. deviation 13967.435; 2018 sig. = 0.002; urban population: mean 15223.96, std. deviation 68616.800; rural population: mean 4764.19, std. deviation 20525.637.

⁴¹ The question about owning commercial properties was not asked in the research from 2003.

⁴² The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2012 and 2018 are: 2012 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 11347.42, std. deviation 129687.615; rural population: mean 2959.26, std. deviation 13967.435; 2018 sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean 15223.96, std. deviation 68616.800; rural population: mean 4764.19, std. deviation 20525.637.

Table 5. Market value of commercial properties of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Market value of commercial properties	2012.		2018.	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Low (up to 39,999 euros)	60.6	72.1	50.0	50.0
Medium (40,000 – 89,999 euros)	27.4	23.3	23.2	31,3
High (90,000 euros or more)	12.1	4.6	26.8	18.8
Total	100	100	100	100

The 2018 research shows that the rural population (72.1%) owns land more often than the urban population (22.1%), as in the previous two periods (73.5% of the rural and 16.3% of the urban population in 2012; 78.8% of the rural and 35.8% of the urban population in 2018), with the highest presence of plots smaller than 10 hectares (Table A3). The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the size of land plots of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2018.⁴³ “Family holding in Serbia is characterized by an unfavourable ownership structure and a large fragmentation of the plots” (Vujović, 2016, p. 80). Data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture in Serbia indicate that the average size of used land per agricultural holding is 5.4 hectares, and the average number of plots is six (Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014–2024, 2014).

According to the results of the 2018 survey, the rural population (67%) owns a car more frequently than the urban population (63.1%), in contrast to the findings of two previous surveys when the urban population was slightly more present among car owners, with gradually decreasing differences (Table A4). The number of households owning more than one car is constantly growing. Almost every fifth of urban households own more than one car in 2018, as well as almost every fourth of rural households. Although rural households own cars more often than urban households during the consolidation of the capitalist order, the market value of their cars is lower than that of the urban population (Table A5). The findings from 2012 are similar.⁴⁴

To sum up the research findings about dwellings, for the most valuable property, the rural population is more present among owners in 2018, as well as in 2012, than the urban population. During the postsocialist transformation, ownership status is a less discriminatory indicator of housing inequalities due to the privatization of socially owned dwellings, whose use was a privilege in the socialist order (Vujović, 1987), which households of private entrepreneurs and farmers did not have (Petrović, 2004). Even though there are more owners of housing units among the rural popu-

⁴³ In the survey from 2003, data on size of land plots were collected in the form of an interval scale. The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2018 are: sig. = 0.000; urban population: mean .7559, std. deviation 3.24785; rural population: mean 3.4301, std. deviation 6.53539.

⁴⁴ The question about market value of the car was not asked in the 2003 survey. Data on market value of a car were collected in the form of an interval scale in 2012 and 2018.

lation, “after the privatization of dwellings there are no longer any significant differences in the dispersion and representation of housing options based on ownership status between rural and urban settlements” (Petrović, 2004, p. 283). During the postsocialist transformation, Serbia “became a society of housing owners” (Petrović, 2004, p. 280), and the market value of a household’s housing unit became a more significant indicator of inequality. According to the results of the 2018 survey, as well as from previous periods, the urban population owns more valuable dwellings than the rural population, which are technically better equipped. The urban population also more often owns additional housing unit in 2018, as in the previous two periods, with a higher market value. Ownership of an additional housing unit (apartment, house, cottage) is a very important indicator of a higher economic position, as a type of long-term investment, shielded from the direct influence of inflation, and it is a potential source of stable and regular rental income (Ljumović & Marinković, 2014).

Consumption of Urban and Rural Population in Serbia

The subject of analysis in this paper is the basic consumption of the urban and rural population in Serbia: food, medicine, clothes and footwear, hygiene products, holidays (whether the household afforded a holiday to at least one of its members, holiday destination, type of accomodation). Consumption is analyzed primarily from the economic perspective, i.e., conditioned by income, and indicates the extent to which income satisfies the needs of household members of these two social groups.

The 2018 research shows that the majority of both urban (76.9%) and rural households (68.1%) can afford meat or fish for every other day’s meal or a suitable vegetarian substitute. Quality nutrition is not available to other households, among which are more numerous rural households. The majority of the urban (90.7%) and rural (88.3%) population can provide medicines whenever a member of the household needs them.⁴⁵

According to the same year’s research, the majority of the urban and rural population in Serbia purchases new clothes and footwear, carefully choosing according to the price (Table 6). The higher purchasing power of the urban population is indicated by the findings that they more often first look at the quality and then the price, and buy quality clothes and footwear, not paying much attention to the price, while the rural population more often buys used clothes and shoes, and receives them as help. The results from 2012 are similar⁴⁶, with the exception that there were households in both population groups that neither buy nor get clothes and footwear as help.

⁴⁵ Questions about nutrition and medicine were not asked in previous surveys.

⁴⁶ The question about acquiring clothes and footwear was not asked in the research from 2003.

Table 6. Acquiring clothes and footwear of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Way of acquiring clothes and footwear	2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
We do not buy clothes and footwear nor get them as help	0.6	0.7	-	0.4
We get clothes and footwear as help	4.0	11.0	7.2	9.7
We buy used clothes and footwear	6.4	6.9	9.1	12.5
We buy new clothes and footwear but carefully choose according to the price	70.1	72.2	64.1	65.6
First we look at the quality of clothes and footwear and then the price	15.8	7.8	15.4	9.0
We buy quality clothes and footwear, we do not pay much attention to the price	3.1	1.4	4.2	2.8
Total	100	100	100	100

The 2018 research shows that both the urban (53.7%) and rural population (71%) mostly use only basic hygiene products, but the share of the rural population in this category is higher (Table A6). The urban households more often can afford luxury products (44.5%) than the rural households (26%), whereas limited income of rural households more often prevented the purchase even of basic hygiene products (3.1%) than the urban households (1.8%). The findings from 2012 are similar, which indicate that the differences between these two population groups regarding the consumption of hygiene products persist.⁴⁷

During the consolidation of the capitalist order in Serbia, the urban population (51.7%) can more often afford a holiday than the rural population (27.5%) Share of households which could afford a holiday for at least one member increased in both population groups compared to the initial stage of introducing the capitalist order during the accelerated postsocialist transformation (42.3% of urban and 18.1% of rural population) and to the period dominated by the cyclical economic crisis and its effects (42.2% of the urban and 17.2% of the rural population). Although there is an improvement in this aspect of consumption in both groups, the mutual differences remain in all three periods.

The 2018 research shows that the rural population on holiday more often seek out destinations within Serbia (22.5%) and abroad (67.7%) than the urban population (15.9% within Serbia and 61.3% abroad) (Table 7). However, the urban population can more often afford vacation both within Serbia and abroad (22.8%) than the rural population (9.9%), suggesting higher purchasing power of the first group. During the previous two periods, the share of urban households taking their holidays abroad or in two locations was higher than in rural households, which also indicates its higher purchasing power. Regardless of the change in the distribution of vacation

⁴⁷ The question about consumption of hygiene products was not asked in the 2003 survey.

destinations, in all three periods, the urban population spent vacation both in Serbia and abroad at least twice as often as the rural population.

Table 7. Holiday destination of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Holiday destination	2003.		2012.		2018.	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Within Serbia	57.6	74.6	17.1	26.9	15.9	22.5
Abroad	26.9	19.2	69.3	66.3	61.3	67.6
Both within Serbia and abroad	15.5	6.2	13.6	6.8	22.8	9.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

During the consolidation of capitalism in Serbia, both urban (51.8%) and rural population (62.3%) favour private accommodation or apartments as a type of holiday accommodation (Table A7). The second most present type of accommodation is the hotel (27.3% of the urban and 24.1% of the rural population). Assuming that a hotel is more expensive than private accommodation, the results on the type of accommodation indicate higher purchasing power of the urban population. The distribution of these two population groups by type of accommodation was similar in 2012⁴⁸, but less than half of the members of both urban and rural population vacationed in private accommodation.

On the basis of consumption indicators, we can conclude that the purchasing power of the urban population is higher than that of the rural population. Nutrition quality is unequally distributed among these social groups for the benefit of the urban population, although the rural population has greater possibilities to produce food. The number of rural and urban households able to afford a holiday has gone up during the consolidation of the capitalist order in Serbia compared to previous periods, though such opportunities are still less open to rural than to the urban population.

Economic Position of Urban and Rural Population in Serbia

The final subject of analysis is the overall economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2018, compared with data from 2003 and 2012. The results from 2018 show that the economic position of the urban population is higher than the economic position of the rural population (Table 8). The urban population is more present in the middle, higher middle and higher categories, while the rural population is more present in the lower and lower middle categories of economic position. The distribution is almost the same in the prior periods, except for 2012, when the urban population was more present in the category of lower middle economic position than the rural population. The results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018.⁴⁹ After the

⁴⁸ The question about the type of accommodation was not asked in the research from 2003.

⁴⁹ The results of the Independent-samples t-test in 2003, 2012 and 2018 are: 2003 sig.=0.000; urban population: mean 2.8402, std. deviation 1.10443; rural population: mean 2.0950, std. deviation

appreciable deterioration in the economic position of the urban and rural population in the beginning with the outbreak of the global economic crisis, there occurred a moderate improvement as the capitalist order consolidate, but economic position of the urban population is higher than the economic position of the rural population independently of variations in the stability of the emerging capitalist order.

Table 8. Economic position of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Index of economic position	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Lower	9.6	27.1	25.7	48.2	19.9	33.3
Lower middle	33.1	46.3	42.4	38.2	39.1	46.7
Middle	29.2	18.9	20.5	11.0	22.3	13.6
Higher middle	19.8	5.5	8.5	2.1	14.8	6.0
Higher	8.3	2.2	2.9	0.5	3.9	0.4

The findings on higher economic position of urban than rural population in Serbia in three observed periods agree with the findings on the higher economic position of urban youth households compared to rural youth households in 2003 and 2007 (Mojčić, 2012), the grouping of households from urban areas into three higher categories and households from rural areas into two lower categories of economic position in 2007 (Petrović, 2009), the higher economic position of the urban than the rural population in 1989, 2003 and 2012 (Manić, 2015), as well as on diversified inter-class differences in economic position observed by region in 2012 and 2018 (Petrović, Backović & Petrović, 2019).

Conclusion

The analysis of indicators of basic dimensions and overall economic position shows that the economic position of the urban population in Serbia during the consolidation of capitalism is higher than the economic position of the rural population. The economic position of the urban population is higher than the economic position of the rural population during the initial stage of introducing the capitalist order (2003), the period dominated by the cyclical economic crisis and its effects (2012) and the consolidation of the capitalist order in Serbia (2018). "In contemporary society, there is an undeniable concentration of economic activities and different forms of capital in certain regions, mostly urban, which entails significant social inequalities" (Petrović, Backović & Petrović, 2019, p. 71).

Although the data on which the analysis is based are several years old, it can be assumed that the basic distribution of urban and rural population by categories of the economic position, i.e., the higher economic position of the urban compared to rural population, has not changed. Differences in the economic position of the urban and

0.93414; 2012 sig.=0.000; urban population: mean 2.2051, std. deviation 1.01059; rural population: mean 1.6837, std. deviation 0.78584; 2018 sig.=0.000; urban population: mean 2.44, std. deviation 1.084; rural population: mean 1.93, std. deviation 0.862.

rural population in Serbia are independent of variations in the stability of the emerging capitalist order. “The problems of agrorural development in Serbia are numerous and serious, most of them belong to almost two centuries of “long-term history”, and a smaller part to the short-term history of today” (Vujović, 2016, p. 95). New and comparable stratification surveys are needed for monitoring changes in the economic position of the (urban and rural) population in Serbia in current social conditions: the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis, the growth of inflation, increase in the prices of food and utility services etc.

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МАТЕРИЈАЛНИ ПОЛОЖАЈ ГРАДСКОГ И СЕОСКОГ СТАНОВНИШТВА У СРБИЈИ ТОКОМ КОНСОЛИДАЦИЈЕ КАПИТАЛИЗМА

Сажетак

Предмет овог рада је анализа материјалног положаја градског и сеоског становништва у Србији током консолидације капиталистичког поретка. Основни циљ је утврђивање да ли постоје разлике у материјалном положају ових друштвених група у наведеном периоду, а претпоставка је да постоје. Анализа је заснована на подацима анкетног истраживања реализованог 2018. године на репрезентативном узорку становништва Србије од 2211 испитаника. Поред тога, користе се и подаци упоредивих анкетних истраживања из 2003. и 2012. године, а сва три је спровео Институт за социолошка истраживања Филозофског факултета у Београду. Најпре су анализирани индикатори основних димензија материјалног положаја, односно приходи, имовина и потрошња градског и сеоског становништва у Србији. Затим је анализиран укупан материјални положај, који је исказан композитним индексом приказаним у облику интервалне скале са пет нивоа материјалног положаја: нижи, нижи средњи, средњи, виши средњи и виши материјални положај. Анализа индикатора основних димензија и укупног материјалног положаја показала је да је материјални положај градског становништва у Србији током консолидације капитализма виши од материјалног положаја сеоског становништва, односно да је

материјални положај градског становништва виши у сва три временска периода.

Кључне речи: материјални положај, градско становништво, сеоско становништво, Србија, консолидација капитализма.

Appendix

Table A1. Way of acquiring a housing unit of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2018 (in %).

Way of acquiring a housing unit	Urban	Rural
Purchased a socially owned dwelling	11.7	1.8
Purchased from an investor	5.0	0.2
Purchased from the previous owner	18.8	8.6
Construction	32.9	51.4
Inheritance	29.3	37.1
Something else	2.3	0.9
Total	100	100

Table A2. Household appliances of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Appliances	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Washing machine	93.3	74.7	96.1	89.0	98.1	94.9
	-	-	42.5	13.7	47.2	24.4
Valuable stereo system	19.4	10.1	18.4	6.7	16.5	9.0
Dishwasher	9.6	4.7	23.8	8.5	34.3	20.4
Computer	31.3	10.5	71.6	43	77.3	56.1

Table A3. Size of land plot of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Size of land plot	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Up to 10 ha	94.3	93.1	93.3	94.0	94.2	94.2
11 ha or more	5.7	6.9	6.7	6	5.8	5.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table A4. Car ownership of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2003, 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Ownership and number of cars	2003		2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Does not own a car	44.8	47.9	40.6	42.0	36.9	32.9
One car	48.6	45.3	49.4	48.4	49.5	51.3
More than one car	6.6	6.8	10.0	9.6	13.6	15.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table A5. Market value of a car of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Market value of a car	2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Up to 5000 Euros	15.1	24.8	10.3	16.8
5,001 – 10,000 Euros	79.8	73.8	83	81.2
10,001 Euros or more	5.1	1.4	6.7	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Table A6. Consumption of hygiene products of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Consumption of hygiene products	2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
We also lack funds for basic hygiene	2.6	4.4	1.8	3.0
We use only basic products	48.8	69.4	53.7	71.0
In addition to basic products, we also use more luxurious ones	48.6	26.2	44.5	26.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Table A7. Type of holiday accommodation of the urban and rural population in Serbia in 2012 and 2018 (in %).

Type of holiday accommodation	2012		2018	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Hotel	31.3	22.3	27.3	24.1
Private accommodation	46.0	49.5	51.8	62.3
Camp	1.3	3.3	1.1	9.9
Accommodation with relatives, friends	17.1	18.3	15.3	2.1
In their house, cottage or apartment	3.9	5.2	4.4	1.1
Other	0.4	1.4	0.1	0.5
Total	100	100	100	100

ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL INEQUALITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Regional disparities in the levels of economic development are indisputable in contemporary societies. Regional inequalities have largely marked the process of post-socialist transformation in Serbia. The processes of sectoral and property transformation that characterized this period not only led to a decline in employment and an increase in unemployment, but also caused the growth of existing regional inequalities. In that sense, the analysis of regional inequalities in the labor market in Serbia is of great importance.

The main goal of this paper is the analysis of regional inequalities in the labour market in Serbia. The analysis will include the basic indicators of the labour market: the employment rate, the unemployment rate, the activity rate (labour force participation), and the rate of the population outside the labour force. Inequalities will be viewed at the level of different territorial units (regions and areas), i.e. statistical territorial units NUTS-2 and NUTS-3. The analysis of inequalities in Serbia will be based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and Eurostat data.

Keywords: regional inequalities, labour market, Serbia, employment rate, unemployment rate

Introduction

Regional disparities in the levels of economic development are indisputable in contemporary societies. Regional inequalities have largely marked the process of post-socialist transformation in Serbia. The processes of sectoral and property transformation that characterized this period not only led to a decline in employment and

an increase in unemployment, but also caused the growth of existing regional inequalities (Petrović & Backović, 2021, p. 123). In this sense, the analysis of regional inequalities in the labour market in Serbia is of great importance.

The main goal of this paper is the analysis of regional inequalities in the labour market in Serbia. The analysis will include the basic indicators of the labour market; the employment rate, the unemployment rate, the activity rate (labour force participation), and the rate of the population outside the labour force. Labour market slack will also be analyzed. Regional inequalities in the labour market will be viewed at the level of different territorial units (regions and areas), i.e. statistical territorial units NUTS-2 and NUTS-3.⁵⁰ The analysis of regional inequalities in Serbia will be based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and Eurostat data.

Theoretical Contextual Framework

The significance of analyzing regional inequalities, specifically the incorporation of smaller spatial units, as an analytical framework within nation-states, suggests a potential contribution to overcoming the limitations of “methodological nationalism” and gaining a better understanding of the growth and transformation of social inequalities in the context of contemporary globalization (Petrović, Backović & Petrović, 2019). Such an approach is especially crucial for European post-socialist societies, characterized by significant internal development disparities in space. At the same time, spatial inequalities in these countries are increasing more rapidly than in more developed EU nations (Hadjimichalis, 2011). When addressing labour market inequalities, several prior empirical studies have demonstrated that regional differences in countries in transition are significantly larger than those in developed countries (Bornhorst & Commander, 2004).

Serbia is marked not only by significant regional inequalities in the labour market but also by their persistence, along with the stable dynamics in the relationship between developed and underdeveloped areas. In particular, there are traditionally underdeveloped areas in Serbia, mainly in the southern part of the country, which have held the status of underdeveloped areas for decades (Molnar, 2013). Despite longstanding regional inequalities in the labour market in Serbia, this matter has not received adequate attention. Addressing the issue of regional disparities in the labour market only became a prioritized goal in the National Employment Strategy for the period 2005–2010. Encouraging employment in less developed regions continued to

⁵⁰ The Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) contains three levels: NUTS 1, NUTS 2, NUTS 3. These statistical units are, in accordance with EU standards, classified according to the following criteria: 1) number of inhabitants; 2) geopolitical position; 3) natural potentials; 4) existing territorial organization and 5) cultural and historical heritage (Regulation on NUTS, 2009: Article 3). NUTS levels are defined based on the number of inhabitants: NUTS 1 3,000,000–7,000,000; NUTS 2 800,000–3,000,000, and NUTS 3 150,000–800,000. Serbia is divided into two NUTS 1 regions, Serbia-North and Serbia-South, and four NUTS 2 regions; 1. Belgrade region; 2. Region of Vojvodina; 3. Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia; 4. Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia; 5. Region of Kosovo and Metohija (NUTS Decree 2009, Article 7). The analysis of regional inequalities does not include the region of Kosovo and Metohija.

be a key objective in the subsequent strategy for the period 2011–2020. However, the realization of these objectives faced challenges due to persistent regional inequalities in Serbia, which were evident even before the beginning of the transformation period (Arandarenko & Nojković, 2007, p. 41).

The rise in regional inequalities within post-socialist countries was shaped by the pre-existing level of industrial development inherited from the socialist period and the unique aspects of socio-economic transformation. These include the transition to a market economy, privatization, restitution, reindustrialization, and the redefinition of the welfare state principle. Metropolitan areas with a growing service sector, developed infrastructure, and highly qualified workforce emerged as the beneficiaries of this process. Conversely, mono-industrial cities where industry collapsed, and smaller, remote cities with underdeveloped transport infrastructure encountered the most significant challenges, such as rising unemployment (Domanski, 2011; Petrović, 2014; Petrović, Backović & Petrović, 2019). The faster development of the capital city and metropolitan area compared to smaller cities and rural areas can be explained by the influence of international trade, foreign direct investment, and various factors of agglomeration. Namely, in the initial phase of economic restructuring, most public investments were deliberately directed to the most efficient projects, most of which were in areas of national growth. On the other hand, the lack of investments in less developed regions, as well as rapid economic restructuring that affected the growth of unemployment, contributed to the increase of regional disparities in post-socialist countries (Arandarenko & Jovičić, 2007, p. 301).

Regional inequalities have largely marked the process of post-socialist transformation in Serbia. The specificity of Serbia, which made this process even more difficult, is the period of blocked post-socialist transformation during the 1990s, with a dramatic decline in the social product and industrial production, hyperinflation, increased unemployment, etc. These difficulties were also reflected in the intensification of pre-existing regional inequalities (Petrović & Backović, 2021). The traditionally underdeveloped south of Serbia was joined by areas that were once developed, such as eastern Serbia, parts of central Serbia, and regional mining centers, thus becoming new areas of underdevelopment (Arandarenko & Nojković, 2007, p. 28–29).

After 2000, regional disproportions in Serbia, measured by the index of development vulnerability, ranked among the most significant in Europe. In 2005, at the district level (NSTJ-3 level), the observed regional differences reached 1:7, meanwhile, the ratio between the most developed and least developed municipality (NSTJ-4 level) was 1:15 (Arandarenko & Nojković, 2007). During this period, the growing gap between the Belgrade and Novi Sad metropolitan areas and other cities became increasingly evident. This trend persists; according to the latest data, the distribution of total foreign direct investment funds again reveals an uneven distribution: the largest share of funds, 34%, was allocated to the Region of Vojvodina, followed by Belgrade with 25%, while the remaining two regions recorded smaller shares, 21% each (Arandarenko, Aleksić & Lončar, 2021, p. 207).

When addressing inequalities in the labour market, it is important to point out that contemporary trends of rising regional disparities are often illustrated by large and growing differences in unemployment rates within countries. One of the reasons is that the unemployment rate is traditionally used as a proxy variable to illustrate the state of the labour market. The question of the adequacy of using the unemployment rate as the best approximation for the state of the labour market remains open. According to Arandarenko, criticism is two-fold. Firstly, some argue that the employment rate provides a more accurate representation of the overall state of the labour market. This perspective is grounded in the belief that the boundaries between employment and unemployment are more distinct and less susceptible to interpretation and manipulation compared to the relatively porous boundaries between unemployment and inactivity. Also, it is pointed out that the standard calculation of the unemployment rate is an insufficiently good measure of the aggregate utilization of the labour potential (Arandarenko, 2011, p. 7–8). In this regard, a comprehensive analysis of the labour market situation requires considering all relevant indicators of the labour market.

Regional Inequalities in the Labour Market – Analysis of Research Results

Before analyzing the key indicators of the labour market, we will provide an overview of the regional gross domestic product. Regional gross domestic product is the regional equivalent to a country's GDP which represents the most important macroeconomic aggregate of a national economy and measure of its productivity and efficiency in the production of goods and services needed for various types of consumption. The sum of GDP for each region is identical to the GDP of the Republic of Serbia (SORS, 2016, p. 9).⁵¹

Data from 2022 related to the region's GDP share show that the Belgrade region takes the top position with 40%. Considering that the Belgrade region includes almost 4% of the territory where a quarter of the population of Serbia lives, it is clear that this region boasts the highest GDP per capita. The Belgrade region is followed by the Vojvodina region, whose share of the total GDP is 26.4%. With a GDP level index per capita at 96.5, Vojvodina is near parity with the overall national level. On the other hand, the participation of the remaining two regions is below 20% (Šumadija and Western Serbia participate with 18.4%, while the participation of the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia is only 15.2%). At the same time, these regions record below-average values of GDP per capita. For the Šumadija and Western Serbia, the level index is 67.2, while for the South and Eastern Serbia Region, the level index is 71.7. Given that the four regions have roughly similar

⁵¹ The calculation of regional GDP, as a part of the system of national accounts of the Republic of Serbia, was made in accordance with EU principles and methodology, i.e. the European system of national accounts (ESA 2010) and the Serbian national Nomenclature of statistical territorial units (NSTJ), which has been harmonized with the European Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS). The main conceptual reference for the Serbian regional GDP is the Eurostat's Regional Accounts Methods manual. The calculations of regional GDP were carried out at the NUTS level 2 (regions) and NUTS level 3 (areas) for the following statistical territorial units <https://www.stat.gov.rs/media/2747/rd-103-gdp2016-eng.pdf>

populations, the resulting gap in regional GDP per capita is huge. The ratio of gross value added per capita of the poorest Serbian district (Jablanica) and the richest (Belgrade) is 1 to 3.7 (Uvalic & Bartlett, 2021, p. 2).

Table 1. Regional gross domestic product.

NUTS 2	BDP (mil. RSD)		Index	Share (%)		GDP per capita (thousand RSD)		GDP per capita - level index RS=100	
	2022	2021		2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Serbia	7097629	6271988	113.2	100.0	100.0	1065	918	100.0	100.0
Belgrade	2839814	2519419	112.7	40.0	40.2	1686	1492	158.3	162.6
Vojvodina	1871367	1616406	115.8	26.4	25.8	1073	885	100.8	96.5
Šumadija & Western Serbia	1306248	1172868	111.4	18.4	18.7	716	628	67.2	68.4
Southern & Eastern Serbia	1077359	960538	112.2	15.2	15.3	763	661	71.7	72.1

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

Regional disproportions become evident when monitoring the key indicators of the labour market (Table 2). Almost all indicators for all three categories of the population point to a more favourable position in the Belgrade region, with the least favourable performance noted in the Southern and Eastern region. The disparities are particularly pronounced when examining employment and unemployment rates. In the Belgrade region, the employment rate is slightly higher, and the unemployment rate is lower, except for the young population category, where the situation is most favourable in Vojvodina. If we look at the unemployment rate, we can see that the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia with an unemployment rate of 12.2% (for the working-age population) is 26% higher than the national average of 9.7%. On the other hand, in the Belgrade region, the unemployment rate is the lowest and below 10% (7.9%), that is, 21% below the national average. Additionally, data concerning the proportion of the population outside the labour force indicate the unfavourable position of the regions of Southern and Eastern Serbia. The share of the population aged 15 and over is almost 50%, while for the population of working age that percentage is 32.3%.

Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable increase in employment across all regions. However, this growth has been the most significant in the Belgrade region, resulting in an increased gap between this region and the other three. On the other hand, the difference between the remaining three regions decreased slightly (see Petrović & Backović, 2021, p.131). This finding can be explained by the fact that new jobs are concentrated in less developed regions. In fact, from 2016 to 2020, most new jobs resulting from foreign direct investments were created in two less developed regions – Šumadija and Western Serbia, and Southern and Eastern Serbia, each accounting for 31% of new jobs. The remaining new jobs were created in Vojvodina (21%) and Belgrade (18%) (Arandarenko, Aleksić & Lončar, 2021, p. 208).

Table 2. Population by region, activity status, and age groups in 2022 (in %).

Indicators	Belgrade	Vojvodina	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Serbia
Population aged 15 and over					
Activity rate	58.8	54.9	56.1	51.5	55.5
Employment rate	54.2	50.4	50.3	45.5	50.3
Unemployment rate	7.8	8.2	10.4	11.7	9.4
Population outside the labour force	41.2	45.1	43.9	48.5	44.5
Youth population (15-24)					
Activity rate	32.3	34.8	32.3	30.7	32.6
Employment rate	25.3	27.5	24.0	21.5	24.7
Unemployment rate	21.7	21.1	25.9	29.9	24.4
Population outside the labour force	67.7	65.2	67.7	69.3	67.4
Working-age population (15-64)					
Activity rate	75.2	70.5	71.5	67.7	71.4
Employment rate	69.3	64.6	63.6	59.5	64.5
Unemployment rate	7.9	8.4	11.0	12.2	9.7
Population outside the labour force	24.8	29.5	28.5	32.3	28.6

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey, 2022.
<https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2023/Pdf/G20235695.pdf>, p. 14.

The analysis of key labour market indicators, especially the employment and unemployment rates, points to the presence of certain regional differences in the labour market in Serbia. However, it should be kept in mind that the variations between the four regions are not pronounced enough, and an analysis of narrower regional units is necessary. More precisely, when labour market indicators are studied at narrower regional levels, specifically at the level of areas (territorial units NUTS-3), interregional differences become more apparent (see more in Molnar, 2013, p. 336–338).

In the following section, we will present the basic indicators of the labour market at the area/district level (NUTS-3). The results reveal significant differences among the observed areas. Regarding the activity and employment rates, the most notable disparity was observed between the Kolubara and Zaječar districts (15.7% in the case of the activity rate and 17.8% in the case of the employment rate). Concerning the unemployment rate, the most favourable situation is unsurprisingly found in the Kolubara district, with an unemployment rate of 6.4%, while the highest unemployment rate is documented in the Raška region (almost 20%). Substantial differences between areas are also evident in the last indicator (population outside the labour force); the Kolubara district has the lowest participation of the population outside the labour force (37.2%), while the highest participation was recorded in the Zaječar region (52.9%).

Table 3. Labour market indicators by NUTS 3 in 2022, population aged 15 and over (in %).

NUTS 3	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Population outside the labour force
Belgrade	58.8	54.2	7.8	41.2
North Bačka district	58.1	53.9	7.3	41.9
Central Banat district	55.1	50.5	8.3	44.9
North Banat district	53.1	46.7	12.0	46.9
South Banat district	53.4	49.0	8.3	46.6
West Bačka district	50.9	46.3	9.2	49.1
South Bačka district	57.1	52.9	7.4	42.9
Srem district	52.6	48.2	8.4	47.4
Mačva district	58.7	53.9	8.2	41.3
Kolubara district	62.8	58.7	6.4	37.2
Podunavlje district	54.5	47.1	13.5	45.5
Braničevo district	54.6	47.1	13.6	45.4
Šumadija district	58.1	52.01	10.6	41.9
Pomoravlje district	53.0	44.0	16.9	47.0
Bor district	49.7	42.6	14.3	50.3
Zaječar district	47.1	40.9	13.2	52.9
Zlatibor district	55.8	51.3	8.1	44.2
Moravica district	59.8	57.5	4.0	40.2
Raška district	51.2	42.1	17.7	48.8
Rasina district	51.8	46.1	11.0	48.2
Nišava district	49.7	44.1	11.3	50.3
Toplica district	49.4	45.7	7.6	50.6
Pirot district	50.0	44.2	11.7	50.0
Jablanica district	56.0	50.5	9.8	44.0
Pčinj district	48.3	43.6	9.8	51.7

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey
<https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2023/Pdf/G20235695.pdf>, p. 22.

Another significant indicator of regional inequalities in the labour market is labour market slack. In response to the challenges in labour market analysis and the limitations of standard labour market indicators during the pandemic, the International Labour Organization proposed additional indicators that monitor changes in the labour market. One of the most reliable and commonly used indicators is labour market slack (ILO, 2021; Petrović & Babović, 2021, p. 23; Petrović, 2023, p. 68).

Labour market slack refers to all unmet needs for employment. The labour market slack includes *unemployment* as defined by the ILO, as well as three supplementary indicators: 1. *underemployed part-time workers* are people working part-time who wish to work additional hours and are available to do so; 2. *people seeking a job but not immediately available to work* are people neither employed nor unemployed

who: (a) were actively seeking work during the last 4 weeks, but not available to work in the next 2 weeks, or (b) found a job to start within less than 3 months and are not available to work in the next 2 weeks, or (c) found a job to start in more than 3 months, but are not available to work in the next 2 weeks; 3. *people available to work but not seeking* are people neither employed nor unemployed who want to work and (a) are available to work in the next 2 weeks but are not seeking work, or (b) were passively seeking work during the last 4 weeks and are available to work in the next 2 weeks, or (c) found a job that will start in more than 3 months' time and are available to work in the next 2 weeks (Eurostat).⁵²

Based on the data presented in Table 4, the labour market slack in all observed regions reached its peak in 2020, when numerous restrictive measures were introduced. With the gradual weakening of measures in 2021, the labour market slack saw a slight decline. Significant differences between Serbia and the EU were particularly noticed in 2020 and 2021, while in 2022 a reduction in disparities was observed. Regarding regional differences within Serbia, this indicator also shows significant variations among the four regions. The most favourable situation, once again, is observed in Belgrade, where the labour market slack is almost equal to the European Union's average across all three observed years. The data show that the so-called unmet need for employment was the highest in Southern and Eastern Serbia in all analyzed periods. The difference compared to the average of the European Union countries was almost 10% (8.9%) in 2020. This difference decreased by one percentage point in 2021 (7.9%), and further decreased to 6.4% in 2022. The differences between Southern and Eastern Serbia and the national average remain constant, fluctuating around 5% in all three years. A more comprehensive analysis of the labour market situation could be obtained by breaking down this indicator into individual components. Unfortunately, such data are not available for the NUTS2 level in Serbia.

Table 4. Labour market slack by NUTS 2 regions.

Region	2020	2021	2022
EU – 27	16.8	16.3	14.4
Serbia	20.8	19.4	15.9
Serbia - North	17.9	17.0	13.9
Belgrade	17.2	16.4	13.4
Vojvodina	18.6	17.7	14.5
Serbia - South	24.0	22.3	18.3
Šumadija and Western Serbia	22.8	21.0	16.6
Southern and Eastern Serbia	25.7	24.2	20.8

Labour market slack by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (online data code: lfst_r_sla_ga) Source of data: Eurostat.

⁵² See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?oldid=347318#Labour_market_slack:_what.27s_it_all_about.3F

Serbia in Comparative Perspectives

To conduct a more comprehensive analysis of regional inequalities in the labour market, Serbia will be placed in a comparative framework, i.e. data for countries in the region and for EU will be presented (Table 5).

Table 5. Employment and unemployment rate in Serbia, EU, Slovenia, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia by NUTS2 regions (%), from 15 to 74 years.

Region	Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	2019	2022	2019	2022
European Union – 27 countries (from 2020)	60.0	60.8	6.7	6.2
Euro area – 20 countries (from 2023)	59.6	60.6	7.6	6.8
Croatia	53.6	54.9	6.6	7.0
Pannonian Croatia	48.0	49.2	9.6	10.9
Adriatic Croatia	51.4	53.6	6.4	6.8
City of Zagreb	60.8	61.5	5.4	5.6
North Croatia	57.7	58.4	4.8	4.2
Slovenia	62.2	62.6	4.5	4.0
Eastern Slovenia	60.9	60.7	4.9	4.2
Western Slovenia	63.6	64.7	4.0	3.8
Montenegro	51.8	:	15.3	:
North Macedonia	48.9	:	17.3	:
Serbia	53.6	55.2	10.5	9.4
Serbia – North	54.7	57.2	8.7	8.1
Belgrade	56.6	59.4	8.3	7.9
Vojvodina	53.0	55.1	9.1	8.3
Serbia – South	52.5	53.1	12.4	11.0
Šumadija and Western Serbia	54.0	55.1	11.8	10.5
Southern and Eastern Serbia	50.6	50.4	13.3	11.8

Unemployment rates by sex, age, educational attainment level and NUTS 2 regions (%) (online data code: lfst_r_lfu3rt); Employment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%) (online data code: lfst_r_lfe2emprrt. Source of data: Eurostat.

Finally, when we compare basic labour market indicators in Serbia with those of the EU-27 in 2019 and 2022, an unfavourable situation is observed. In 2022, the total employment rate in Serbia is lower by almost 6%, while the difference in the unemployment rate is slightly smaller (3%). It is important to consider the quality of employment in Serbia, particularly the significant share of precarious employment. Examining the characteristics of the labor market in the region shows the most favourable position of Slovenia; both regions of this country have a lower unemployment rate than the average of EU countries, while Croatia is at the level of

the average of EU countries. On the other hand, in Montenegro and North Macedonia, the unemployment rate exceeds 15%, which places these two countries at the lower end of European rankings.

Conclusions

Considering that uneven economic growth contributes to the deepening of pre-existing territorial inequalities and recognizing that regional disparities can have adverse consequences on the overall socio-economic development of a country, the study of the scale and characteristics of regional inequalities in the labour market seems necessary.

The analysis in this paper primarily focuses on examining interregional differences at the NUTS-2 and NUTS-3 levels. The research results indicate the persistence of regional inequalities in the labour market in Serbia. Furthermore, the obtained data substantiate previously stated theoretical and empirical observations, highlighting that specific urban and metropolitan areas, such as the Belgrade region in this case, are experiencing faster development compared to other regions, significantly exceeding the national average. What we could further state is that if labour market indicators are observed at narrower regional levels (i.e. at the NUTS-3 level), then interregional differences are more pronounced.

Intraregional disparities are particularly evident in underdeveloped regions. Examining the GDP per capita in Southern and Eastern Serbia reveals a ratio of 2.6:1 between the most developed (Bor) and the least developed (Jablanica) districts. In contrast, differences in the remaining regions are considerably smaller, ranging from 1.65:1 for areas in Vojvodina to 1.74:1 for areas in Western Serbia and Šumadija. The “diversity” of regional inequalities in Serbia indicates the importance of analysing regional inequalities on different spatial entities, which would remain obscured by analysing large spatial entities (Petrović & Backović, 2021).

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АНАЛИЗА РЕГИОНАЛНИХ НЕЈЕДНАКОСТИ НА ТРЖИШТУ РАДА У СРБИЈИ

Сажетак

Територијалне, односно регионалне неједнакости у степену економског развоја представљају неоспорну чињеницу која карактерише савремена друштва. Регионалне неједнакости у великој мери су обележиле и процес пост-социјалистичке трансформације у Србији. Процеси секторске и својинске трансформације који су обележили

овај период нису се одразили само на пад запослености и пораст незапослености, већ су, између осталог, проузроковали и раст већ постојећих регионалних неједнакости. У том смислу проучавање регионалних неједнакости на тржишту рада постаје од све већег значаја.

Основни циљ рада представља анализа регионалних неједнакости на тржишту рада у Србији. Анализом ће бити обухваћени основни индикатори тржишта рада и то, стопа запослености, стопа незапослености, стопа активности (учешћа радне снаге) и стопа становништва ван радне снаге. Регионалне неједнакости на тржишту рада биће праћене на на нивоу ужих територијалних подручја (региона и области), за које су подаци доступни, односно НСТЈ-2 и НСТЈ-3 нивоу. Анализом ће бити обухваћени подаци Анкете о радној снази коју у Србији спроводи Републички завод за статистику и подаци Еуростата.

Кључне речи: регионалне неједнакости, тржиште рада, Србија, стопа запослености, стопа незапослености.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SERBIAN POPULATION: WHAT THE LATEST CENSUS DATA REVEAL⁵³

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Abstract

This paper discusses regional differences in educational structure based on the interpretation of educational characteristics of the population, not only as a significant indicator of the attained level of socio-economic development, but also as an important developmental potential and predictor of social inclusion of the population in a given region. The following key indicators of the population's educational structure are analyzed: level of formal education, share of illiterate population, and computer literacy. To that end, the data from the most recent census in Serbia, conducted in 2022, were used. The data show that despite decreasing differences in the educational structure of population, the differences still persist. Furthermore, the latest census data suggest that it is crucial to observe the total regional differences in educational structure in terms of layers – by stratifying them into interregional, subregional, and intra-subregional differences in educational achievement. Considering the vital role of education in economic, cultural, and social development, such a perspective could help improve resource management to reduce regional inequalities.

Keywords: region, regional inequalities, educational structure, literacy, computer literacy

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Introduction

The systematic and decades-long issue of disproportionate regional development in the Republic of Serbia (Kokeza, 2013; Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2007) has reached its peak during the transition period (Mijačić & Paunović, 2011; Jakopin & Čokorilo, 2022). Recent data indicate that this trend persists, despite the fact that harmonious regional development has been a focal point in all strategic public policy agendas over the past decades. As of late 2022, the facts were as follows: the majority of underdeveloped municipalities (with a development level below 50%) are still concentrated in southern Serbia (out of the 19 least developed municipalities in nine districts, 15 are located in southern Serbia). The disparities in regional contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Republic of Serbia are significant, with the two most developed regions generating over two-thirds of the GDP. The Belgrade region contributes 41.7% to the GDP, the Vojvodina region 26.5%, while the Šumadija and Western Serbia region and the Southern and Eastern Serbia region contribute only 18.1% and 13.7%, respectively. Furthermore, the disparities in investment in research and development reveal dramatic differences among regions. The Belgrade region receives 72.8% of the funds, the Vojvodina region 19.2%, while the investment in the other two regions is negligible: Southern and Eastern Serbia 4.5% and Šumadija and Western Serbia only 3.5%. According to the Serbian Government, these developmental disparities are partly due to the lack of “a well-conceived and consistent regional development policy and appropriate institutional framework” (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2007, p. 183). Naturally, there are various theoretical attempts to explain the development disparities of certain regions on both national and broader international levels.

Theoretical Context

Summarizing various theories aimed at interpreting regional development reveals a clear shift from classical economic theories which use econometric approaches to consider the economic resources and welfare parameters as the primary assumptions/effects of social development (Medeiros, 2022). The effects of globalization, the opening of national economies, and orientation toward broader markets have called such economic policies into question, as evident in greater regional inequalities, among other things (see Stiglitz, 2002). This has led to the emergence of theories that emphasize human capital. However, in recent decades, sustainable regional development theories have become increasingly popular, highlighting the multidimensionality of social development concepts by including dimensions beyond economic indicators, such as human and ecological dimensions. These theories prioritize quality of life over economic growth, sometimes advocating for limiting economic growth (see Pike, p. 4). Similar to these are comprehensive eclectic theoretical approaches that integrate multiple factors, connecting economic, infrastructural, institutional, administrative, geographical, social, political, cultural, and significant endogenous characteristics of the population, such as their innovation potential and willingness to cooperate and exchange. These are typical of human development theories. In its regional development policy recommendations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) particularly

emphasizes infrastructural support, human capital, and innovation (OECD, 2010). From the above stated, it can be concluded that newer theories are based on a multidisciplinary and multidimensional concept of social development, shifting focus from classical interpretations to a much broader understanding. They assert that development “not only entails the growth of per capita income and poverty reduction, but also the access to civil liberties, education and health, among others” (Stutz & Varf, 2012, as cited in Medeiros, 2022, p. 3).

In contemporary theoretical and pragmatic approaches, social development is not solely viewed through exogenous economic development parameters and potentials but is instead considered from the perspective of the synergy of various exogenous and endogenous factors. Thus, the quality of human capital emerges as one of the significant factors contributing to regional development disparities. Several studies have confirmed the stable relationship between the educational characteristics of the population and regional development. Perhaps the most convincing result demonstrating the strong link between the education index of the population and overall regional development measures is presented in a study examining the determinants of regional development based on data from 1,569 subnational regions in 110 countries, covering almost three-quarters of the world’s surface and 97% of the world’s GDP (Gennaioli, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, & Shleifer, 2013, p. 105). This analysis revealed that, in addition to several other variables, the education level of the population (measured by years of schooling) is among the most important predictors of economic development. Specifically, the authors’ regression analysis found that the data “shows that education explains 58% of between-country variation of per capita income, and 38% of within country variation of per capita income” (Ibidem, p. 129), and, in additional statistical analyses, that “the coefficient on years of education [...] remains the most powerful predictor of GDP per capita” (Ibidem, p. 132).

Monitoring the educational qualifications of the population in Serbia – a country with pronounced regional development disparities – is crucial for several reasons. These qualifications serve not only as independent indicators but also as components within broader synthetic indicators of social development. Education cannot be solely reduced to a means of personal and social promotion or an instrument for individuals to develop skills for personal benefit. It is simultaneously a factor and indicator of progress and social welfare for both local communities and society as a whole. Additionally, education is an effective mechanism for social integration of vulnerable social groups (Petovar & Jokić, 2009, p. 111; Petrović, 2012, p. 64). Thus, education should also be understood as a significant predictor of social inclusion and overall well-being of individuals and groups, as a certain level of competencies acquired through formal education facilitates access to all social resources: employment, cultural and political participation, etc. (Jokić & Petovar, 2009; Petrović, 2011; Petrović, 2012, p. 62; Sen, 2000). Therefore, it is of great importance not only to assess the consequences for individuals or social groups arising from non-engagement but also to consider what society loses by under-utilizing the human capital at its disposal (Sparkes, 1999; Peace, 2001). The educational qualifications of the population are directly related to the institutional

development of a region (Gennaioli, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes & Shleifer, 2013). Furthermore, the education of the population could be a significant prerequisite for connecting knowledge with developmental opportunities and the innovative capacities of a particular area. Educational competencies facilitate the development of attitudes and practices in line with the requirements of sustainable management of natural, economic, social, and human resources, which is certainly a prerequisite for the long-term development of an area. Additionally, it should be noted that specific educational competencies, such as computer literacy and skills developed based on it, become a necessary condition for performing many jobs and are a comparative advantage in accessing various resources that may be significant for individuals and the community. Education has also been recognized as a significant development potential and resource in Serbia's strategic documents, which state that:

The greatest risk for the national economy of the Republic of Serbia is the unfavourable educational structure of the population [...] Changes in the overall economic environment, the needs of the economy, and the development of new technologies require adequately educated and trained individuals and the nation as a whole [...] Regarding the Republic of Serbia and its regional development, the reconstruction and transformation of education, especially vocational education, is one of the prerequisites for overall socio-economic development. In this context, investment in education, i.e., in human capital, also takes on the character of investment [Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2007].

Methodology

The subject of this research is to determine regional differences in the domain of literacy, educational structure and computer literacy. It was assumed that there are distinct regional differences in the mentioned characteristics of human capital in Serbia. Also, the assumption that there are pronounced differences in Serbia not only at the regional level, but also at the intra-regional and sub-regional level was checked.

The data presented in this study are based on the analysis of secondary data collected during the most recent population census in Serbia, conducted in 2022. Key indicators of the educational structure of the population were analyzed, including (1) literacy rates, (2) the highest level of formal education achieved by the population, both individually by the proportion of residents with each education level and through a composite indicator – the overall education index, and (3) computer literacy rates. The data on the said educational characteristics were analyzed and compared at regional, subregional, and intra-subregional levels, focusing on the least developed region in Serbia (Southern and Eastern Serbia) and the region closest to the national average in terms of educational competencies (Vojvodina region). To define literacy and computer literacy, the interpretation of the two aspects used in official statistical sources and in the methodology applied during the census, whose results were analyzed, was necessarily accepted. Additi-

onally, parameters representing the educational structure at all analyzed levels correspond with the education levels according to the census methodology.

Results and Discussion

Literacy among the population of Serbia is a fundamental indicator of the educational characteristics of the populace, continuously monitored in all post-war censuses since 1948. Literacy, defined as the ability to read and write, has seen significant improvements over the decades. While Serbia has not completely eradicated illiteracy, the proportion of illiterate individuals has steadily declined. From a peak of 27.91% in 1953,⁵⁴ the percentage of illiterate residents dropped to 0.63% in 2022. Despite the overall low percentage of illiteracy, the present study examines whether there are notable regional disparities in literacy rates. The most recent data reveal significant regional differences. For instance, the Belgrade region is close to eradicating illiteracy, with only 0.27% of its population being illiterate. In contrast, the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia, the least developed region, has a nearly four times higher illiteracy rate. Other regions fall closer to the national average, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Illiteracy rates in Serbia by region (2022 census data, in %).

Area	Total number of illiteracy persons	Illiteracy rate
Serbia	37.956	0.63
Belgrade region	4.154	0.27
Vojvodina region	10.869	0.69
Šumadija and Western Serbia region	10.135	0.61
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	12.798	1.00

Differences in the educational structure of Serbia's population by region show a similar pattern, particularly regarding the concentration of people with the lowest and highest levels of education. The highest number of individuals without formal qualifications come from Southern and Eastern Serbia (1.42%), which is three times higher than in the Belgrade region (0.49%). The concentration of people with incomplete primary education is also highest in Southern and Eastern Serbia (7.71%) and the Šumadija and Western Serbia (7.11%), which is over six times higher than in the Belgrade region, where only 1.54% of individuals did not complete primary education. In the case of individuals with the lowest level of formal qualifications – primary education – the ranking is similar, though interregional differences are smaller. Thus, the percentage of these individuals is nearly double in Southern and Eastern Serbia (21.37%) and Šumadija and Western Serbia (20.60%) compared to the Belgrade region (10.63%). In the region of Vojvodina, the percentage of people with the lowest formal qualifications is close to the national average (see Table 2).

⁵⁴ The census methodology from 1948 was somewhat different, as any person able to read was considered as literate.

An opposite trend has been observed regarding the concentration of people with the highest formal qualifications. More than a quarter of the residents in the Belgrade region have a university education (27.45%), whereas only about one in nine residents in Šumadija and Western Serbia (11.6%) and one in eight residents in Southern and Eastern Serbia (12.07%) have a university degree. This means that the percentage of highly educated individuals is about 2.5 times higher in the Belgrade region compared to the latter two regions of Serbia.

Regional differences are slightly less pronounced for individuals with college education. Although the Belgrade region again leads with 8.14%, the percentage of these individuals in other regions is around 5% (see Table 2). The percentage of people with secondary education is fairly uniform across all regions, varying by no more than 5% from the national average.

Table 2. Educational structure of the population of the Republic of Serbia by region (in %).

Area	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	College educat.	Univer. educat.	Unkn.
Serbia	1.01	5.27	17.80	53.08	6.05	16.40	0.40
Belgrade region	0.49	1.54	10.63	50.96	8.14	27.45	0.78
Vojvodina region	1.17	4.90	18.81	55.03	5.43	14.37	0.29
Šumadija and Western Serbia region	1.02	7.11	20.60	54.28	5.12	11.60	0.26
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	1.42	7.71	21.37	51.64	5.53	12.07	0.26

When the data is presented through the education index of the population⁵⁵, an ordinal scale is obtained that shows the ranking among regions, clearly indicating the disparity in the educational structure of their populations (see Figure 1). The data summary clearly indicates that the population of the Belgrade region significantly stands out in its educational characteristics compared to the residents of other regions, all of which fall below the national average. The education index value for the Vojvodina region is closest to the national average, while the largest lag is observed in the population of the Southern and Eastern Serbia region.

⁵⁵ The data were obtained by weighting each level of qualification with a specific value, multiplying it by the share of residents who possess each level of education, and then calculating the average for each region.

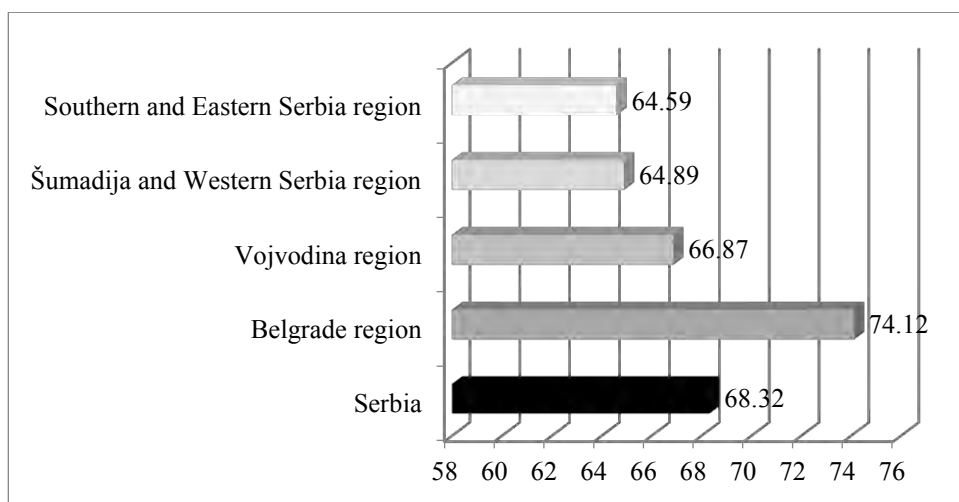


Figure 1. Education index of the population by region.

Data on computer literacy, collected only in the last two population censuses, mirror the regional differences in the educational competencies of the population, although the differences between the Belgrade region and other statistical regions are somewhat smaller. In the Belgrade region, 60.08% of the population is computer literate, while the percentage of computer literate individuals in other regions does not even reach a half of the population.

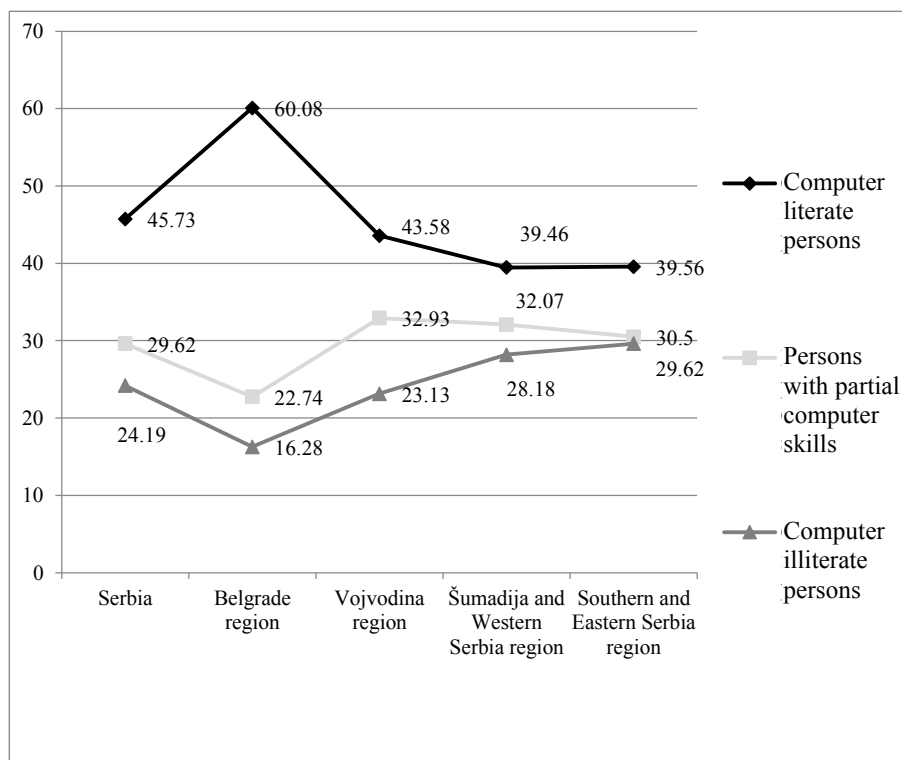


Figure 2. Computer literacy of the population of the Republic of Serbia by region (in %).

With regard to individuals who have only partial computer skills, their percentage slightly varies from the national average in most observed areas. The exception is the Belgrade region, where the share of residents with such a level of competence is about 7% lower than the national average. However, the concentration of computer illiterate individuals is the lowest in the Belgrade region (16.28%), while in other regions it is almost twice as high – 30.5% in Southern and Eastern Serbia and 28.18% in Šumadija and Western Serbia (see Figure 2).

From the above, it can be concluded that significant differences among regions in Serbia are observed in all indicators of population education, with the largest differences recorded between the Belgrade region and other regions. The Southern and Eastern Serbia region and the Šumadija and Western Serbia region are in the least favourable position in terms of human capital, as viewed through the presented indicators of educational competencies of the population.

Subregional and Intra-Subregional Differences in the Educational Competencies of the Population of Serbia

Since we were interested in verifying the assumption that there is no uniformity in educational competencies, not even for districts within regions, we zoomed in on the census data at the next level of administrative division of regions. The data at the subregional level (using the example of the Southern and Eastern Serbia region and the Vojvodina region) reveal evident inequality in the educational attainments of the population.

Table 3. Illiteracy rates in Southern and Eastern Serbia region and Vojvodina region by district (in %).

Area	Illiteracy rate	Area	Illiteracy rate
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	1.00	Vojvodina region	0.69
Bor district	0.96	West Bačka district	0.60
Braničevo district	1.38	South Banat district	0.94
Zaječar district	0.63	South Bačka district	0.55
Jablanica district	1.20	North Banat district	0.80
Nišava district	0.63	North Bačka district	0.82
Pirot district	0.57	Central Banat district	0.89
Podunavlje district	0.74	Syrmia district	0.60
Pčinja district	1.71		
Toplica district	1.16		

In the case of Southern and Eastern Serbia, although the differences are not as marked as in the data on regions as a whole, the concentration of illiterate population within certain districts of this region ranges up to a ratio of 1 to 3, which means that in some districts, there are almost three times more illiterate people compared to the districts where their share is the smallest. For example, in the Pirot district, illiteracy

rate (0.57%) is three times lower than in the Pčinja district, where 1.71% of the population are illiterates. In the Nišava and Zaječar districts, their concentration is two and a half times lower (0.63%) compared to the Pčinja district. When observing the Vojvodina region, illiteracy rate varies around the regional average, so the share of illiterate people in districts with the highest and lowest numbers differs by about 50%. However, the situation changes significantly when the data are observed at the municipality level in both regions.

A further increase at the subregional level shows sharper differences within the Southern and Eastern Serbia region. One example is the Nišava region where data indicate that the concentration of illiterate residents in some municipalities is nearly six times higher than in the urban municipality of Niš. For instance, in the municipality of Aleksinac, the percentage of illiterate individuals is 1.82%, compared to 0.31% in the City of Niš (see Table 4). A similar pattern emerges when the population of the city of Niš is compared with the residents of Gadžin Han and Merošina municipalities. Although the difference is not as significant, it also emerges when zooming into data from the Vojvodina region. For example, in the South Bačka district, the municipality of Titel has a four times higher illiteracy rate (1.25%) compared to Sremski Karlovci municipality (0.29%), and three times higher than Novi Sad, Bački Petrovac, and Temerin municipalities (Table 4), which are considerably larger disparities than those observed at the regional level.

Table 4. Illiteracy rates in the Nišava district (Southern and Eastern Serbia) and the South Bačka district (Vojvodina) by municipality (in %).

Area	Illiteracy rate	Area	Illiteracy rate
Nišava district	0.63	South Bačka district	0.55
City of Niš	0.31	Novi Sad	0.40
Aleksinac	1.82	Bačka Palanka	0.49
Gadžin Han	1.43	Bački Petrovac	0.42
Doljevac	1.28	Beočin	1.09
Merošina	1.46	Bečej	1.10
Ražanj	0.74	Vrbas	0.56
Svrljig	0.78	Žabalj	1.24
		Srbobran	0.90
		Sremski Karlovci	0.29
		Temerin	0.36
		Titel	1.25

Regarding the educational structure of the population at the subregional level, using the example of the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, it was concluded that differences in the concentration of individuals without formal qualifications follow the trends observed at the regional level. The share of individuals without qualifications is similar between the Nišava (0.95%) and Pčinja districts (2.23%), as well as

between the Belgrade region and the Southern and Eastern Serbia region. Analysis of the differences in the share of individuals with incomplete formal qualifications, which is the lowest in the Nišava district (4.83%) and the highest in the Bor (11.52%) and Braničevo districts (10.94%), revealed that these differences are smaller than at the regional level, where there is a significantly higher concentration of such individuals in all regions except for Belgrade. Although somewhat smaller, the difference is evident in the share of individuals with completed primary education, with 15.79% in the Nišava district compared to nearly a third or a quarter of the population in other districts (e.g., 30.13% in the Braničevo district and 24.54% in the Pčinja district). Differences in the concentration of individuals with the highest level of formal qualifications also follow regional trends, with the highest share of individuals with a university degree in the Nišava district (17.80%), and the lowest in the Braničevo district – only 8.58%.

A similar situation is observed in the Vojvodina region when differences are examined at the subregional level. Individuals without formal qualifications have the highest share in the South Banat (1.48%) and Central Banat districts (1.38%), while they are least represented in the district with the administrative center of the region – the South Bačka district, where their share is 0.97%, almost 50% lower. The share of individuals with completed primary education is also the lowest in the South Bačka district – only 3.3%, while it is more than twice as high in the North Banat district – 7.68%. The opposite is true regarding the share of university educated citizens of Vojvodina. Their concentration is more than twice as high in the South Bačka district (20.79%) compared to the North Banat and West Bačka districts, where barely every tenth citizen has a higher education (see Table 5a). This suggests that the most pronounced subregional differences closely follow the pattern observed at the regional level.

Table 5. Educational structure in Southern and Eastern Serbia region by district (%)

Area	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	College educat.	Univer. educat.	Unkn.
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	1.42	7.71	21.37	51.64	5.53	12.07	0.26
Bor district	1.44	11.50	22.47	49.26	4.92	9.99	0.42
Braničevo district	1.87	10.94	30.13	44.16	4.04	8.58	0.29
Zaječar district	0.97	10.49	23.41	49.15	5.40	10.32	0.25
Jablanica district	1.71	8.99	18.72	54.75	5.41	10.21	0.20
Nišava district	0.95	4.83	15.79	53.52	6.85	17.80	0.27
Pirot district	0.81	6.77	22.14	51.79	6.78	11.56	0.14
Podunavlje district	1.10	6.22	21.54	56.36	4.81	9.68	0.28
Pčinja district	2.23	7.54	24.54	48.69	4.92	11.83	0.25
Toplica district	1.82	6.87	21.48	54.06	5.79	9.74	0.23

Table 5a. Educational structure in Vojvodina region by district (in %).

Area	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	College educat.	Univer. educat.	Unkn.
Vojvodina region	1.17	4.90	18.81	55.03	5.43	14.37	0.29
West Bačka district	1.11	4.85	20.15	59.40	4.29	9.99	0.22
South Banat district	1.48	5.87	20.63	54.72	5.47	11.39	0.44
South Bačka district	0.97	3.30	15.11	53.53	6.00	20.79	0.30
North Banat district	1.20	7.68	24.34	51.76	5.04	9.81	0.16
North Bačka district	1.21	5.71	21.68	53.13	5.32	12.54	0.42
Central Banat district	1.38	5.89	20.97	54.68	5.21	11.68	0.19
Syrmia district	1.17	5.26	19.07	58.73	5.19	10.39	0.20

Further examination of data for the Nišava district regarding the educational structure of the population shows a sharpening of differences in the acquired qualifications of the population across various municipalities. In Niš, the share of individuals without formal qualifications is 0.53%, while in the municipality of Aleksinac, this share is four and a half times higher – 2.38%, with similar shares seen in the municipalities of Merošina and Gadžin Han. The difference is even more pronounced regarding the share of individuals who have not completed primary education. In the City of Niš, this share is seven and a half times lower (2.49%) than in the municipality of Ražanj (19.17%), almost six times lower than in the municipality of Gadžin Han, and almost five times lower than in the municipalities of Svrlijig and Merošina (see Table 6). Meanwhile, in the City of Niš, the share of individuals with the highest formal qualifications is five and a half times higher than in the municipality of Gadžin Han (3.99%) and about four times higher than in all other municipalities of the Nišava district (except for the municipality of Aleksinac, where the share of highly educated individuals is three times lower than in the city of Niš). The share of individuals with secondary education ranges from 42% to nearly 55% of the population.

Regarding the intra-subregional analysis for Vojvodina, conducted on the example of the South Bačka district, the situation is very similar. The educational structure is the most unfavourable in the municipalities of Titel and Bač, where the share of individuals without formal education is three times higher than in the municipalities of Novi Sad and Bački Petrovac. Additionally, the former municipalities also have the highest share of individuals without completed primary education and the lowest share of university educated individuals. For example, the percentage of residents in the municipality of Titel with a university degree is five times lower than in Novi Sad, and twice as low as their share in Bački Petrovac, Bačka Palanka, Vrbas, and Temerin (see Table 6a). The share of individuals with secondary education ranges from 49% to 63% of the population.

The observed disparities in formal educational qualifications indicate that intra-subregional differences are much more pronounced than those at the regional level.

Table 6. Educational structure in the Nišava district by municipality (in %).

Area	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	College educat.	Univer. educat.	Unkn.
Nišava district	0.95	4.83	15.79	53.52	6.85	17.80	0.27
City of Niš	0.53	2.49	11.86	54.63	7.89	22.27	0.29
Aleksinac	2.38	9.34	26.09	49.06	5.25	7.59	0.26
Gadžin Han	2.00	14.34	25.88	51.99	2.64	3.99	0.06
Doljevac	1.75	8.74	22.74	57.86	3.45	5.07	0.16
Merošina	2.18	11.74	26.76	51.70	2.30	5.19	0.10
Ražanj	1.26	19.17	29.66	41.62	3.11	5.00	0.14
Svrljig	1.05	11.55	26.93	50.80	4.12	5.36	0.16

Table 6a. Educational structure in the South Bačka district by municipality (in %).

Area	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	College educat.	Univer. educat.	Unkn.
South Bačka district	0.97	3.30	15.11	53.53	6.00	20.79	0.30
Novi Sad	0.71	1.71	10.52	51.22	7.19	28.25	0.37
Bač	1.93	10.19	29.46	48.96	3.05	6.25	0.13
Bačka Palanka	0.87	4.78	21.91	57.20	4.70	10.34	0.18
Bački Petrovac	0.64	3.99	29.46	50.85	4.02	10.91	0.12
Beočin	1.79	6.48	23.02	56.23	3.91	8.27	0.27
Bečej	1.59	8.20	25.72	50.87	3.97	9.51	0.12
Vrbas	0.91	4.91	17.09	62.89	4.74	10.84	0.19
Žabalj	2.70	7.15	22.14	58.35	2.56	6.77	0.30
Srbobran	1.63	6.95	27.35	54.17	2.89	6.82	0.17
Sremski Karlovci	1.13	2.29	14.74	58.75	7.18	15.74	0.14
Temerin	0.83	3.64	17.05	63.05	4.98	10.22	0.20
Titel	2.26	8.89	23.59	56.53	3.19	5.39	0.11

The data on computer literacy at the subregional level to a certain extent follow the pattern observed at the regional level. When comparing census results at the subregional level, it is observed that computer-literate citizens are concentrated in the Nišava district, where almost a half of the citizens are fully proficient in computer use, and another quarter have partial knowledge of computer use. However, in other districts of the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, the situation is different. In these districts, the share of computer-literate individuals reaches about a third of the population, similar to the share of citizens who have partial computer literacy. An exception is the Pčinja district, where a slightly higher share of computer-literate citizens is recorded than in other districts of this region. The share of computer-illiterate individuals in most districts of the region also varies around a

third of the population, except for the Nišava and Pčinja districts, where it varies around a quarter of the population. Similar differences are recorded in the Vojvodina region, where the citizens of the South Bačka district surpass other districts in computer literacy, with almost 53% of citizens fully proficient in computer use, whereas this percentage is below or around 40% in other districts. Only about 18% of the population in the South Bačka district is computer illiterate, while in other districts, the share of computer-illiterate citizens varies around 25%. The data indicate that although there is a significantly higher level of computer literacy among citizens in the Vojvodina region compared to the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, at the subregional level, both regions exhibit significant differences when data are examined by districts.

Table 7. Computer literacy rates in Southern and Eastern Serbia region by district (in %).

Area	Computer literacy rate	Partial computer literacy rate	Computer illiteracy rate
Southern and Eastern Serbia region	39.56	30.50	29.62
Bor district	36.17	33.10	30.27
Braničevo district	31.09	37.73	30.85
Zaječar district	34.01	30.14	35.57
Jablanica district	36.56	31.12	32.06
Nišava district	48.21	25.87	25.58
Pirot district	37.10	27.28	35.44
Podunavlje district	37.20	33.04	29.45
Pčinja district	42.53	30.13	27.06
Toplica district	37.89	30.17	31.60

Table 7a. Computer literacy rates in Vojvodina region by district (in %).

Area	Computer literacy rate	Partial computer literacy rate	Computer illiteracy rate
Vojvodina region	43.58	32.93	23.13
West Bačka district	36.26	37.51	25.95
South Banat district	40.68	33.23	25.59
South Bačka district	52.77	28.93	17.94
North Banat district	35.86	35.71	28.17
North Bačka district	41.55	33.55	24.42
Central Banat district	37.28	37.09	25.36
Syrmia district	38.76	34.76	26.22

Additional analyses at the intra-subregional level show that differences regarding computer literacy of citizens become more pronounced. For example, in the City of

Niš, over 55% of citizens are computer literate, while in the municipality of Gadžin Han, less than one-fifth are computer literate. The share is twice as low in the municipalities of Ražanj, Doljevac, Merošina, and Svrljig, where citizens mostly have only partial computer skills or none at all. A particularly high share of computer-illiterate individuals was observed in the municipality of Gadžin Han, where more than a half of the citizens fall into this category, and in the municipalities of Svrljig and Ražanj, where their share is slightly lower (see Table 8) but still considerably high compared to the overall average of the Nišava district.

Table 8. Computer literacy rates in the Nišava district by municipality (in %).

Area	Computer literacy rate	Partial computer literacy rate	Computer illiteracy rate
Nišava district	48.21	25.87	25.58
City of Niš	55.93	22.86	20.81
Aleksinac	32.30	31.02	36.35
Gadžin Han	18.71	29.50	51.62
Doljevac	25.67	41.72	32.44
Merošina	26.19	38.54	35.15
Ražanj	23.46	35.71	40.74
Svrljig	26.06	28.38	45.37

Table 8a. Computer literacy rates in the South Bačka district by municipality (in %).

Area	Computer literacy rate	Partial computer literacy rate	Computer illiteracy rate
South Bačka district	48.21	25.87	25.58
Novi Sad	62.74	23.08	13.72
Bač	28.28	43.88	27.67
Bačka Palanka	38.0	37.84	23.93
Bački Petrovac	38.16	39.78	21.93
Beočin	36.62	38.34	24.64
Bečej	33.33	39.91	26.54
Vrbas	44.54	33.39	21.83
Žabalj	33.09	40.49	26.05
Srbobran	33.14	38.86	27.78
Sremski Karlovci	48.53	29.36	21.85
Temerin	42.89	37.29	19.53
Titel	29.52	39.0	31.28

The situation is similar in the South Bačka district. Citizens living in the municipality of Novi Sad, the administrative center of the district and the entire region, surpass others in computer skills (62.74%), which is twice the share of the municipalities of Titel and Bač. A similar difference is observed between the

municipality of Novi Sad and the municipalities of Žabalj and Bečej, while the differences are somewhat smaller in other municipalities. Citizens of Sremski Karlovci and Vrbas are closest to the average computer literacy level of the entire South Bačka district. The highest concentration of computer-illiterate individuals was observed in the municipality of Titel, where their share is nearly one-third of the population, while in other municipalities, it varies around one-quarter (see Table 8a), except for the municipality of Novi Sad, where their share is only 13.72%. All this indicates that the differences in educational competencies regarding computer literacy of the population in Serbia are more pronounced at the intra-subregional level than at the regional level.

Conclusion

Even though the educational structure of the population has generally improved compared to the last census, regional differences still remain. The difference between the Belgrade region and all other regions is pronounced in all observed parameters. The differences are particularly notable regarding the least educated population and those with the highest level of formal education. Quantitatively expressed, the share of individuals without education and with incomplete primary education in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region is 4.5 times higher than in the Belgrade region, while the share of individuals with college and university education in the Belgrade region is 2.1 times higher than in the Šumadija and Western Serbia region, where they are least represented. Similarly, the share of illiterate individuals is almost 4 times higher in Southern and Eastern Serbia than in the Belgrade region. Regarding computer literacy, the differences are somewhat smaller: the share of computer-literate individuals is 1.5 times higher in the Belgrade region than in Southern and Eastern Serbia, while the share of computer-illiterate individuals is 1.8 times lower in the Belgrade region than in Šumadija and Western Serbia, where such individuals are most numerous.

Zooming in on differences within regions, using the Southern and Eastern Serbia region as an example, slightly milder differences were observed regarding literacy and the share of university educated and computer-literate population. Further ‘zooming in’ and observing of the educational characteristics of the population within subregions showed that these differences once again sharpened. For example, underdeveloped municipalities in the Nišava district exhibit huge variations in the share of the least educated residents compared to the population of the City of Niš (e.g., Niš:Ražanj – 1:7), while this difference is somewhat smaller regarding the share of individuals with university education (e.g., Gadžin Han:Niš – 1:4.5). In the Vojvodina region, subregional literacy differences in some districts range up to almost 60% compared to the South Bačka district, where the smallest share of illiterate citizens was observed. Additional analyses at the intra-subregional level show significantly sharper differences in the share of illiterate individuals by municipalities, where this difference reaches a ratio of 1:3 between the municipalities of Novi Sad and Titel, for example. Variations in educational structure are also more pronounced at the subregional level. The ratio between the least and most formally educated individuals by district in the Vojvodina region, i.e., between those

who have not completed primary education and those with university education is 1:2. However, when these differences are observed at the municipal level in the South Bačka district, differences in the share of citizens with the lowest qualifications increase to 1:6 (e.g., Novi Sad–Bač). Simultaneously, the share of university educated individuals is 5.2 times higher in Novi Sad than in the municipality of Titel, for example. Although differences in computer literacy among citizens are not as pronounced as differences in educational structure, they are present both at the subregional and intra-subregional levels, especially at the municipal level, where larger differences were observed than at the regional level.

The presented data indicate that significant differences in all indicators of population's education were observed among the regions in Serbia, with the most pronounced differences existing between the Belgrade region and other regions. The Southern and Eastern Serbia and Šumadija and Western Serbia regions have the most unfavourable circumstances in terms of human capital based on the presented indicators of educational competencies of the population. This pattern is repeated at the subregional and intra-subregional levels of analysis applied to two regions. Districts and municipalities that include the administrative centers of the regions, which are also university centers, have the most favourable educational structure, with the fewest illiterate and the most computer-literate citizens. Significant differences observed at the intra-subregional level indicate that there are certain exogenous and endogenous factors that adversely affect the educational structure as well as other analyzed educational characteristics. In addition to cultural, economic, and other factors influencing the education of the population, one should not forget the urban-centric model of organizing educational activities in Serbia with pronounced territorial differences in the distribution of educational institutions, the standardization of work in educational institutions (viewed in terms of the center-periphery relation), accessibility in terms of architectural standards, cultural barriers concerning underprivileged groups, etc. (Petovar & Jokić, 2009, p. 112). Indeed, one should not forget the intergenerational transmission of 'uneducation', which has its structural dimension. These are some of the reasons why the tendency to abandon higher levels of education is more pronounced among certain social strata and specific territorial units. Given that these are only a few among many isolated factors that may influence the observed differences in educational competencies in Serbia, we conclude that there is ample justification to study them by focusing not only on the regional level but also on the subregional and intra-subregional levels, since both structural factors and local idiosyncrasies can provide reasons for significantly lower performance of human capital, which is one of the essential prerequisites for socio-economic development.

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РЕГИОНАЛНЕ РАЗЛИКЕ У ОБРАЗОВНОЈ СТРУКТУРИ СТАНОВНИШТВА СРБИЈЕ: ШТА ПОКАЗУЈУ НАЈНОВИЈИ ПОДАЦИ ПОПИСА СТАНОВНИШТВА

Апстракт

Тумачећи образовне карактеристике становништва не само као значајан показатељ достигнутог степена друштвено-економског развоја, него и као важан развојни потенцијал и предикатор социјалне укључености популације одређеног подручја, пратили смо разлике у домену образовања на регионалном нивоу. Као кључни индикатори образовне структуре становништва анализирани су досегнут степен формалног образовања становништва (школска спрема), удео неписменог становништва и компјутерска писменост. У ту сврху коришћени су подаци из последњег пописа становништва у Србији изведеног 2022. године. Подаци показују да, упркос смањивању разлика у образовној структури становништва, оне још увек постоје. Такође, подаци са последњег пописа сугеришу да је од великог значаја укупне регионалне разлике у образовној структури посматрати слојевито – разлажући их на међурегионалне, унутар регионалне и унутар субрегионалне разлике у образовном постигнућу становништва. Имајући у виду улогу образовања у економском, културном и социјалном развоју, таква перспектива може помоћи бољем управљању ресурсима у циљу смањивања регионалних неједнакости.

Кључне речи: регион, регионалне неједнакости, образовна структура, писменост, компјутерска писменост.

PART THREE

REGIONAL AND RURAL: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE POINTS

STATUS OF WOMEN FARMERS IN SERBIA AS AN INDICATOR OF RURAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT⁵⁶

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Abstract

Serbia is one of the countries with the biggest disproportions in regional and social development in Europe. The economic transition has further increased the regional inequalities. The multi-layered polarization of Serbia is manifested through considerable interregional differences, demographic structures, human potential, economic structure and its efficiency, poverty, and infrastructure coverage. The existence of disparity in the level of development between specific regions in Serbia is the most pronounced between Serbia's North and Southeast.

In addition to the disparity between specific regions, there is also a gender gap in many areas of life and work. This paper focuses on the status of women involved in agricultural production, in order to establish if there is a connection between the level of development of an agricultural region and the status of women farmers. Even though there is an entire series of indicators used to measure the level of rural development and the status of women in specific economic branches and in society in general, there have not been many attempts to connect these indicators. Accordingly, the authors examine the connection and/or complementarity between the indicators in the context of general indicators of regional development.

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Specifically, the key issue is to determine whether the status of women farmers should be introduced as an indicator of rural regional development.

Keywords: rural development, regional development, indicators, agricultural production, women farmers

Introduction

The transition processes in Serbia which began in the late 20th century significantly changed economic flows. The transition involved rapid transformation of the economy from a planned and state-directed system to a market economy. The initial phases of the transformation saw a reduction in production and employment and a decline in the standard of living. Unfavourable trends in Serbia's economic development in recent years have caused considerable regional disparities. Since 2001, the transition processes have further deepened previously inherited negative regional differences. In addition to these factors, privatization, incomplete institutional infrastructure, lack of coordination between sectoral and development policies, and others have contributed to an increasing regional gap.⁵⁷ Stimulus policies have not eliminated the ongoing trend of lagging behind in certain less developed parts of Serbia (Jakopina & Čokorilo, 2022). In such circumstances, regional and structural developmental issues have only been exacerbated, and the consequences have become more pronounced. In recent years, significant interregional and intra-regional imbalances have emerged that have led to "people's dissatisfaction", resulting in strong migration flows and other problems in Serbia, thus potentially slowing down social development.

Uniform regional development at the supranational level implies "a general effort to enhance well-being and living standards in all region types, from cities to rural areas" (OECD, 2018), which is essential for the development of national states. Unlike the previous period, when the disparity in regional development was viewed through economic indicators and was essentially reduced to economic development,⁵⁸ from the 1990s onward, it was understood to include other aspects: ecological development of a region and conservation of nature, development of the social services system, enhancement of human capital, and development and strengthening of regional identities and interregional cooperation (Antić et al., 2012,

⁵⁷ According to the most recent Human Development Index (HDI), the regions of Belgrade and Novi Sad are above the national average (0.806) and are categorized as areas with very high human development. Most cities in the Vojvodina region and one from the Southern and Eastern Serbia region (Niš) are categorized as having upper-high human development, while most districts from the latter region have lower-high human development. In terms of world rank, the Belgrade region is ranked 34th, the Vojvodina region 67th, the Šumadija and Western Serbia region 84th, and the Southern and Eastern Serbia region 88th (UNDEP Srbija, 2022, pp. 21, 63).

⁵⁸ Blakely (1994) defines regional economic development as "a process in which local governments or community-based organizations are engaged to stimulate or maintain business activity and/or employment. The principal goal of local economic development is to stimulate employment opportunities in sectors that improve the community, using existing human, natural, and institutional resources" (cited in Antić et al., 2012, p. 8).

p. 8). Accordingly, Moseley defines rural development as “a sustained and sustainable process of economic, social, cultural, and environmental change designed to enhance the long-term well-being of the whole community” (Moseley, 2003, cited in Janković, 2012, p. 12), implying that it comprises four dimensions: economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and political/institutional (see Janković, 2012, pp. 109–123 and Šljukić & Janković, 2015, p. 234). Additionally, it is defined as

the vitality of a specific rural area in relation to the development of agriculture, diversification and the overall development of rural economy, [...] poverty, social exclusion, the status of social groups (youth, elderly, women), the functioning of the village as a local community, local-regional identity, cultural heritage, and the like (Janković, 2021, p. 13),

or the transformation of natural potentials in line with sustainable use and “management of rural development with the local population participating in efforts to engage internal forces and motivation for development” (Janković, 2021, p. 14).

In keeping with the modern understanding of regional development, especially concerning Serbia, it also needs to include the development of rural areas. At the same time, “every policy for the development and revitalization of rural areas, on the other hand, should be integrated into the regional context in terms of resources, needs, and possibilities for the sustainability of development solutions” (Janković, 2021, p. 110).

Building on the aforementioned, the connection of regional development to agricultural development was investigated, with a specific focus on the status of women in the context of regional development. It was assumed that the development of a region determines the status of women participating in agriculture. Therefore, the less a region is developed, including its agricultural sector, the less favourable the status of women is expected to be. This is especially true because the level of regional development in Serbia is expressed by applying the national average of GDP per capita, while other dimensions of rural development are mostly neglected (Decree Determining the Methodology for Calculating the Level of Development of Regions and Local Self-Government Units, 2015). At the same time, Serbia is characterized by pronounced gender inequalities in various spheres of life and work, as well as in private and family relationships, as indicated by some of the main international gender equality indices and numerous national studies (Babović, 2018; Babović & Petrović, 2021).

Gender inequalities are present in the spheres of employment and work, education, political and social participation, material status and incomes. They also exist in the realm of private life, through unequal distribution of unpaid household work and family care between women and men. These inequalities are rooted in patriarchal norms that are still widespread among the population of Serbia (see, for example, Vardi & Pajvančić, 2020; Babović, 2010).

Social and Employment Status of Women Farmers on Serbian Family-Run Farms as an Indicator of Regional Rural Development

When discussing transitional changes in Serbia, it is crucial to consider changes in agrarian structure (see, for example, Šljukić, Šljukić, 2019), which are caused by economic and political transformations and, in our opinion, are connected with regional disparities and decades-long neglect or insufficient investment in rural areas. Such neglect of this significant economic sector has led to the abandonment of rural areas in some parts of Serbia. According to the latest census data, 38% of the population lives in rural areas in Serbia, which is about 4% less compared to the previous census period. In addition to depopulation, the age structure is very unfavourable in these settlements, with an average age of 45.25, which is higher than the average age of the total population (43.85). The population aged over 45 prevails, with the highest number belonging to the age group between 65 and 69 years. Additionally, the gender aspect of rural depopulation is noticeable. The share of women in the total population of Serbia is 51.38%, in urban areas 52.48%, and in settlements classified as 'other' 49.58%. In the age structure of the female population in the 'other' category, the majority fall within the 65–69 age group, whereby the number of women is higher in all age cohorts over 65 years compared to men (see: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023).

In addition to unfavourable demographic structure, rural areas face numerous other issues, such as economic underdevelopment, increasing poverty, poor infrastructure connectivity – in short, unfavourable living conditions. The economic structure of rural areas in Serbia is mostly associated with primary production, and the dominant part of the active rural population is employed in agriculture. Family farms encounter serious difficulties in accessing larger markets for their products. The economic lag of rural areas in Serbia is reflected in the agricultural sector, with the lowest GVA growth rate in all four quarters of 2022 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, 2023), resulting in an increase in poverty. Causes of poverty, in addition to the economic underdevelopment of rural areas, may include: centralization of activities in urban centres, lack of investment in rural areas, urbanization, unemployment in the entire country, lack of infrastructure in rural areas, concentration of capital in urban centres, and the lack of opportunities to meet non-economic needs in rural areas. According to projections, absolute poverty threatens almost a quarter of elderly rural population by 2024 (Kuzmanov, 2022, pp. 27, 28). At the local community level, there is no uniform and financially sustainable system of services and support for the elderly, which puts the older people in rural areas at higher risk of social isolation. They also face difficulties in accessing healthcare, social, and transportation services. Education, employment, health status, and social security of rural residents are the elements of human capital that crucially influence the chances for economic and social development of rural communities and areas. Education and structure of the rural population are interconnected and may either enable or hinder the development of villages. According to the latest census data, in rural environments, more than a half of the population completed secondary education (52.56%), while 37.21% have no edu-

cation, incomplete primary, or only primary education (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023a).

To emphasize the necessity of considering women farmers in the context of regional development, previous data on regional development differences have been taken into account, indicating that northern Serbia is significantly more developed compared to the south and the east. It should be noted that regions in Serbia are classified into two groups: developed regions, with a development level above the national GDP average per capita, and underdeveloped regions, with a development level below the national GDP average per capita (Law on Regional Development). Based on available data, shown in Figure 1, the difference in the development level between the Belgrade region and other regions of Serbia is clearly visible. The Belgrade region contributes the most to the national GDP, followed by the Vojvodina region, the Šumadija and Western Serbia region, with the Southern and Eastern Serbia region ranking last. Additionally, according to the latest data, unemployment is the lowest in the most developed region, standing at 30 per 1000 inhabitants, as opposed to 50 in the Vojvodina region and as many as 82 in Southern and Eastern Serbia. Data on average earnings in the regions also highlight the regional differences. In 2022, the Belgrade region had the highest average salary, 94,808 dinars, while in Vojvodina it amounted to 71,236 dinars and in the least developed region only 64,329 dinars (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023v, pp. 156, 158, 160, 162).

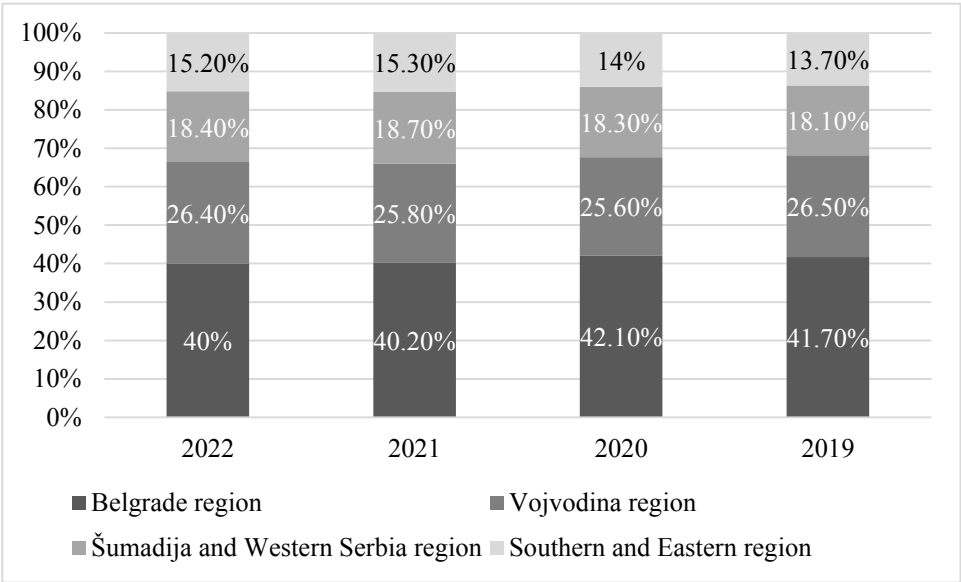


Figure 1. Regional GDP, 2019–2022.
(Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2022 and 2023b)

Given that agricultural production is not characteristic of the most developed region, this paper focuses on the status of women farmers in the Vojvodina and Southern and Eastern Serbia regions, examining the relationship between the level of regional

development and the status of women farmers. Since only the preliminary results of the 2023 Agriculture Census are currently available, an interesting piece of information comes from the 2022 Population Census regarding the number of people employed in agriculture. According to the census data, a significantly larger number of people in Vojvodina, as expected, are employed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing within legal entities (16,103) compared to the Southern and Eastern Serbia region (4,116). Regarding the number of registered individual farmers in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, it is three and a half times higher (11,613) than the number of those working for legal entities, whereas in the Vojvodina region it is only slightly higher, amounting to 16,708 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023).

Table 1. Number of farms according to intervals of available land (Survey on the structure of agricultural holdings 2018).⁵⁹

	Number of farms according to intervals of available land – based on the responses from surveyed farms involved in agricultural production				
	Total	0–10 ha	10.01–30 ha	30.01–100 ha	over 100 ha
Vojvodina region	20 333	12 048	5 097	2 313	875
South and East Serbia region	30 100	22 965	5 865	1 106	164
	Number of farms according to intervals of available land – weighted data				
	Total	0–10 ha	10.01–30 ha	30.01–100 ha	over 100 ha
Vojvodina region	127 069	94 399	24 029	7 479	1 162
South and East Serbia region	164 802	139 684	22 730	2 208	181

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019.

Regardless of the fact that the total number of farms is higher in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, it is dominated by a significantly higher number of farms with smaller arable land areas, while in the north of Serbia, in the Vojvodina region, the number of such farms is significantly lower. The extent of available arable land per farm directly influences the scope and quality of agricultural production, and the presented data clearly indicate that Northern Serbia is rurally more developed than Southern Serbia due to a significantly higher number of farms with larger arable areas (Table 1).

According to both the 2018 Survey on the structure of agricultural holdings and the first results of the 2023 Agriculture Census, family-run farms are prevalent in the

⁵⁹ Data from the most recent census of farms regarding the intervals of available land are not available yet.

total number of farms.⁶⁰ According to the 2018 Survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, women constitute only 19.4% among holders of family-run farms, which is significantly lower than their share in the total workforce on farms (42.3%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019), indicating an unequal access to a status associated with greater power and responsibility on the farm. However, it should be noted that compared to the 2012 Census of Agricultural Holdings, the share of women among farm holders has increased in all regions. A significant increase in the share of women among farm holders in the Eastern and Southern Serbia region is the result of the increase in the number of very small farms (fewer than 2 hectares of land) in this region compared to 2012, as well as incentives related to women in agriculture (Figure 2).

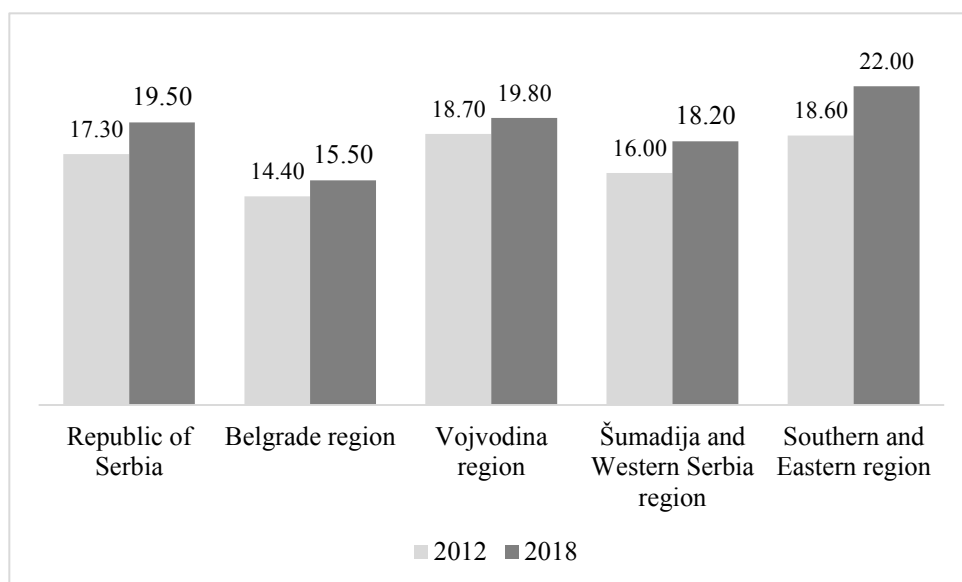


Figure 2. Share of women among holders of family-run farms, 2012 and 2018 [%].

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2013 and 2019.⁶¹

However, the status of women farmers is only seemingly more favourable. The share of women farm holders is the highest for the category of farms up to 2 hectares and decreases as the size of the farm increases, with the smallest percentage owning farms larger than 50 hectares (see: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

⁶⁰ However, the most recent data indicate that the number of agricultural holdings in Serbia has decreased by 10% compared to 2018. According to these data, in the Vojvodina region and the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, the decrease is greater than at the national level, reaching 12% in both regions (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2024a).

⁶¹ A more precise nature of changes in the relevant characteristics of holders of agricultural holdings will be known only after complete data from the 2023 Agriculture Census have been publicized.

The increase in the number and share of the elderly population in rural areas, especially between these two regions, is one of the main characteristics of population changes in Serbia. These processes are also reflected in changes in the average age of farm holders, with the older population of both genders prevailing in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region (Table 2), although the data from the 2023. Agricultural Census are somewhat more favourable at the national level. According to the most recent data, the average age of family farm holders is somewhat more favourable compared to 2018, standing at 60 years, and every 11th person is younger than 40, but regional data are not yet available (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2024).

Table 2. Average age of farm holders, Republic of Serbia, 2012 and 2018

Territory	2012		2018		Index	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Vojvodina region	55	59	57	60	104	102
South and East Serbia region	60	64	62	66	103	103

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2013 and 2019.

According to the data from the Survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, the structure of farms by age of holders indicates a low percentage of farms whose holders are younger than 35, but also an extremely high percentage of farms whose holders are older than 65, especially in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region (48%), as opposed to the Vojvodina region (33.2%). The Vojvodina region has a larger share of younger holders, with 16.5% of holders younger than 45, compared to the Southern and Southeastern Serbia region (9.9%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

Family labour force is the most important foundation for agriculture on family-run farms. Differences in the share of the family labour force in the total labour force on family farms are also visible. The comparison of data from 2018 and 2023 indicates a decrease in the size of the labour force on family farms, which can be partially explained by the reduction in the number of farms. In line with the reduced number of farms, the latest data also show a decrease in the labour force, the decrease being one percent higher for male labour force (14%) compared to female labour force (13%). Moreover, there has been a minimal decrease in male labour force in the total contingent of employees in agricultural holdings (2018: 57.97%; 2023: 57.6%) as well as a minimal increase in female labour force (2018: 42.04%; 2023: 42.4%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2024a). As there are still no regional data available, we present data for the observed regions from the 2018 Survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, according to which the majority of the family labour force on farms is composed of women. Unlike the Vojvodina region, where the share of women in the labour force is 56.3%, in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, it is 58.3%. Women make up the majority of the family labour force on farms of all sizes, except the largest ones (over 50 ha), where they account for 49% of the family labour force. Their share is higher on smaller farms, making up 64% of the family labour force on very small farms (under 1 ha) and 55% on farms that own

between 10 and 50 ha of arable land (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

The share of women among farm managers is even lower than their share among farm holders. Only 15.3% of women assume the role of managers in agricultural holdings, which is four percent lower than their share among farm holders. However, it is interesting that in less developed regions there is a higher percentage of women farm holders and managers (Figure 3).

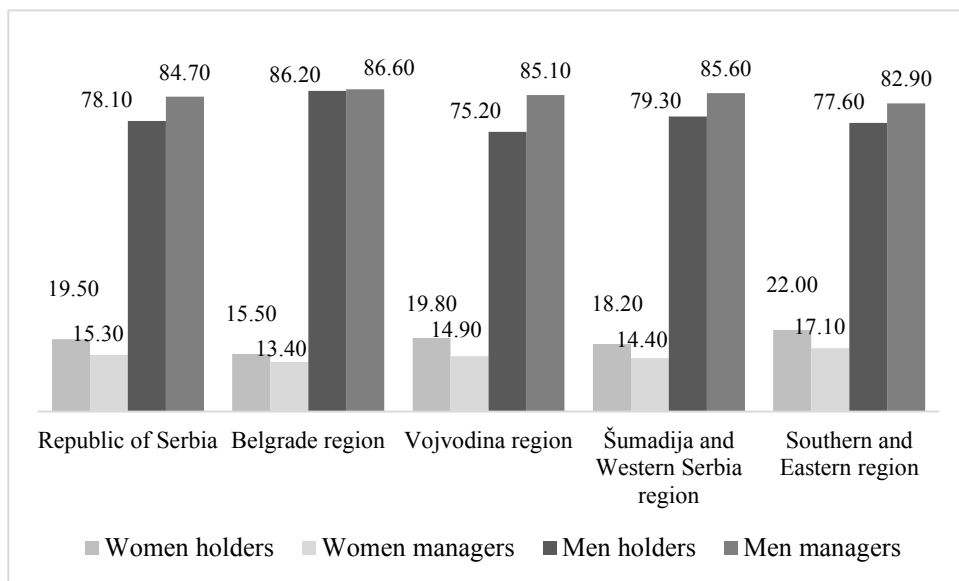


Figure 3. Family-run farm holders and managers by gender and region 2018 [%].

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019.

As with farm holders, the share of women farm managers decreases with the increase in the size of the farm. Thus, their share among small farm (under 1 ha) managers is 19.3% as opposed to 5.8% among the managers of the largest farms (see: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

Regional differences in the share of women among managers of farms of different sizes are significant. A high percentage of women among managers of small farms is particularly pronounced in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region and is a result of traditional inheritance models, where the farm is passed on to the oldest surviving family member, typically women due to their longer average lifespan. However, in this region, the percentage of women managers is higher in other size categories than in other regions, except for the category of the largest farms. The same pattern is observed in the share of women among managers of farms of different economic sizes – as the economic size of farms increases, the share of women managers decreases. The highest percentage of women among managers was recorded in farms with a value of up to 2,000 Euros (21.1%), and the lowest among managers of the largest farms with a value greater than 100,000 Euros (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

The majority of agricultural workers in Serbia are family members of farm holders (57.5%), and their share of labour has increased. This indicates that there is a large amount of informal work produced in agriculture within family farms and with the help of family labour force. Such high representation of the family labour force suggests that the sustainability of farms in economic and social terms relies on the work of their own members, but raises the question of the possibility of securing the workforce in the context of the worsening age structure of farm members.

An above-average share of women farm holders (22%) was recorded in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, and it has significantly increased compared to 2012. Such high percentage of women among farm holders can be associated with the unfavourable age structure of holders in this region (48% aged over 65), the longer lifespan of women, and with a persistently high share of small farms. However, more detailed analyses of the farm structure at a lower territorial level are needed to draw valid conclusions.

Although women are a minority among farm managers of all production orientations, their share is above average on farms specializing in specific types of production. The types of farms where women are managers differ by region, depending on the region-specific characteristics of agriculture and resources. Despite there being relatively few such farms, this finding suggests that diversification within primary agricultural production, through specialization, occurs on farms where the share of women holders is above average.

Women have a lower share among managers of diversified farms than among managers of all family-run farms (12.5% compared to 15.3%). Although diversification of activities on farms is encouraged through various incentives for processing agricultural products on the farms favouring women managers, the results show that women are more commonly managers of farms with diversified primary production. This result is an important signal for policymakers. For a better understanding of farm economics, deeper analyses are needed, including research into factors influencing investment decisions on the farm. However, at first glance, it may be said that women managers prefer to choose less investment-intensive businesses (such as primary production), thus avoiding the risks of indebtedness and market risks.

Regarding the regions of Vojvodina and Southern and Eastern Serbia, it is essential to consider the differences in the educational structure of their rural populations. According to the latest census data in the Vojvodina region, there is a lower percentage of people with no primary education and incomplete primary education, 9.04%, as well as those with primary education, 25.36%, while these percentages are higher in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, 14.11% and 28.25%, respectively. About 50% of the rural population has secondary education, with a higher percentage in the Vojvodina region, 54.57%; in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, less than half of the population has this level of education, 48.41%. Applied college and higher education was completed by 10.23% in the Vojvodina region and 9.03% in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region. It is worth noting that with regard to the first three educational categories (no primary education, incomplete primary education, and primary education), the female population dominates in both regions,

whereas the male population dominates the category of secondary education (Table 3). An interesting fact is related to applied college and higher education. In the Vojvodina region, the rural population with applied college and higher education is over 50% female, while in the Southern and Eastern Serbia region, the situation is somewhat different – it is the only region in which the female population with higher education prevails over the male population.

Table 3. Educational structure of the population aged 15 and over.

Region		Total	No educat.	Incomp. primary educat.	Primary educat.	Second. educat.	Applied college educat.	Higher educat.	N/A
Southern and Eastern Serbia	T	574 812	10 588	70 548	162 414	278 278	18 863	33 054	1 067
	M	50.60%	28.81%	31.45%	47.05%	58.41%	54.08%	48.24%	46.49%
	W	49.40%	71.19%	68.55%	52.95%	41.59%	45.92%	51.76%	53.51%
Vojvodina	T	569 024	10 233	44 623	144 309	310 491	20 322	37 877	1 160
	M	49.71%	31.31%	34.42%	46.02%	55.36%	44.56%	43.17%	48.02%
	W	50.29%	68.69%	65.58%	53.98%	44.64%	55.44%	56.83%	51.98%

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2023a (Authors' analysis).

The overall environment in which structural changes in Serbian agriculture and rural areas have taken place over the last two decades has not been favourable to its more dynamic restructuring (Bogdanov & Babović, 2014). Compared to 2012, conditions in the labour market (both domestic and foreign) have changed, pulling a significant contingent of vital workforce out of the sector. At the same time, the production structure of the sector is being reformed towards the growth of labour-intensive productions while the average size of farms is increasing. Increased labour needs are being met by greater effective utilization of the existing workforce. While these changes can be deemed generally positive, all the considered characteristics of farm holders and managers (without insight into the demographic characteristics of farm members) indicate that the workforce could soon become a critical factor in the development of the agricultural sector, as there are no indications of having younger managerial personnel on farms. Additionally, the age and gender structure of managers suggests that thresholds and criteria for defining beneficiaries of investment support should be thoroughly examined and tested to make the effects of (not just agricultural) policies more visible.

The availability of services significant for establishing a satisfactory standard of living, quality of life, and sociocultural participation is also very limited. Therefore, the life of women in rural areas and their families is predominantly characterized by the struggle to meet basic existential needs, due to extensive material deprivation of women and their insufficient participation in the social community (National strategy for improving the status of women and promoting gender equality, 2009).

Children and women in rural areas are faced with an array of serious obstacles to accessing essential social services, which prevents them from improving their living conditions and developing their potentials by means of which they could actively

contribute not only to their own well-being but also to the development of their community. The deprivation is expressed in numerous aspects of meeting one's needs, and most services are insufficiently available and of poor quality.

Inadequate availability of social security services in rural areas is reflected in the reduced opportunities for rural families to exercise their right to pension insurance and to various forms of material assistance, as well as in the limited availability of support services for various family problems.

Concluding Remarks

The population in Serbia is continuously declining as a result of lower birth rates and external migration, with the population decline trends being particularly pronounced in rural areas. Rural areas are characterized by aging population trends and a decline in fertility rates. This has led to a change in the structure of the functional population, with the ratio of dependent young and elderly population to the working-age population shifting in favour of the former. Population decline trends are more pronounced in the female rural population than in the male population, a result of their more intensive emigration from rural areas (FAO, 2021). The reasons for this can be found in weaker property ties to the rural community they leave, limited employment opportunities, as well as poorer access to social services and various amenities important for the quality of life.

The fact that women are less likely to be farm owners due to limited access to production resources significantly influences their social status and contributes to the existence of a pronounced gender gap in Serbian agricultural production. The statistical data presented in this paper indicate that patriarchal values still dictate the functioning of agricultural production in Serbia, which is not favourable to women in agriculture.

Based on the presented data, there is a clear connection between the level of regional and rural development as well as between the level of regional rural development and the gender gap in agricultural production. Gender aspects of agriculture and rural development need to be considered in the broader context of gender relations in Serbia as well as policies aimed at promoting gender equality. Serbia is characterized by prominent gender inequalities in numerous spheres of public life, but also by regional differences. Therefore, in the authors' opinion, a different approach to regional, especially regional rural development, is necessary, taking into account not only economic but also other indicators, with a special focus on the role and status of women. Reducing the gender gap in agricultural production in Serbia is very complex, so it is necessary to ensure multisectoral coordination of public policies based on institutionalized collection of data on gender difference indicators. Changing the traditional evaluation of women and their work in all areas, including agricultural production, is likely to be of great relevance.

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ПОЛОЖАЈ ПОЉОПРИВРЕДНИЦА У СРБИЈИ КАО ИНДИКАТОР РУРАЛНОГ РЕГИОНАЛНОГ РАЗВОЈА

Сажетак

Република Србија је једна од држава са највећим диспропорцијама у регионалном и социјалном развоју у Европи. Регионалне неједнакости Србије транзициони процес је још више продубио. Вишеслојна регионална поларизованост Србије испољава се у значајним међурегионалним разликама, у демографским структурама, људском потенцијалу, привредној структури и њеној ефикасности, сиромаштву и инфраструктурној изграђености. Постојање разлика у степену развијености између појединих региона у Србији најизразитије је између севера Србије и југоисточне Србије.

Осим диспаритета у развоју појединих региона, уочено је и постојање родног јаза у многим областима живота и рада. Наша пажња усмерена је на положај жена које се баве пољопривредном производњом у намери да истражимо постојање везе између степена развијености пољопривредног региона и положаја жена које се баве пољопривредном делатношћу. Премда се користи низ показатеља за мерење степена руралног развоја, као и положаја жена у појединим привредним гранама и друштву уопште, нема довољно покушаја да се они међусобно повежу. Стога, ауторке преиспитују повезаност и/или комплементарност ових индикатора у контексту општих показатеља регионалног развоја. Другим речима, кључно питање је трагање за одговором да ли положај пољопривредница треба увести као један од индикатора руралног регионалног развоја.

Кључне речи: рурални развој, регионални развој, индикатори, пољопривредна производња, пољопривреднице.

SOME CRITERIA OF RUSSIA'S RURAL-AGRARIAN REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION AND APPROACHES TO ITS SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS⁶²

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Abstract

The article presents a short overview of Russian rural sociology in the micro and macro perspectives (long-term participant observations based on qualitative techniques and large-scale studies combining statistical and sociological 'big data') as contributing to a better understanding of some general trends in the post-Soviet regional differentiation under the ongoing agrarian reform and systemic transformation of rural areas. The first trend is the strengthening and expanding agro-'holdingization' (in the black-earth/Chernozems areas), which is a global trend under the dominant industrial agriculture, transforming traditional farming into the socially and politically institutionalized, large, vertically integrated, high-tech and capital-intensive agribusiness embedded in international trade and global markets. This trend allows to consider regional differentiation in terms of agrarian structure – regions with a corporate type of agrarian structure and regions with a family type of agrarian structure; their differences are determined by natural conditions, land availability, ethnic factors, economic efficiency and policies. The second trend is the strengthening and expanding peripheralization (of the non-black-earth areas) – an increase in the internal periphery due to the social-economic degradation of remote rural areas and to the outflow of the working-age population to urban centers; however, with some sparks of rural entrepreneurial activities and with some sprouts of rural gentrification, which contribute to rural development by the

⁶² The article was written on the basis of the RANEPA state assignment research program.

diversity of agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities, combination of formal market-oriented institutions with informal social interactions, and mobilization of internal and external resources.

Keywords: Russia's regional differentiation, agroholdings, rural periphery, rural survival and revival, rural entrepreneurship, rural gentrification

Introduction

When speaking about Russian rural sociology, one cannot help but remember the metaphor of bipolarity to describe the tradition of empirical research in rural areas (see: Vinogradsky, 2009; Yastrebinskaya, 2005). On the one hand, there are long-term participant observations of local rural realities, based on various combinations of qualitative techniques. On the other hand, there are large-scale social studies, combining statistical and sociological 'big data' to provide macro-descriptions of the past and on-going agrarian reforms, of the rural human and social capital, of the country's social-economic and spatial differentiation (see: Kalugina, Fadeeva, 2009; Shagaida et al, 2019). Thus, such 'big data' allowed to identify and systematize the prerequisites for the post-Soviet agrarian reform, which emerged already in the Soviet period, mainly in the relationship between the state and agricultural producers (Uzun & Shagaida, 2015, p. 12). Certainly, rural sociologists prefer qualitative techniques as providing lively illustrations of rural life and revealing 'grassroots' realities behind the official bravura 'big data'.

Both in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, such illustrations contributed to the 'discourse of imitation'. Local and regional authorities tend to report on the local situation in such a way as not to upset federal authorities, but not too sugarcoating it in order to get additional funds for the improvement of rural social infrastructure. Local entrepreneurs tend to present themselves in such a way as to receive the necessary support 'from above': for instance, if the state decides to finance the rural-urban cooperative movement, farmers quickly organize cooperatives 'on paper'. Such imitative games maintain the long-established status quo in the social management system, but this cannot prevent researchers, working with both quantitative (indicators and dynamics of changes in social-economic realities) and qualitative (forms and types of rural self-government and informal social networks) data, from dividing Russia into three conditional parts: 'territories of growth', 'territories of stagnation', and 'territories of compression' (or 'desolation zones') (see: Nefedova, 2003).

Positive and Negative Rural Transformations under the Post-Soviet Reforms

Considering the results of the post-Soviet agrarian reform, long-term ethnographic observations as parts of case studies (of rural settlements or agrarian regions) reveal those social-economic forms that determine the statistically substantiated statements about a multi-structure of the Russian agrarian economy: why huge agricultural organizations (agroholdings) displace peasant farms and personal subsidiary plots; why agriculture lost its 'collective' status; why there are strong regional differences in the agrarian structure; what are mechanisms of "the post-Soviet significant

redistribution of land by category, owner, type of property and land use”, reasons for “changes in the list of largest producers... and for the increased concentration of production in largest regions” (Uzun & Shagaida, 2015, p. 182, 206), and consequences of “the complete and unconditional triumph of large and very large farms... agrarian gigantomania... combined with the liquidation of peasant farms and personal subsidiary plots... and with the disappearance of two villages every day” (Toschchenko, 2016, p. 14). Moreover, the qualitative approach allows to reconstruct the subjective dimension of the macroeconomic picture and to reveal radical changes in the life of villagers under the ongoing transformation of their everyday practices and traditional rural communities. This transformation can be defined as depeasantization, social alienation or even “scorched social landscape” due to the “disintegrated peasant world – today there is nothing in common, nothing unites people, disunity and isolation grow” (Toschchenko, 2016, p. 45).

However, Russia’s contemporary rural realities are characterized not only by negative trends caused by ineffective formal social-economic institutions (described with quantitative indicators) but also by positive trends, such as the revival of rural communities based on informal mechanisms (networks of mutual moral support and real mutual assistance, various forms of grassroots mobilization), which compensate for material difficulties and low standards of living (described with qualitative typologies). Both negative and positive trends are partly the result of the unjustified romanticization of the countryside by post-Soviet reformers, i.e., of their utopian “fantastic idea of the collective-farm peasant who, having received land, would turn into the farmer and would independently ensure the entire production cycle – purchase seeds, fertilizers and fuel, use fertilizers, collect and sell crops” (Toschchenko, 2016, p. 52).

In recent decades, many economic and sociological works have considered the systemic transformation of Russia’s rural areas. As a rule, these works focus on different scenarios for the development of agriculture and countryside, on institutional traps and transaction costs of numerous attempts to resolve the “land question”, on objective contradictions of the post-Soviet agrarian reform, strategies for the revival of rural periphery, relationship between formal and informal social-economic practices, interrelated trends of depeasantization and repeasantization, centralization and decentralization, globalization and glocalization, etc. (see: Allina-Pizano, 2008; Hann, Rottenburg, Schnepel & Shimada, 2003; Kalugina & Fadeeva, 2009; Lindner & Moser, 2011; Nefedova, 2003; Nefedova, 2013; Pilyasov, 2009; Shagaida, 2010; Uzun & Shagaida, 2015). Most works (even the optimistic ones) emphasize challenges of the ‘shrinking’ rural space (under the rural outflow to cities), a reduction in the number and scale of the traditional types of agricultural employment, a depletion of human and social capital in rural areas, the persistence of objective and subcultural poverty and other negative trends that do not allow rural settlements to overcome the gap in the level and quality of life with cities. The strong social-economic differentiation is a distinctive feature of the contemporary Russian society, which is most clear when comparing life practices and opportunities of urban and rural dwellers.

Key Trends in the Russian Rural Differentiation

Certainly, there are many regional and local peculiarities in the Russian rural differentiation but with the dominance of two general trends. The first trend is the strengthening and expanding agro-holdingization in the black-earth rural areas (Uzun, Shagaida, Gataulina & Shishkina, 2022). When visiting such areas, we regret to note that agroholdings have become as ubiquitous as the peasantry at the beginning of the 20th century. Although there are still discussions about the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of agriculture and rural way of life in the contemporary realities, there are no debates about the peasantry as a still existing social group, because the peasant way of life is extremely rare (see: Trotsuk, 2015) and even then is artificial, restored, such as eco-villages⁶³ and kin's domains (see: Ivanova, 2021; Pozanenko, 2020; Vilkov, 2021). Thus, researchers prefer to focus on the reasons for the fatal (judging by the centuries-old Russian history) failure of agricultural cooperative movement and on the prerequisites, factors, prospects and dangers of agroholdings' consolidation.

On the one hand, the concentration of capital and power in the hands of a small number of agricultural players is a global trend (see: Bernstein, 2013; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Clapp & Isakson, 2018; Howard, 2016; McMichael, 2013). Developed countries maintain the industrial model of agriculture, exporting it to developing/poor countries despite its obvious negative consequences for the latter (Wegren, Nikulin & Trotsuk, 2018; Wise, 2019). Industrialization (today combined with digitalization) transforms traditional agriculture into a large, vertically integrated, high-tech and capital-intensive agribusiness embedded in international trade and global markets (see: Wegren & Trotsuk, 2020; Epshtein, Hahlbrock & Wandel, 2019), i.e., the agro-industrial (agroholding) system is socially and politically institutionalized (see: Shik, Yanbykh & Serova, 2020; Krylatykh & Belova, 2018). On the other hand, the terms "industrial agriculture" and "agro-industrial system" are clear, but the term "agroholding" is still controversial due to the diverse interpretations of its criteria (not only huge land holdings but also horizontally or vertically integrated and consolidated agricultural companies; concentration of all types of resources in a limited number of enterprises to reduce transaction costs, taxes and risks of bankruptcy, increase sustainability, receive subsidies and take advantage of economies of scale) and types (by form of ownership, national or

⁶³ In Russia, eco-villages are still a marginal phenomenon due to attracting relatively few people. Ideologists of this movement consider eco-villages a kind of laboratory for models of sustainable development, autonomy and harmonious coexistence of man and nature (Lifin, 2012, pp. 129–130). Russian kin's domain settlements/eco-villages borrow and develop ideas of eco-villages in different parts of the world: environmental technologies, conscious minimalism, cooperation for reasonable consumption, spiritual development and healing, meditation and self-expression in art, communication with nature and so on. However, Russian "builders of the new world" recognize their distance from the global movement since their utopian projects are often rooted in the Soviet past and in the economic-ideological crisis of the 1990s (Soviet morality and "do-it-yourself" practices) (Andreeva, 2012; Andreeva, 2021; Konakov, 2022, pp. 7–14; Mitrokhin, 2020, pp. 51–78).

foreign control, beneficiary/owner, degree of integration, specialization, income and so on) (Uzun, Shagaida, Gataulina & Shishkina, 2022, pp. 133–134). Moreover, there are diverse “prerequisites for the creation of agroholdings in Russia (see: Nikulin, 2010) – both objective economic reasons, common to all countries, stimulating the organization of large businesses in vertically and/or horizontally integrated chains, and the country’s specific historical development, agricultural policies, vast and cheap land resources” (Uzun, Shagaida, Gataulina & Shishkina, 2022, pp. 102). And the system of agroholdings is very dynamic: mergers and divisions, changes of owners and composition, many other forms of adaption to changing business conditions.

Based on the traditional division of agricultural enterprises into corporate (50% of gross output produced in agricultural organizations), mixed (30%–50%) and family (up to 30%), Uzun et al. (2022, p. 139) identify the following types of Russian regions: corporate – regions in which the share of agricultural organizations in gross output is equal to or exceeds 55%, family – regions in which the share of households and peasant farms exceeds 55%, and mixed – all other regions (shares of corporate and family farms range from 45% to 55%). According to this typology, “in 31 subjects of the Russian Federation, there is a corporate type of agrarian structure (Belgorod, Bryansk, Tambov, Lipetsk, Kursk, Krasnodar, Stavropol and Pskov Regions with private agroholdings; Komi Republic and Chukotka Autonomous Region with state agroholdings); in 36 subjects... there is a family type of agrarian structure (Republics of Kalmykia, Altai, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Magadan and Astrakhan Regions); however, in general there is a significant shift towards a corporate agrarian structure (the number of regions with this type and their share in the country’s gross agricultural output has increased)” (Uzun, Shagaida, Gataulina & Shishkina, 2022, p. 142). The differences between these groups of regions are determined by natural conditions, land availability, ethnic factors, efficiency of farms, and regional policies (see: Trotsuk, 2023).

The second general trend in the agrarian and rural development, affecting Russia’s regional differentiation, is concentrated in the non-black-earth rural areas with difficult conditions for agriculture. In regions with favourable conditions for agriculture, we can witness the same negative and positive social-economic processes as in the non-black-earth areas, but the latter are more indicative as ‘critical’ cases, showing the two main survival strategies of rural population. On the one hand, there are passive-depressive settlements with rare last attempts to survive with the help of the former collective/state farm (if it has been somehow preserved under the market economy and spontaneous privatization), with a general feeling of complete abandonment by the state, and with strong migration sentiments. On the other hand, there are less pessimistic settlements with sparks of entrepreneurial activity based on former Soviet enterprises (children and grandchildren of their former leaders/workers) or new projects supported by the state (often initiated and implemented by former city dwellers) (see: Bozhkov & Trotsuk, 2018).

Both types of rural entrepreneurs support the local economy (create jobs, replenish local budgets), preserve local communities (keep the rural youth from migrating to

cities, attract families from neighboring areas), and perform the functions of former Soviet agricultural enterprises in cooperation with local administrations (housing construction, organization of local holidays, cleaning of territories, etc.) (see: Nefedova, 2013; Nefedova, Pokrovsky & Treivish, 2015; Nefedova, Averkieva & Makhrova, 2016). On the one hand, such informal practices of supporting rural infrastructure and social capital can be explained by rational “capitalist calculations” – as ‘investments’ in rural work force for agricultural enterprises. On the other hand, rural entrepreneurs have no guarantees that their “calculations” will be correct (due to possible natural disasters, financial crises, crop failures, etc.). Therefore, their motives and actions can be explained by the traditional Russian “theory of small deeds” (see: Gordeeva, 2003) – altruistic communitarian ideas for the comprehensive improvement of rural life through everyday transformations at the local level (educational, cultural-historical, recreational-ecological, etc.). For instance, among the peripheral (non-black-earth) rural areas, we can find autarkic (eco-settlements) and symbiotic (combination of formal and informal social-economic practices) rural communities (see: Averkieva, 2017); while among economically developed, densely populated and market-oriented (black-earth) rural areas – multi-structural and mono-structural local and regional economies (see: Fadeeva, 2015).

Based on our field case studies, combining participant observations and semi-structured interviews with local residents (‘experts’), in the non-black-earth rural areas (Leningrad, Vologda and Arkhangelsk Regions), we analyzed not only the subjective, biographical dimension of the sustainable rural poverty and depopulation under the destruction of agricultural enterprises and the collapse of rural infrastructure, but also the ‘source’ of some optimistic trends in the traditionally depressed rural areas – a new local entrepreneurial stratum: young entrepreneurs stay, return or come to the village to support rural economy, preserve local communities and restore their ‘normal’ social-demographic structure. Depressive and pessimistic moods still prevail among villagers, but rural entrepreneurs maintain and spread certain optimism. As a rule, the emerging cohort of new rural entrepreneurs continues the work of their parents, preserving their agricultural enterprises, relying on the state support and new technologies that sharply reduced the need for workers in agriculture, and making a huge contribution to the preservation of rural settlements despite the still unresolved (or partly resolved) acute problems related to land legislation, agricultural production sales, quality of rural human capital, weak local authorities, undeveloped social and transport infrastructure, etc.

Another type of rural revival is rural gentrification, or ruralization (see: Ovchintseva, 2021), which is concentrated in few Russian regions (see: Il’yn & Pokrovsky, 2016; Makhrova, Medvedev & Nefedova, 2016; Nefedova & Starikova, 2021): city dwellers move to rural areas with their rich social capital and other resources and become ‘new villagers’. For instance, in the Vologda, Arkhangelsk, Kostroma and Lipetsk Regions, city dwellers participate in different spheres of the rural social-economic life by introducing new types of activities that could be characterized as sprouts of rural modernization if not for their close connection with the traditional rural life (see: Averkieva, 2017; Averkieva & Nefedova, 2016). On the one hand, former city dwellers work in the rural social infrastructure (schools, cultural centers,

shops, administration), offering rural residents new, urban practices (public lectures, book crossing, separate waste collection, second-hand stores), thus contributing to positive changes in certain aspects of rural life and to deagrarianization of rural areas (see: Shepanskaya, 2021). On the other hand, new villagers adopt elements of rural lifestyle, preserving rurality as opposed to the urban lifestyle: some resettlers (religious escapists) archaize everyday practices, others revive traditional culture (folklore, folk paintings, ceramics, weaving), which hardly means the introduction of urban elements into the countryside, especially as many new villagers do not reject civilizational benefits.

Thus, we focused on the typology of agroholdings in the leading Russia's agricultural regions and on the typology of rural areas in Russia's depressed hinterland, since any other typologization is a difficult and perhaps pointless task, given the large size and geographical diversity of the country and incomplete statistical and sociological data. Moreover, there is a general peripherization trend: an increase in Russia's internal periphery due to the social-economic degradation of remote rural areas and to the outflow of the working-age population to the economic, social, political and cultural centers. This trend increases the gap in living standards between urban and rural, developing and stagnating areas, thus, strengthening the country's regional (and spatial) polarization: accelerated development of central regions and urban agglomerations and degradation of the social-economic space that makes up most of Russia, despite the government's efforts to 'artificially' equalize social-economic development.

Conclusion

Sustainability and survival (not to mention revival) of the rural periphery depend on the ability to withstand systemic shocks, maintaining its functions and structures, the ability to cope with uncertainty through renewal, reorganization and learning, and the ability to radically change its trajectory of development and the nature of its systemic organization. The successfully sustainable rural periphery in Russia has the following features: diversity of lifestyles (agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities); specific combination of formal market-oriented institutions with informal social interactions; strong social capital that allows to mobilize internal and external resources. Unfortunately, most old-developed rural regions in Russia do not have such features, or they are too weak, which determines the strengthening peripherization of rural areas and the growing central-peripheral polarization of the country.

To identify the trends of the Russian regional differentiation in the urban-rural and developing-stagnating perspectives, we should combine micro- and macro-approaches, admitting both their above-mentioned possibilities and limitations. Thus, case studies can describe amazingly stable social practices of rural life but as seen by the 'stranger' (researcher), i.e., through the biased perception of the 'other' (city dweller), implicit and explicit comparison, simplifications of complex phenomena as 'simple' or 'backward' rural society, etc. (see: Banfield, 2019). However, without case studies we would not reveal that the official rural status does not

guarantee that outside the city there is a utopian rural world, the realm of *gemeinschaft* relations and communalism, since the main problems of both rural and urban communities are the same: unemployment, poverty, low level of trust in authorities, perception of the state as both the cause of life worsening and the only source of financial assistance, etc.

The same applies to the sociological descriptions of agro-holdingization. When we combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, we can see not only the obvious economic effect of agroholdings (increased production, guarantees of food security and sovereignty, contribution to rural development), but also that holdingization increases social-economic (displacement of small business from agricultural production, credit and trading markets; a reduction in the share of people employed in agriculture, which leads to a significant drop in rural incomes and to an increase in rural poverty; increased losses from bankruptcy of backbone agroholdings), environmental and epidemiological (due to concentrated doses of fertilizers and pollution of water and air by large livestock complexes; reduction in product quality; high losses from epidemics on megafarms), and even social-political risks (farmers and villagers protest against environmental harm, land grabbing, political lobbying and priority government support for megafarms as increasing rural unemployment, landlessness and poverty) (see: Vorbrugg, 2018; Vorbrugg, 2020).

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ТИПОВИ РУСКИХ РУРАЛНИХ РЕГИОНА ПРЕМА КРИТЕРИЈУМИМА ‘АГРОХОЛДИНГА’

Сажетак

Када се посећују руска рурална подручја, морало би се признати да су данас велики пољопривредни произвођачи које руски научници називају ‘агрохолдинзима’ (мегафарме) постали масовни као што је то било сељаштво почетком 20. века. Иако се још увек воде расправе о квантитативним и квалитативним одликама агрохолдинга, о разлозима неуспеха пољопривредних кооперација (на националном нивоу), перспективама и опасностима консолидације великих пољопривредних произвођача (пре свега за националну прехранбену безбедност), већина истраживача се слаже у томе да је у савременом руском друштву сељачки начин живота изузетно редак и често је вештачке природе (као што су новооснована еко насеља или породична имања). Међутим, постоје јасне регионалне разлике: у неким руским регионима преовлађује корпоративни тип аграрне структуре; у другим регионима, напротив, породични тип аграрне структуре. Такве разлике одређене су природним условима, расположивошћу земљишта, етнографским чиниоцима, ефикасношћу корпоративних газдинстава, регионалним аграрним политикама и државним мерама. Ове регионалне разлике одређују како социјално-економске предности локалне/регионалне привреде (раст производње због обима агрохолдинга и државне подршке) тако и претње (постоји тенденција да агрохолдинзи повећавају друштвене, еколошке и епидемиолошке ризике, посебно у руралним подручјима). Због тога, у регионима са јаком традицијом самоорганизовања, фармери и сељаци протестују против угрожавања животне средине, отимања земље, политичког

лобирања и давања приоритета државној подршци пољопривредним газдинствима док расте незапосленост и одузимања имовине на селу.

Кључне речи: агрохолдинг, рурална кооперација, рурално само-организовање, регионалне разлике, корпоративни и породични тип аграрне структуре.

RURAL SELF-ORGANIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EXPOLAR ECONOMY⁶⁴

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the specifics of the functioning and development of substantive forms of self-organizational actions of rural residents. The methodological basis of the study is the method of double reflexivity, used in the analysis of transcribed interviews recorded during sociological expeditions in Russian rural regions. The authors believe that the diversity of events in acts of rural self-organization turns out to be subordinate to the dominant factor – the immersion of self-organizational initiatives in the space of the “expolar economy.” Or, as it is commonly referred to in the discourse of sociology, the economy of “informal”, “invisible”, “alternative”, “family”, “marginal”. The core of expolarity is formed by another, “different” logic, which is not exhausted by an orderly system of exclusively economic reasons and expectations, which boil down mainly to considerations of pragmatics, winning and breaking even. By analyzing the “other” logic of action, the authors get a real opportunity not only to more clearly discern the properties of the socio-cultural structure that has developed on the basis of the everyday life of the current rural

⁶⁴ The article was written on the basis of the RANEPA state assignment research program.

generation, in which the formal and the expolar coexist, but also to predict the historical fate of such a combination.

The modern rural world is steadily defined and characterized not so much by the patterns of intersubjectively emerging everyday standardized comfort, but by the subject's ability to rebuild and modernize both the external contours and the internal structure of a new expolarity, since in this case innovative mechanisms of self-organization are most effectively triggered and spatially deployed.

Keywords: rural self-organization, expolar economy, practices of self-organization of the rural population, rural everyday life, innovative mechanisms of self-organization

Introduction

Studying the specifics of the functioning and development of substantive forms of self-organizational actions of rural residents presupposes knowledge of the basic coordinates of the socio-economic space where the economic practices of the rural population are located. Self-organizational initiatives of both individual subjects and rural communities as a whole are possible only as part of such practices.

In the research heritage of Russian sociology, there is a well-reasoned theoretical and methodological position, which helps to understand that self-organization in its event dynamics is quite definitely determined. "Self-organization", in contrast to its linguistic emphasis, which sharpens and highlights the independence of actions of a subject or community, is in fact multilaterally attached to the current actual situation. There are circumstances at work here that profile the type of socio-economic space in which self-organizational initiatives take place.

Self-organization and its specific practical manifestations and forms, both in total volume and in their situational details, turn out to be subject to an extremely important circumstance – the complete immersion of self-organizational initiatives in the sphere of the so-called "expolar economy". The phenomenon of "expolar economy" in sociological discourse usually refers to such types of economy as "informal", "parallel", "invisible", "alternative", "family", "marginal".

The author of the concept of "expolarity" T. Shanin specially noted that such multivariance of any definitions derived from "expolarity" is not at all arbitrary and heteroglossic; the multiplicity of names rather indicates that the researcher encounters here a certain multi-layered economic reality, deeply rooted in the "structures of everyday life", as they were understood and interpreted by the French historian Fernand Braudel. It turns out that economic matters themselves are somewhat moved into the depths of the life scene and the *mise-en-scène* of the social existence of both subjects and communities comes forward.

In fact, such synonymous abundance in itself is very impressive, full of obvious, at first glance "unscientific" metaphors, and thereby expressively testifying to the plethora, polymorphism, breadth and prevalence of expolar practices that form some

skillfully assembled, “branded” social-economic system. This system is internally interconnected in its functional qualities and effective manifestations and is also distinguished by the fact that its typical actors, as subjects of an expolar economy, stand out among the bulk of the human mass by the obvious properties of passionarity. It is also important here that subjects of expolar economic practices strive to develop unique normative regulatory rules for their socio-economic actions and follow them in the course of life practices.

The Concept of Expolarity by Theodor Shanin and the Results of Its Application in Sociological Research

The substantiation of the idea of expolarity is the undoubted and very fruitful merit of the outstanding sociologist and peasant expert scientist Theodor Shanin. In a generalized sense, the terminological bunch “expolar economy” serves to introduce into scientific circulation ideas about the sum of social technologies that are capable of at least elementary ensuring the preservation of the vitality and relative stability of the acceptable existential orders of subjects and groups that, for well-known reasons, are fenced off from the trajectories of life given by fate prosperity and are forced to simply survive, with difficulty achieving at least a semblance of the fullness of the organic existence of the family.

Expolar socio-economic “devices” concentrate in themselves such characteristic features and qualities that, acting together, contribute to the fact that the main functions of life are carried out, as they say, “in their own way,” along a proven, well-trodden track. This ensures that existential mood of society, which can be called “consent”, “connection” or “dialogue” of generations, a phenomenon manifested and recorded, in particular in voluminous peasant narratives recorded during field sociological expeditions initiated by Professor T. Shanin. In this case, the following characteristic features are noteworthy:

- The presence of tacitly accepted, non-verbal behavioral attitudes, the result of which is the commitment of employees not so much to market regulations and rules, but rather the focus of subjects on normative standards of survival. As for the manifestations of self-organization, it is expressed here in the reproduction of such forms of employment that are based on considerations of the feasibility of workloads, and not on the unconditional maximization of economic profit through work on the market.
- A systematically observed set of both individual and cooperative production actions taking place in the space of expolar structures is based on a silent and almost instinctively harmonious combination of goal-rational and value-rational actions; self-organization reveals itself here not in search of production and economic novelty, but is expressed in a stubborn adherence to stencils and skills learned from previous generational attitudes – “this is how our grand-fathers set it up”.
- In some respects contradictory and sometimes very bizarrely superimposed on this kind of archaic attitudes and, nevertheless, clearly noticeable personification, a special warehouse of economic and socio-cultural life practices of each individual expolar cell; the “self-organizational temperament” of a tradi-

tional peasant household (as well as a modern peasant farm) is in most cases unique and original, especially if you observe and analytically compare the self-organization initiatives of different economic cells in two complementary research modes – participant observation and remotely, from the outside. It should be separately emphasized that this circumstance (i.e., the far from identical “norms” of different family farms) was repeatedly recorded by the methods of qualitative sociology, as in the above-mentioned peasant studies projects of T. Shanin in the early 1990s, during which the life practices of traditional peasant households, and in the latest expeditionary research dedicated to the modern farming community in Russia.

- For a long time, family ties existing in the rural social space, strong neighborly contacts, relations of friendship, mutual assistance and personal affection act as the basis for the phenomenal network structure of the local rural society. Networks of private interaction (industrial – construction, haymaking, plowing gardens, cleaning rivers and forests; leisure and festive – holidays, name days, weddings; ritual - seeing off in the army, funerals, wakes, etc.) are included in the very core of the organics of expolar life arrangements. It is networks that accumulate and in the intersubjective memory of communities store the collective skills of village “habitual affairs”, which, along with the long-rooted pragmatics of a circle of stereotyped and quite ordinary rural activities, include excellently working mechanisms of generation and reproduction (not only in imitative-reproductive, but also in reconstructive-breakthrough forms and variants) of those self-organizing initiatives and cunning “inventions”, which, as the famous popular saying says (“the poor are wise to invention”), are so much of a need for the poor. Such network phenomena, for all their apparent ephemerality, are embodied in the very vital matter of a socio-spatial community. They are undisguisedly visible when you enter their lived-in limits. Moreover, they are characterized by a certain unique and each time peculiar “organoleptic” – that special temperature and atmosphere of communication, that communicative and socio-psychological ether and aroma that differs from other communities, which are perfectly felt during a functional (and even elementary tourist-contemplative) immersion in them and which are clearly distinguished by the local inhabitants themselves when, for example, a sociologist asks them the question: “Which (kind of people) are you, compared to other villages?” (Vinogradsky, 2017)
- Expolar socio-economic structures act not only as reliable repositories of existential experiences and competencies of the past, but also as experimental sites for the development of elements of future everyday life. In particular, today the basic foundations for the socio-spatial renewal of the appearance, technological structure and socio-demographic content of rural settlements are being laid. Opportunities of this kind for expolarity were clearly and quite effectively identified in the course of measures to counter the threats of the global COVID-19 pandemic, when human civilization began to overhaul the opportunities and limitations that progress brings.

Most of the characteristic features of expolarity outlined above cannot but have a decisive impact on the self-organizational behavior of rural residents. What is the fundamental mechanism of this impact?

First of all, it should be pointed out that rural households, within which all the main empirical manifestations of expolar principles are consistently implemented, are able to invent certain behavioral patterns and techniques that allow them not to ignore, but to adapt to various kinds of management initiatives and regulatory activities of government bodies.

The deep nature of such self-organizing initiatives and practical actions of rural residents was discovered and analyzed several decades ago by the famous American sociologist and anthropologist James Scott. Exploring the historical phenomena of peasant resistance to the authorities, he invented an insightful formula, “weapons of the weak” (Scott, 1985), that accurately reflects the very essence of what is happening.

Self-organization, which occurs in an atmosphere of expolarity, is distinguished by the presence of a number of tactical and technical characteristics inherent specifically in the “weapon of the weak”. Just like a peasant who, being forced to react to the orders of the authorities, prefers to formally obey, but at the same time knows how to find other ways in order to maintain acceptable degrees of freedom, the subject of self-organization believes that it is better to be delicately modest. As a rule, he strives to cover up his arbitrary, wayward plans and intentions with formulas of loyalty and corresponding behavioral actions.

Based on our own experience of field research in the expolar economy of peasant households in a number of Russian regions and after analyzing the materials received (interview protocols, budget tables, diagrams of network economic relations and exchanges), we came to the conclusion that this kind of economy is a central element of peasant everyday life, which belongs to the arsenal of precisely the “weapons of the weak”.

Moreover, we saw that the “weapons of the weak” are capable of being converted into a certain transformed form, the essence of which can be denoted using the lexically related formula “tools of the weak”. In this terminological version, it absorbs the sum of the technologies of peasant existence and, in fact, determines the entire nature and scope of peasant everyday life. And this life is nothing more than a functional space of expolarity, that is, no longer captured by external regulations, free from alien supervision, an inexhaustible scope of various work activities. It is impossible to complete the endless circle of peasant activities, in accordance with the seasons, without mastery of the “tools of the weak” (Vinogradsky, 2009).

“Tools of the weak” represent a long list of peasant knowledge, skills and abilities, acquired from childhood and organically growing both into long-term life strategies, and most actively working in tactical packages of incessant “customary affairs”. The philosophical dimension of all this kind of life order was clearly formulated by T. Shanin already at the very early stages of the study of expolarity. He said back in 2000 that the projection of expolarity concentrates in its content theoretical and

methodological ideas about “the logic of survival in the sense of realizing broad social goals, the goals of daily life” (Shanin, 2000).

The interpretation of the expolar economy as a determining factor regarding the processes of self-organization presupposes the need to answer the following, logically arising question: why exactly does it act as the activity form (or, more precisely, a construct) within which self-organization is, as is commonly said, *in statu nascendi* (at the moment of formation – *lat.*)? In what and how is the generative energy of expolarity manifested?

It is in rural life practices that the expolar economy, technologically intended mainly for the implementation of economic affairs attached to the seasons, includes in its structure all those heterogeneous, technologically different-sized (due to their seasonality and multiplicity of target settings), economic activities that take place in actions of members of a particular household.

In this projection, the expolarity is multi-encompassing and spacious, since it absorbs the undivided unity of the vital manifestations of the family production ensemble. It is precisely this expolarity that creates the basic mood of life in a rural micro-society, forming that phenomenological unity that can be designated through the conceptual connective “rural world” (Vinogradsky, 2018; 2019; Vinogradsky, Vinogradskaya, & Nikulina, 2020). At the same time, this conceptual connective was based on the comprehensively substantiated theoretical and methodological position of M. Heidegger, who formulated the following basic definition: “World” is the mood, tone, melody (*die Grundweise*) of being. Mood is a certain structure in the sense of melody, which does not hover over the so-called spot being of a person, but sets the tone for this being, i.e. configures and arranges the “what” and “how” of his being. Moods are the “how” according to which a person feels this way and that way” (Heidegger, 2013, pp. 116–117).

These moods, each time manifesting themselves in their unique existential tonality, are capable of generating original self-organizational initiatives, into which the individual voices of the actors are woven. Since the expolar (informal) economy is the main component of the “tools of the weak” which, as was said, represent the systemic unity of the technologies of everyday peasant existence and, in essence, profiles the basic character and permeates the entire volume of peasant everyday life, then its necessary final product is what can be called “the fullness of organic existence”. The conditions of this kind of completeness have been repeatedly captured and explained in the studies of historians, linguists and local historians, devoted, in particular, to the analysis of proverbs and sayings about everyday peasant life.

As for formal economic actions (for example, collective farm sowing or harvesting campaigns), their goals are pre-planned and organizationally thought out. And therefore, as often happened historically, this kind of “event” sometimes turned out to be mysteriously unsuccessful, sometimes even a failure. And this is not surprising, since the subject, being included in the pre-calculated space of official-formal economic actions, is forced and most often remains in a state of forced,

calculated, weighed (but not by himself, but by the instructions, rules and technical specifications established for him). As a rule, he unquestioningly tunes in to the logic of such actions, diligently inflates and “sets up” himself for them, fearing to make a mistake, to blunder in the eyes of the management, an indispensable attribute of any formal organizational structure.

In fact, this kind of action is a legibly composed score, from which management regulations, the so-called “dirigisme,” are not allowed to deviate in any way. This kind of practice is observed and analyzed by domestic peasant experts (Fadeeva, 2019). Be that as it may, any self-organizing initiatives (not to mention specific actions) in such situations are simply unimaginable, since they are obviously and almost automatically regarded as restiveness and self-will. Let us note in passing how diagnostically precisely the language works here, demonstrating the complete identity of the main root meanings in the concepts of “self-organization” and “self-will”. In addition, the synonymous battery of “self-will” contains almost twenty different positions, thereby unwittingly enriching the semantics of the synonymously poor, linguistically colorless and even official “self-organization”.

On the contrary, the expolar economy does not deny, but presupposes moments of self-organization with its creative impulses, since in its activity space the subject finds himself in a state of free, and not deliberately imposed on him from the outside, command readiness. Its typical (especially rural) manifestations are characterized by artel work, carried out “willingly”, where any self-organizational initiatives and innovative technological techniques that arise in the course of labour efforts are certainly supported, becoming common property.

The main analytical guideline that promotes the correct interpretation of both the general meaning and the constitutive features of the expolar (informal) economy is formulated in the article by V. V. Radaev, published in the collective monograph “Informal Economy. Russia and the World”, initiated by Theodor Shanin. The author, observing this phenomenon, figuratively speaking, “from above”, from a general analytical distance, asserts that “the informal economy does not simply indicate individual forms of economy, but denotes a general economic-sociological approach to the world of economy. The informal economy appears as *a certain logic of actions of economic agents*” (Radaev, 1999, p. 36) (emphasis added).

Informality (= expolarity) is precisely “logic”, that is, “reasonableness” and “regularity” of activities. It is also “certainty”, that is, the unambiguity of the agent’s actions, observed in a wide space of expolar actions inherent in both patriarchal, tradition-sanctified works, and the practices of modern peasant (farm) farming. And it is precisely this “certain logic” that is capable of correcting the historically hardened contours of the formal economy with its border logic.

Thus, the core of expolarity is formed by another, “different” logic, which is not exhausted by an orderly system of exclusively economic reasons and expectations, which boil down mainly to considerations of pragmatics, winning and breaking even. Expolarity absorbs all the intricate intricacy of the everyday existence of a particular subject – an existence that is correlated, first of all, with the way of life of

the local society and, looking more broadly, with life habits and an attached family reputation going deep of the family biography, this special existential norm.

It is through expolar-informal optics that the landscape of connections and relationships that determine the choice and focus of a subject's life trajectories becomes available to us for observation and understanding. A vital logic is revealed and comes to light, one way or another building a support so that the subject has the opportunity to answer the question "how should one live?"

Moreover, the content of such an answer depends on the understanding of which point of the fork, the extreme points of which are "formal" and "informal", "state" and "family", is attached this or that socio-economic action in which this social subject is involved.

And this kind of logic does not imply ignoring at all, but rather an active and, as a rule, careful and subtle connection to the main formal economic highways of various self-organizational initiatives and creative insights. These initiatives, as noted above, are clear indicators of subjectivity, which, manifesting itself in the coordinates of expolarity, each time creates completely original pictures of self-organizational endeavors.

Instead of a Conclusion

Let us briefly dwell on research prospects concerning the informal (expolar) economy and the moments of self-organization built into it. By analyzing "another" logic of action, we get a real opportunity not only to more clearly discern the properties of the socio-cultural structure that has developed on the basis of the "works and days" of the current rural generation, where the formal and the expolar coexist, but also to predict the historical fate of such a combination.

Today's rural Russia has become quite familiar with practices that have created vast deposits of expolarity and continues to move in this direction. T. Shanin, who promptly noticed this phenomenon, in an article expressively entitled "Expolar economies and the political economy of the roadside: forms of economy outside systems," advised to delve into the analysis of the issue of "the interrelation of technologies, resources and skills" (Shanin, 1999).

This is good advice. After all, it is these elements of economic practices that are capable (subject to their cultivation and all-round care for them) to noticeably rebuild and modernize both the external contours and the internal structure of the new expolarity, since here innovative mechanisms of self-organization are most effectively triggered and spatially deployed.

Exploring the family peasant economy during the next field expedition, employees of the Center for Agrarian Research of the Institute of Peasant Research of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration worked in the villages and farmsteads of the Krasnodar Territory. At the same time, we were able to observe with our own eyes the internal structure of expolarity, since for several years sociologists lived literally next door to village families and at the same time finally became convinced that the rural world, emerging on the basis of

technological discoveries of expolarity, equipped with various “tools of the weak,” each and every in its own way original and literally “original”. It was concluded that this world is steadily defined and characterized not so much by the patterns of intersubjectively emerging, everyday standardized comfort, but by a special, not amenable to clichés, thoroughly detailed and individually arranged coziness, a certain individually chosen pleasantness of the living environment and the entire life order. Such coziness is always unique and whimsical. It is not repeated from one rural estate to another, since it is not set by alien, third-party design stencils, but each time is generated by a truly inexhaustible supply of diverse peasant skills that allow the most possible, exhaustive use of the expolar economic and sociocultural ones available, or, better said, “at hand” to the subject activity initiatives, resources and technological schemes.

Thus, self-organization in its deepest sources can be interpreted as a kind of procedurally and phenomenologically expressed otherness of expolarity as a “certain logic of action” (T. Shanin).

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РУРАЛНО САМООРГАНИЗОВАЊЕ У КОНТЕКСТУ ЕКСПОЛАРНЕ ЕКОНОМИЈЕ

Сажетак

Проучавање регионалних одлика самоорганизованог делања становника руралних подручја подразумева разумевање основних координата тог социо–економског простора у коме се одвијају самоорганизоване иницијативе појединаца и руралних заједница. Регионалне разлике у руралном самоорганизовању су обично детерминисане такозваном „експоларном економијом“ или – како се то дефинише у дискурсу руске социологије – ‘неформалном’, ‘сивом’, ‘паралелном’, ‘невидљивом’, ‘алтернативном’, ‘породичном’ или ‘маргиналном’ руралном економијом. Језгро експоларне економије чини логика која није ограничена на организовани систем искључиво економских разлога и очекивања прагматичне природе. Експоларност апсорбује све регионалне и локалне комплексне одлике свакодневног живота руралних домаћинстава и заједница јер одражава и представља како начин живота локалног друштва тако и навике и углед његових породица. Сагледавајући ‘другу’ логику руралног делања, добијамо праву прилику не само да јасније идентификујемо регионалне елементе и чиниоце социо–културне структуре засноване на ‘пословима и данима’ садашње руралне генерације (која комбинује формално и експоларно) већ и да предвидимо историјску судбину такве специфичне регионалне комбинације. Дакле, савремени регионални ‘рурални светови’ нису толико детерминисани обрасцима интерсубјективног настајања из свакодневних стандардизованих пракси колико способношћу руралних субјеката да реконструишу и модернизују, како спољашње контуре, тако и унутрашњу структуру нове експоларности засноване на иновативним механизмима самоорганизовања.

Кључне речи: рурално самоорганизовање, експоларна економија, регионалне праксе самоорганизовања руралног становништва, рурални свакодневни живот.

RURAL SELF-ORGANIZATION: A NOT TYPICAL CASE FROM CRIMEA

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Abstract

The rural crisis that began in the last decades of the Soviet state has deepened in recent years as the measures taken by the Russian authorities do not have the desired effect. Rural territories keep losing the economically active population despite the intensifying urban migration to the countryside. The gradual ‘optimization’ of the rural social infrastructure, significant differences in the urban and rural living conditions, and shortage of jobs in rural areas determine the desire of many villagers to move to the city, while the lack of real powers, funding, and mechanisms for participation in solving local problems with self-government leads to social atomization and apathy. Certainly, an increase in social and human capital (Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2017; Coleman, 1988) can stop the stagnation of rural areas, if there are mechanisms for social mobilization of rural population through which local rural communities can initiate projects, raise funding, and influence territorial planning and improvement in their settlements. Unfortunately, this is a not a common practice in Russia, and in the first part of the article the author explains the reasons for this situation. In the second part of the article, based on his field research and analytical work, the author describes a non-typical case (village Alekseevka) from the non-typical Russian region (Crimea) to prove the very possibility of rural self-organization and explain factors of its efficiency.

Keywords: rural self-organization, rural community, Crimea, Russia, regional differences, human capital, social capital

Introduction

In the Russian Empire, the most common form of self-organization in the countryside was rural community (Trotsuk & Nikulin, 2010). However, under the strict administrative control of all aspects of people's life, 'natural' forms of self-organization (from below) usually emerged under the weakening state power, such as between the February Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of the USSR, when many partnerships for the joint cultivation of land, communes, artels and other associations of villagers were formed, including those for management tasks. In other periods, the emerging forms of self-organization were either repressed (such as Tolstoy communities) or taken under control because of their mass character (such as Old Believers or Cossack communities).

After the 1837 reform, rural societies became units of the rural administrative and economic self-government, i.e., they were formed and controlled by the authorities to regulate all economic and fiscal relations in rural areas. After the emergence of the Soviet state, the entire rural population was forcibly collectivized, which, given the strict administrative control from above, led to the return of serfdom. The variety of management forms that developed under the NEP did not last for long and were brought to uniform Soviet standards already in the late 1930s. The existing local rural councils were quite nominal as the collective farms' management was much more influential. On the one hand, small collective farms that united the population of one settlement could be considered a form of self-organization. On the other hand, the administrative consolidation of collective farms in the 1950s deprived rural population of the right to decision-making but left them the right to influence everyday life of their villages.

After the collapse of the USSR, new forms of self-organization got a chance to develop. Collective farms either disappeared or were reorganized into commercial enterprises (Trotsuk, 2017). However, the apathy of rural residents and their desire to migrate to cities limited the mass self-organization of rural population. Despite the recent words of the Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly V. Matvienko that "local self-government as a form of public self-organization has fully developed in the country", this is far from the truth, which is proved by numerous incidents in various rural municipalities during local elections, when no one claims the position of the head of rural administrations.

The federal government keeps making attempts to revive rural activity and encourage villagers to self-organize but in the traditional way – 'from top to bottom', when rural population is periodically and insistently offered forms that were developed or chosen by the most active communities (for instance, cooperatives of various types and territorial public self-governments that are far from being widespread) (Nikulin & Trotsuk, 2022). Certainly, there are other practices of self-organization in rural areas such as ecological settlements, religious or social communities/movements. However, most of their members are urban dwellers, who purposefully moved to the countryside but prefer not to interact with locals in any way; and this is especially typical for the outskirts of the Moscow agglomeration (Pivovarov et al., 2018).

In this article I will focus on Crimea as a specific case representing most Russian rural trends albeit with predictable differences. The contemporary Crimean society has formed since 1944, after the liberation of the Crimean Peninsula from the German occupation. The mass extermination of the Jewish and Gypsy population, partisans and other ‘enemies’ of the occupation authorities, and then the deportation of Russian Germans, Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks and ‘asocial elements’ interrupted the natural course of the regional social development. The resettlement movement that started immediately after the liberation in 1944 and finished in 1976 formed the core of the contemporary Crimean society – the Slavic majority (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians constituted 75% of population in 2021) (Ethnic composition..., 2021). The second ‘component’ of contemporary Crimean society was ‘painfully’ added in the 1990s – after the deported people returned after the abolition of discriminatory laws and the collapse of the USSR. The growing interethnic tension and rapid pauperization hampered both establishing a dialogue and self-organization in rural areas despite the authorities’ efforts for social mobilization.

The article is based on the results of many field studies conducted in the center of the Crimean Peninsula, in the Krasnogvardeisky district, from 2017 to 2022. The author conducted interviews with local villagers, including farmers, rural activists, government officials, pensioners, and representatives of other strata of rural society. The studies focused mainly on the village of Novoalekseevka located 7 km from the geographical center of the Crimean Peninsula. In addition, statistical data, articles and other sources were analyzed to clarify the situation in rural Crimea.

Crimea as a Specific Case of the Russian Regional Rural Development

In Soviet times and in the first post-Soviet years, collective farms were the key organizers of life in the countryside. Many state and collective farms were ‘millionaires’, i.e., their annual profit exceeded one million Soviet rubles, which allowed them to implement infrastructural projects in their settlements – build social facilities and water conduits, paved roads, etc. Collective farms strived to ‘standardize’ villagers through a joint place of work, common holidays and trips and promoting ‘collectivism’ from above. After the start of the transition to the market economy, the delayed reforming of the collective-farm system led to the rapid bankruptcy of the ‘collective farms-millionaires’ that were extremely successful in the planned economy. The temporary weakness of the state allowed the most enterprising villagers to take collective farms apart according to their possibilities: as a rule, the former chairmen privatized land and property funds en masse, machine operators bought tractors, milkmaids bought cows, others dismantled buildings for stones. As a result, by the end of the 1990s, rural communities were left without jobs, resources, and care of collective farms, while the remaining ones were reorganized into agricultural cooperatives and farms.

This was the general post-Soviet situation but with some regional differences which in the Crimean case were determined by strong social ties in rural areas as a common phenomenon, supported by the authorities and NGOs to develop local

democracy. From 1995 to 2014, the Crimean Development and Integration Program within the framework of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP CIDP) operated in Crimea to support rural areas on the path to the sustainable social-economic development based on the national and cultural diversity. The program was initiated by the government of Ukraine to reduce ethnic and social tension in Crimea (Tverdokhlebov, 2005) by contributing to the rural and ethnocultural development, focusing on repatriates and unemployed villagers. The UNDP CIDP specialists visited Crimean rural areas and proposed ways to solve infrastructural problems with the help of rural cooperation. At village meetings, possible projects were discussed, and activists were elected to control the implementation of such projects 'on the ground'. The necessary funding was provided mainly by foreign companies and Ukrainian authorities, but only if locals formed a public organization consisting of villagers and collaborating with the UNDP CIDP, and if villagers added some investment for implementing the project. These conditions were necessary for the social mobilization of the village, so that rural residents would participate in planning and decision-making for the infrastructural development of their settlements in dialogue with local authorities.

Since the start of the UNDP CIDP work in Crimea, the following goals were set (The UNDP representation..., 1995): assistance in establishing a dialogue between rural communities and local authorities in identifying and supporting local initiatives; fight against poverty through the development of entrepreneurship and agriculture; improvement of conditions for the accumulation and use of social capital in rural areas; reduction of interethnic tension and teaching tolerance through educational, cultural and information-technology projects; promotion of peace and stability by monitoring and ensuring social security. Accordingly, the projects implemented in rural areas helped to improve villagers' access to basic services – water, healthcare, education, cultural events, and so on. The UNDP CIDP specialists believed that to achieve the financial independence of rural population, at the initial stage it was necessary to provide villagers with water at households, which would cause further changes in rural settlements, such as: organization of garden watering for ensuring self-sufficiency in agricultural products and a sale of surplus; development of private business based on greenhouses; improvement of rural social and living conditions; growing incomes of rural population and co-financing of infrastructure projects; an increase in the cost of real estate and a decrease in the number of empty houses in steppe villages (Evaluation Report, 2009).

The problem of rural poverty has been a significant obstacle to the formation, preservation and development of social capital in rural areas of Crimea. According to the UNDP CIDP monitoring in 2009, every third farm in rural areas was among the poorest households, but poverty indicators varied by district: for instance, in the Sovetsky district the share of the poorest exceeded 4/5 of all farms, and in the central Kirov district – less than 1/10 (Report "Living Standards", 2009). The high level of poverty hindered the implementation of projects with the participation of the local population as villagers did not have available funds. However, the UNDP CIDP projects helped to solve social problems in more than 700 urban and rural municipalities of Crimea and to establish a dialogue between the authorities and the

public, which allowed to open medical-obstetric stations and reconstruct water pipelines, schools, kindergartens, rural clubs, and other infrastructural facilities in rural areas. Assistance in the construction and modernization of rural infrastructure was provided not only to improve the rural living conditions but also to develop rural democracy in non-urbanized areas of Crimea, as within the framework of the PRO-ON CIDP program, there was a special subprogram “Democratic Governance” to promote the self-organization of rural population into public organizations and to support grassroots projects for the development of rural settlements. In eight districts of Crimea, in which this component was implemented (a necessary agreement was signed with the local authorities), more than 30 communities were created. Certainly, not all of them survived after the cessation of funding from donors and authorities, but some continue to initiate and implement projects with the help of local activists.

Thus, the UNDP CIDP specialists managed to establish a dialogue between rural dwellers and authorities (local and regional) at different levels of planning and implementation of projects in rural areas. The main social institution that was formed with the support of the UNDP CIDP – rural community, a public organization uniting resident of a certain locality and interacting with program specialists and authorities. Such communities were to organize public discussions, to search for projects in the interests of the normal existence in their locality, and to develop the people’s belief in their ability to influence decision-making. The task of the UNDP CIDP specialists was to ensure private investments for the implementation of rural projects, although to participate in the program the community had to provide minimal funding, which was to form a sense of responsibility among rural population. As a result of the work of the UNDP CIDP in 1995–2014, more than 700 investment projects were implemented, more than 600 communities were organized, and about 80% of them with the direct support of the UNDP CIDP. Most communities ceased to exist after the completion of their projects, but there are also communities that still function as active villagers got used to working together and even after the completion of the program implemented projects to improve their settlements.

Rural Cooperation in Crimea

The development of cooperation in rural areas is one of the key measures to improve rural living standards when there are no jobs and sustainable poverty (Sobolev et al., 2018), which was typical for Crimean villages. The impetus for rural cooperation was given by the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On Urgent Measures to Speed up the Reform in the Agrarian Sector of the Economy” of 1999, which promised the state support for personal subsidiary plots and farms and the promotion of association of economic entities into non-profit service cooperatives. Since the early 2000s, many villagers have united in various types of cooperatives. However, despite the operation of state programs for the development of cooperation, the number of agricultural production cooperatives remained small. For instance, in 2012, out of 732.1 thousand rural dwellers only 1.16 thousand were members of cooperatives, although the UNDP CIDP specialists supported the

cooperative movement by giving legal advice, training participants, and promoting associations among medium-sized agricultural producers. However, the lack of a consistent policy for the support of agricultural cooperation did not allow to extend this practice to all rural areas of Crimea: there were 54 agricultural cooperatives in 2011, 64 in 2012 and 65 at the beginning of 2023. Moreover, as a rule, agricultural service cooperatives are 'cooperatives of one village', i.e., their weak material and financial base does not allow for development.

The population of rural Crimea has not decreased in the post-Soviet period despite the complete destruction of the collective-farm system and the high level of rural unemployment. In 1990, 746.2 thousand people lived in rural areas (All-Union Census of 1989), in 2022 – 999 thousand (The number of population..., 2022). The long-term shortage of government funding for infrastructure and its degradation deprived some of the settlements of important conditions for living in arid areas. For instance, in the 1990s–2000s, in the urban-type settlement of Oktyabrskoe in the Krasnogvardeysky district, with a population of more than 10 thousand people, there was no constant water supply – water was supplied three times a day for two hours, but during the summer period of increased water consumption the upper floors of apartment buildings did not get any water; in the village of Veresaev in the Saki district, there was no drinking water, which was quite common. Without proper maintenance, water pipelines in villages became unusable, and the poverty of local budgets and residents did not allow rural communities to solve such problems on their own.

In the village of Novoalekseevka, despite ethnic contradictions, villagers organized a community to discuss and solve local problems (Gusakov, 2017). This village is quite 'representative' for the steppe agricultural regions of Crimea, since there are traces of social-economic changes that took place, albeit at different times, in both depopulating depressed and growing rural settlements. The main reason for cooperation of villagers was a common problem – water supply maintenance. While being separated on political, ideological, religious, cultural and other grounds, villagers found common ground to unite into a community consisting of 600 residents living in the rural central part of the Crimean Peninsula. This village is close to a busy railway station and a large settlement, which explains its demographic stability, although there are practically no employment opportunities and no basic social infrastructure that was liquidated in the Soviet period. In Novoalekseevka, about 50% of residents are able-bodied (the rest are pensioners and children), and there are no lonely old people as in many Russian Non-Black-Earth regions. Most villagers are employed outside the village, since there are not enough jobs in Novoalekseevka – only a store, a paramedic-obstetric station, the Krasnogvardeysk State Variety Testing Station, and several farms. There is a high share of informal employment – in raising livestock and poultry, gardening, etc. Villagers of Novoalekseevka stand out for their civil activity: in addition to regular village meetings to discuss local issues, villagers express their political views, and here the voter turnout at the elections was higher than the national average, which is also proved by the presence of representatives of various political forces in the village.

The question is how the common cause that united people arose: in the Crimean steppes, free access to drinking (and/or technical) water has always been one of the key factors of viability. Until the 1960s, the agricultural specialization of the region developed taking into account the natural environmental conditions, and after the launch of the North Crimean irrigation and water supply canal, the authorities expanded the range of products produced (for instance, rice and horticulture in arid steppe areas) (Crimean Region, 1974) as agricultural production became more resistant to periodic droughts, the effects of which were minimized by artificial irrigation. However, large-scale plowing of virgin lands and a sparse network of natural reservoirs in steppes have exacerbated the shortage of water resources, primarily in the north and east of Crimea. An increase in agricultural production and population conditioned the situation that up to 85% of the necessary fresh water was supplied through the canal. Water shortage became acute after the closure of the North Crimean Canal in 2014. The drought of 2018 caused an environmental disaster in the north due to the drying out of the acid storage tank at the Crimean Titan plant, and the drought of 2020 almost led to a humanitarian catastrophe. All this affected mainly cities supplied with water from reservoirs, while in rural areas, water from the canal was used in economic activities of households and by agricultural enterprises, and drinking water was provided by artesian wells, except for the northern areas (Experts, 2020).

Novoalekseevka takes water from an artesian well. In Soviet times, the collective farm was the main organizer of public life and the main provider of public services, but in 1995 it went bankrupt and later disappeared with all its funds and resources. The main burden of maintaining social infrastructure fell on the local authorities, who were unable to even monitor its safety. Thus, in the 1990s, during the period of the so-called post-Soviet ‘anarchy’, due to the connivance of authorities and law enforcement agencies and to the indifference of local population, the village lost its club, library, school, first aid station and a part of the dairy farm (its buildings were dismantled). In general, the 1990s became a period of the greatest disunity both in this village and in the post-Soviet states in general, especially in rural areas and mainly due to the combination of the extreme poverty of the majority with the relative prosperity of the elites, which destroyed the collective-farm social ties based on joint work and social equality of households (Smirnova, 2012).

Villagers lost access to basic benefits due to pauperization and disappearance of social infrastructure, which caused the loss of the rural social capital accumulated during the Soviet period. The lack of livelihood, the return of repatriates, the growth of interethnic contradictions, the search for someone to blame for the destruction of rural infrastructure, widespread dependency sentiment and unemployment led to social fragmentation: the village ‘psychologically’ turned into scattered autonomous farms connected only by common problems with water supply. The lack of financial support from the local authorities led to the closure of the drinking water well (the pump broke down), and non-potable hot water in the supply system was not suitable for irrigation, which limited gardening that needed additional watering in this steppe zone; drinking water had to be brought from other settlements.

The revival of the rural community in Novoalekseevka began with the arrival of the UNDP CIDP specialists in the 2000s (Institutional development..., 2009). They focused on the local infrastructure projects with the participation of foreign investors, authorities and local residents. To participate in the program, the village needed to register a local community or a public organization – to coordinate and implement projects and to collect symbolic money from villagers to create a sense of collective responsibility. Three projects were implemented in this village – the construction of a paramedic-obstetric station (in 2003), of an irrigation water pipeline (in 2004), and of a drinking water pipeline (in 2007). Activists were selected to explain the essence of the project and to raise funds. As always in such projects, there were ‘activists’ who used such projects for personal enrichment: due to their dishonesty, the irrigation water pipeline was not laid deep enough, which led to its repeated damage when plowing gardens; for the drinking water supply, pipes of the wrong diameter were purchased, which reduced the volume of water supplied to the system. Nevertheless, the implementation of these projects led to the formation of the rural community that united a significant share of villagers and was able to solve local problems. In the structure of this community, the ‘engines’ were local rural residents with financial resources, interested in maintaining rural social infrastructure – primarily farmers that rented residents’ land shares, private entrepreneurs and educated, ambitious activists. They constituted rural elite (source of finance) and rural intelligentsia (source of ideas), which gradually turned village meetings to discuss common problems into an effective and regular decision-making event.

In the early 2010s, such common efforts (Ostrom, 2010) allowed to improve the public park, the territory of the former rural club, the cemetery, etc. However, these measures could not maintain the viability of this rural community for a long time without a more important reason for the stable interaction of villagers, and this reason was the maintenance of the water pipeline that required constant repair, since it was built in the 1970s from used ship pipes and experienced sudden changes in temperature. The local housing and communal services company refused to take care of the water supply system, referring to the previous bad service and a large debt for services. In the 2000s, the well and the water supply system were transferred by the village council to the rural community for free use, and the amount of monthly payment for repair was set at the general village meeting, depending on the size of household and the presence of cattle and personal transport. Rotating representatives of the village community collected monthly payments and carried out renovation work for a nominal fee. Obviously, with time the forms of this rural communication changed: initially there were notices in public places (crossroads, shops, etc.), and in the last few years – a group chat in the messenger (120 out of 600 villagers participate, i.e., representatives of 70% of households). This digitalization led to an increase in the share of participants in decision-making on rural development as even villagers working in cities or other settlements could participate in public discussions.

Conclusion

In recent years there has been a decline in the rural public life as an increase in subsidies in the local budget and the active restoration of social infrastructure paradoxically pushes villagers away from solving local problems, while the local authorities become the main manager of financial resources and the initiator of projects. It seems that the state financial support for infrastructure projects and the authorities' failure/unwillingness to cooperate with villagers gradually reduce the level of grassroots social activity. Until 2014, some rural communities had a strong belief that "*if we don't solve this problem, no one will help us*"; today the previous (Soviet) dependency sentiments are reinforced by the government funding for rural projects.

The growing return migration from the city to the countryside (Nikulin & Trotsuk, 2017) indicates that the anti-crisis measures taken by the federal authorities to improve the quality of rural life have yielded results, but today it is necessary to reconsider the priority areas of support and partially replace the emphasis from the implementation of large infrastructural projects to the development and accumulation of human and social capital by supporting self-organization in rural areas.

The case of Novoalekseevka shows the importance of partnership between the authorities and the local population in solving rural problems as only joint efforts can improve social capital and people's responsibility for rural infrastructure. The memory of the dangers of the villagers' passivity in matters of the development of their settlements persists; moreover, many local clubs, libraries, kindergartens and schools built during the Soviet period were looted by the local population during the anarchy of the 1990s. In recent decades, the increased state funding for social projects in rural areas has improved the standard of living, but many villagers still lack a responsible attitude to the local infrastructure.

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РУРАЛНО САМООРГАНИЗОВАЊЕ НА КРИМУ

Сажетак

Самоорганизовање је важан показатељ развоја цивилног друштва док атомизација руралних заједница указује на озбиљне проблеме. Рурална криза која је почела на Криму последњих деценија совјетске државе продубљује се јер мере које су предузимале власти у пост-совјетском периоду нису имале и још увек немају жељени ефекат. Рурална подручја настављају да губе економски активно становништво упркос неким центрифугалним миграцијама градског становништва на село. Такозвана ‘оптимизација’ руралне друштвене инфраструктуре, значајне разлике између градских и руралних средина, недостатак послова и други разлози гурнули су многе становнике села у град. Штавише, недостатак стварне моћи власти у руралним областима и механизма за решавање локалних проблема појачава атомизацију и апатију сељака. Повратне миграције (из града на село) указују на то да нису све антикризне мере које предузимају власти узалудне. Међутим, неопходно је преиспитати приоритетне области подршке: данас је нагласак на инфраструктурним пројектима, иако није мање важно развијати људски и социјални капитал заснован на регионално специфичним облицима самоорганизовања у руралним срединама. Позитиван пример таквог развоја су напори власти и невладиних организација да подрже и промовишу руралну сарадњу у степским подручјима кримског полуострва: руралне заједнице неких депресивних насеља успеле су да реше многе друштвено–економске проблеме и такве заједнице заслужују приоритетну подршку.

Кључне речи: руралне области, самоорганизовање, рурална заједница, регионалне резлике, Крим.

BACK TO THE COMMUNITY-LED AGRICULTURE: TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

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Abstract

Nowadays, climate change presents one of the greatest challenges for human development. The impact of climate change is obvious all over the globe where altered hydrological cycles and precipitation variance, changes in air/soil/sea temperatures, increased intensity and frequency of storms, drought, flooding and heat waves, modifications in weeds, pests or microbes, sea level fluctuations, water quality, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity are observed. The most vulnerable sectors are agriculture, forestry and tourism. The agricultural sector is both a victim and a cause of climate change. Therefore, agriculture must both adapt to climate change and adopt changes towards climate change mitigation. Apart from reduction of GHG emissions from agricultural sector and by increasing biological/terrestrial carbon sequestration, the mitigation of climate change can also be tackled by various social innovations and practices which turn the agriculture towards local communities. In this paper the diverse practices in the manner of local endogenous development in which agriculture has a multifunctional role and thus contributes to local and sustainable rural development will be presented. Contemporary practices which are in some rural communities transformed into projects and local policies should be recognized as a valuable climate change mitigation

paths. Local rural and regional development will be presented through the practices of community-supported agriculture and short supply chains in grassroot and public policy context.

Keywords: climate change, agriculture, mitigation, rural and regional development, endogenous development

The Impact of Climate Change

Climate change is a growing threat as it affects all aspects of the environment and the economy as well as threatens the sustainable social development. The effects of climate change are visible in all parts of the world and are manifested in changes in hydrological cycles, air/soil/ocean temperatures, increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, sea level changes, reduction of biodiversity, etc. The Republic of Croatia is considered a climatic “hot spot” where the effects of climate change will be particularly pronounced. The agricultural sector is one of the most vulnerable sectors to climate change. According to the Climate change adaptation strategy in the Republic of Croatia for the period until 2040 with a view to 2070 (Official Gazette 46/2020), the greatest damage in Croatian agriculture is caused by drought, hail, frost and flooding.

As far as the projections for Croatia are concerned, Branković et al. (2010; 2012) expect an increase in temperature of 0.6°C in winter and 1°C in summer in the first period of the future climate (2011–2040). In the second period of the future climate (2041–2070), the expected temperature increase is up to 2°C in the continental part and up to 1.6°C in the south in winter. In addition, an increase of up to 2.4°C is expected in the continental part and up to 3°C in the coastal belt of Croatia in summer. The expected changes in the amount of precipitation in the first period of the future climate (2011–2040) are very small and are limited to smaller areas and vary in their sign depending on the season. The largest change in precipitation is expected in the Adriatic in the autumn, when a decrease in precipitation is predicted. In the second period of the future climate (2041–2070), the changes in the amount of precipitation in Croatia are somewhat more pronounced, so that a decrease is expected in summer in mountainous Croatia and in the coastal region. While in winter, an increase in precipitation is expected in the northwest of Croatia and on the Adriatic (Branković, Güttler, Patarčić & Srnec, 2010; Branković, Patarčić, Güttler & Srnec, 2012).

Climate projections for the agricultural sector for the 21st century predict an increase in yields in colder regions, a decrease in yields in warmer regions, an increase in diseases and pest infestations, a deficit in soil moisture content, crop damage and soil erosion due to heavy rainfall events, as well as numerous other problems. The effects of climate change are also likely to cause additional annual net costs, which will increase over time as air temperatures continue to rise. Agriculture is not only a victim of climate change, but also a contributor to it. Therefore, humanity faces two major challenges in agriculture, namely adapting to climate change and mitigating climate change.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In order to mitigate the climate change, numerous agreements have been adopted with the aim of stabilising the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic effects on the climate system. The most important international agreement on climate protection is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In the mid 1990s, the signatories to the UNFCCC recognised that the reduction of emissions required stricter regulations and concluded the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which introduced legally binding emission reduction targets for industrialised countries for the first time. This protocol expired in 2020. With the Paris Agreement, countries have reaffirmed their commitment to climate protection and agreed on new targets to accelerate efforts to limit global warming. The stated goal of the Paris Agreement is to accelerate action and investment towards a sustainable low-carbon future to limit the increase in global average air temperature to “significantly below” 2°C or up to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial period. A global goal for adaptation to climate change was also defined, namely: strengthening adaptive capacity, enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, to contribute to sustainable development and ensure adequate adaptation measures within the temperature target.

In order to fight climate change, the causes must be identified, namely anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, whose concentration in the atmosphere has risen considerably since the industrial revolution. The calculation of greenhouse gas emissions is done according to the guidelines of the UNFCCC Secretariat and the methodology of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), that includes emissions caused by human activities, whereby greenhouse gases are divided into direct and indirect greenhouse gases. The three most important direct greenhouse gases are: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). The largest contributor to global warming is CO₂ which has a lifetime of several hundred years and whose main anthropogenic sources are deforestation, agricultural production and the use of fossil fuels. The second most effective greenhouse gas is CH₄, which has a lifetime of 12 years. The largest anthropogenic source of methane in agriculture is animal husbandry, i.e. internal fermentation in the digestive process of ruminants and manure management, followed by the burning of crop residues and rice fields, i.e. rice cultivation. N₂O has a lifetime of 120 years, its greenhouse effect is 220 times greater than that of CO₂. The largest anthropogenic sources of N₂O in the agricultural sector are direct N₂O emissions from agricultural soils, direct N₂O emissions from animal husbandry and indirect N₂O emissions from agricultural activities.

The largest contribution of individual greenhouse gas to total national emissions (excluding the LULUCF sector) is respectively: CO₂ (71.2%), CH₄ (15.9%), N₂O (5.9%) and HFCs, PFCs and SF₆ (7%) (Figure 1).

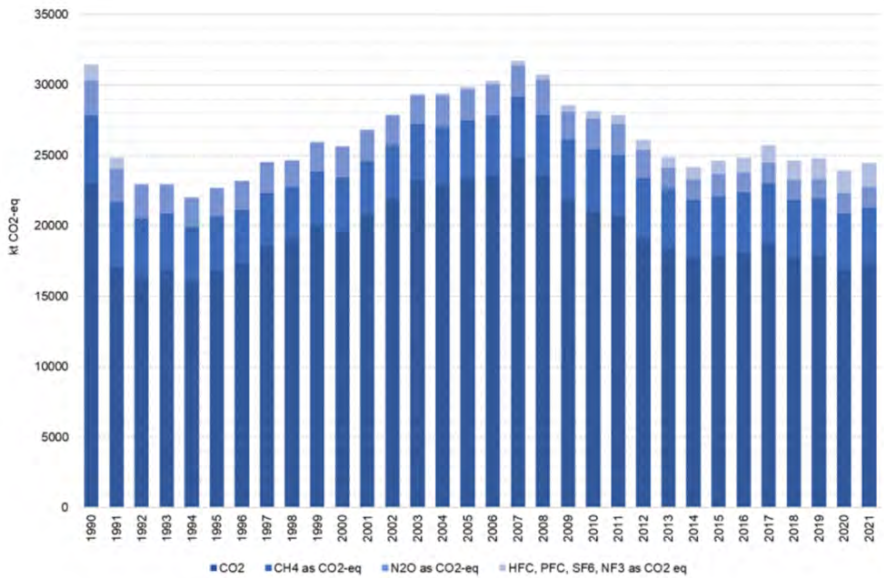


Figure 1. Trend of GHG emissions, by gases (NIR 2023).

When calculating greenhouse gas emissions, all sources and sinks of greenhouse gases are divided into the following sectors Energy, Industrial processes and product use, Agriculture, Waste, Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) and Other. Most of these sectors are sources of greenhouse gas emissions and only the LULUCF sector is a sink. The largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in 2021, excluding the LULUCF sector, was the Energy sector with 65.3%, followed by Industrial processes and product use with 15.9%, Agriculture with 11.3% and Waste with 7.5%, while the removal of greenhouse gases by sinks within the LULUCF sector amounted 22.3% (Figure 2).

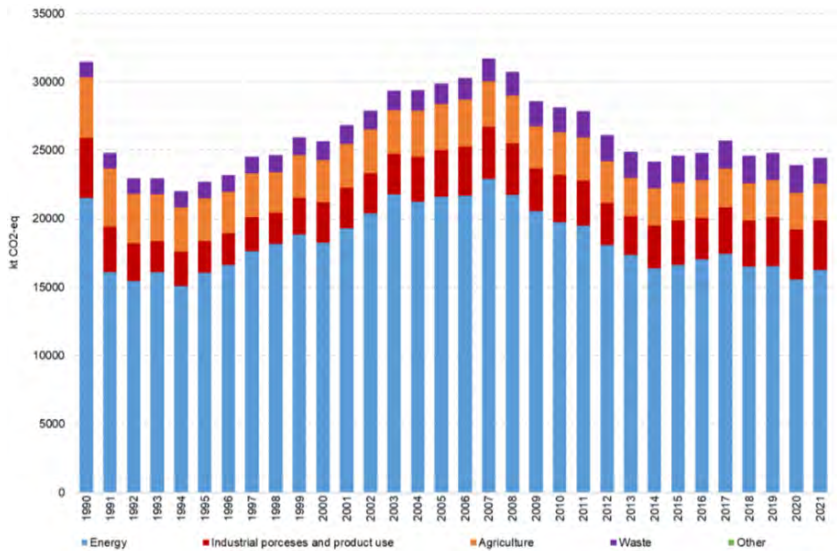


Figure 2. Trend of GHG emissions, by sector.

Climate Change Adaptation Measures

As the observed climate changes have an impact on agricultural production, the implementation of adaptation measures is necessary to ensure food security (Figure 3). Adaptation measures in agriculture can prepare agricultural production for extreme weather conditions and other risks associated with climate change and/or take advantage of the positive aspects of climate change. According to the Climate change adaptation strategy in the Republic of Croatia for the period until 2040 with a view to 2070 (Official Gazette 46/2020), climate change adaptation measures in agriculture are designated as P-01 to P-08 and are divided into three categories based on the overall assessment of individual measures according to their importance: *measures of very high importance* (implementation of the research program for adaptation to climate change in agriculture; increasing the water holding capacity of agricultural soils; implementation of appropriate soil management practices such as conservation or reduced tillage, cultivation of crop varieties and domestic animal breeds that are more resistant to climate change, inclusion of climate change risks in the development of irrigation systems), *of high importance* (application of antierosion measures, renovation and construction of melioration drains) and *of medium importance* (insurance of agricultural production against production losses due to unfavourable climatic conditions).

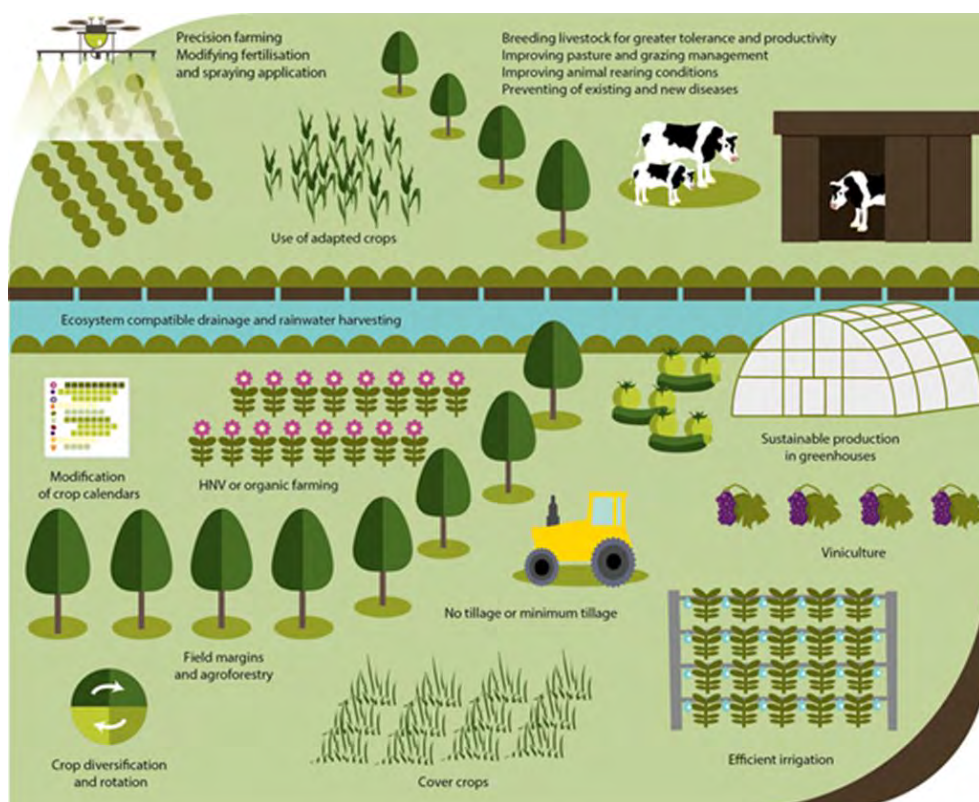


Figure 3. Climate change adaptation measures in agriculture (Source: EEA, 2019).

Climate Change Mitigation Measures

In agriculture, it is possible to contribute to climate change mitigation in two ways, namely by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the Agricultural sector and by increasing the removal of greenhouse gasses by sinks in the LULUCF sector. The trend of agricultural emissions and trend of emission (+) / removal (-) for LULUCF sector is presented in Figure 4.

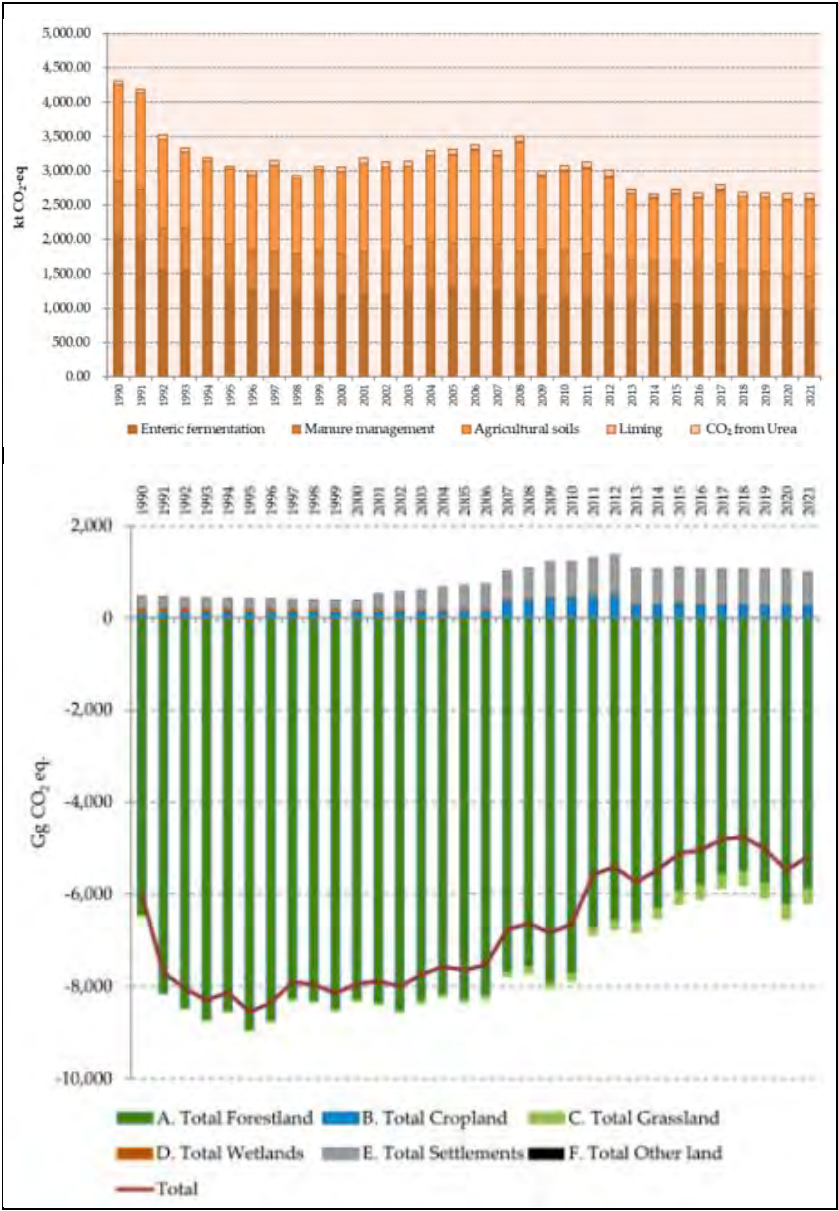


Figure 4. Agriculture emission trend (left) and Emission (+) / removal (-) trend for LULUCF sector (right) (source: NIR 2023).

The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Agriculture sector can be achieved by the reduction of greenhouse gasses in the agricultural sub-sectors: Enteric fermentation (CH_4), Manure management (CH_4 , N_2O), Agricultural soils (N_2O), Liming and urea application (CO_2). Increasing the removal of greenhouse gasses by sinks in the LULUCF sector can be achieved by increasing biological and terrestrial carbon sequestration.

Carbon circulates very intensively between the atmosphere, biosphere and pedosphere in shorter periods of time, in contrast to the very slow exchange of carbon between the atmosphere and hydrosphere. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants sequester atmospheric carbon into their biomass, and the soil, as the most important “organ of the agricultural organism”, transforms all organic residues by decomposition, releasing some of the carbon back into the atmosphere and leaving some of the carbon permanently sequestered in the soil (Figure 5.). Therefore, agricultural soils can be both sources and sinks of carbon, and their role depends on biotic and abiotic factors as well as agricultural practices.

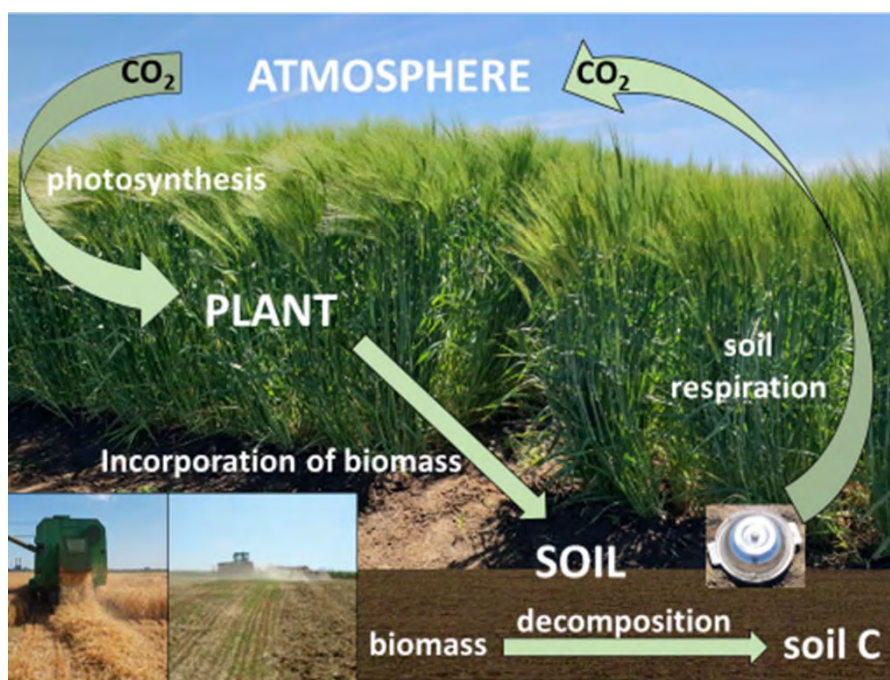


Figure 5. Carbon cycle in agroecosystem (source: Bilandžija, Galić & Zgorelec, 2023.).

The mitigation of climate change can be achieved through the application of sustainable agricultural practices and the implementation of numerous measures that contribute both to reduction of greenhouse gasses from agricultural sector and increase of biological and terrestrial carbon sequestration:

- 1) *Soil Tillage*: affects carbon sequestration in the soil (reduced tillage or no tillage reduces carbon losses through oxidation processes).
- 2) *Mulch*: mulch on the soil surface protects the soil from sun, rain or wind, and if the mulch are post-harvest residues or other organic materials, it

- increases also the soil organic matter content, increases soil fertility and reduces water and wind soil erosion.
- 3) *Fertilization*: great attention is given to the effective application of nitrogen (lower input of nitrogen into the soil results in reduced nitrogen concentration in the soil, which results in a lower emission of N_2O into the atmosphere).
 - 4) *Crop rotation*: wide and diverse crop rotations, as well as various legume cultivation contribute to greater sequestration potential.
 - 5) *Agroforestry*: the integrated cultivation of perennial woody plants, agricultural crops and/or livestock on the same field contributes to a better use of natural resources, greater biodiversity, higher yields, better protection of the soil from wind and water erosion, and a reduction in the losses of nutrients from the soil.
 - 6) *Animal husbandry*:
 - a) *Number, type and lifespan of livestock*: directly related to methane emissions released by manure storage and internal fermentation; a limited number of animals prevents overgrazing which leads to soil degradation and large carbon losses.
 - b) *Type of fodder*: affects the digestibility of feed and thus the emissions released by internal fermentation; in addition, the preparation of fodder on the farm contributes to the reduction of emissions released by the transport of feed from the place of production to the farm.
 - c) *Animal waste management systems*: processing techniques for solid and liquid organic fertilizers need to be improved, as this affects the efficiency of organic fertilizers, while inadequate manure storage and improper manure handling encourage the release of emissions; therefore, covering the manure storage area reduces direct methane and ammonia emissions.
 - d) *Anaerobic decomposition of manure/slurry and production of biogas*: by introducing a biogas plant, methane emissions from the disposal of manure/slurry can be reduced and energy from renewable sources can be produced at the same time.
 - 7) *Biomass burning*: a ban on biomass burning can have an impact on CH_4 and N_2O emissions which account for around 12% of greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector.
 - 8) *Minimal use of fossil fuels*: contributes to the reduction of CO_2 emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels.
 - 9) *Changes in consumer habits and local food systems*:
 - a) *Type of food*: by reducing the consumption of meat and meat products and increasing the proportion of fruit, vegetables and cereals in the human diet.
 - b) *Locally produced food*: the consumption of locally produced food has an impact on reducing emissions caused by the transportation of food from the place of production to the consumer.

Local Food as Politics and Policy

Ideas of more sustainable and more resilient social and economic systems date back in the early 1970s when scholars such as E.F. Schumacher, Herbert Gruhl, Barry Commoner, Fritjof Capra and Club of Rome organization started to oppose the unlimited growth and offer ideas for an alternative. However, at the policy level, almost two decades had to pass in which the ideas started to grow timidly into policies and citizens' consciousness. In the 1990s, two important things changed in the area of local development and sustainability. Local governance adopted a bottom-up and endogenous approach that paved the way for decentralized decision-making and subsidiarity. Secondly, the environmental social movement has democratized so that the goals such as sustainability have become local efforts, often addressed by citizens, civic associations and other local actors. The idea of more sustainable and resilient social and economic systems has inspired many local communities to develop their own ideas on how to bring about such changes. For example, the idea of local food (e.g. the Slow Food movement) that emerged in the late 1980s was one of the first ways of resisting the negative effects of that globalization in the food system. This has been followed by numerous initiatives, practices and policies that reform the system of food production, procurement, and consumption at local and regional levels to reduce the negative impacts on the climate and the environment and to strengthen the resilience of local farmers and rural economies. The food system is, of course, only one of many layers in the social system of environmental resource consumption. However, it is a mobilising issue which emerges as one's personal policy, especially in high income countries. Changes in the food system are often interpreted in civil society debates as concepts of food sovereignty or food system literacy (Kimura, 2011) and studied at the academic level within agroecological approaches as well as emancipatory rural policies (Scoones et al., 2018).

Short supply chains and community-supported agriculture are initiatives which address carbon footprint issue as well as social responsibility issue from the local level. This kind of local solidarity partnerships between producers and consumers can also provide a support for community development (Pešak, 2021). This type of initiatives began in Japan in the early 1970s, when citizens organized *teikei* groups to oppose agriculture based on fossil fuel energy, mechanization, chemicals, and large-scale monoculture farming (Orlić, 2014, p. 76). Similar initiatives have emerged across Europe and North America in recent decades under various names (*community supported agriculture* – CSA, *Solidarische Landwirtschaft*, *gruppi di acquisto solidale* – GAS, *association pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne* – AMAP, *grupe solidarne razmjene*, *solidarne ekološke grupe* etc.). They all play a role in transforming lifestyles and have the potential to reshape local economies in times of crisis (Grasseni, 2013). In addition to grassroots initiatives aimed at encouraging farmers and consumers to have an active and equal roles in the market, there are emerging local policies which are introducing institutional changes in patterns of public food procurement. From Sweden to Romania, more and more municipalities are promoting local and organic producers through public procurement which shows the power of grassroots initiatives (of preferring local,

organic, direct-from-farmer food provision) to grow into the system and to gradually bring it forward to the socially and environmentally more responsible policies (Lindström, Lundberg & Marklund, 2020; Bucea-Manea-Țoniș, 2021).

Increasing awareness of climate change also shapes the consumer attitudes (and if affordable, also the practices), thus the comparative advantages of short supply chains (contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to viability of local farmers as well as to higher food quality) make them a feasible practice in grassroot initiatives as well as in green public procurement processes. Short supply chains offer the opportunity to promote family farms and create ecologically and economically sustainable agricultural production. The increasing presence of the term 'short supply chains' in Croatian policy and related documents is in line with the aforementioned trends (Pešak, 2021).

Short supply chains are a widely used concept in the European context and their potential to contribute to solving a variety of rural development problems. However, there is a need to identify and monitor the experience of actors in short supply chains as well as the implementation of measures and infrastructural opportunities for its establishment (Pešak, 2021, p. 44).

The institutional support is specifically important for establishing the short supply chains and incorporating also the social and environmental objectives while creating new practices of green procurement.

Conclusion

Apart from the mitigation of climate change by reduction of GHG emissions from agricultural sector and by increasing biological/terrestrial carbon sequestration, it can also be tackled by various social innovations and practices which turn the agriculture back towards local communities. This paper argues that we cannot leave the practices of mitigating climate change to technological solutions only. The changes need to come from the main actors – society. Policies and social movements in the last three decades reformed towards endogenous development approach and high environmental awareness where agriculture has a multifunctional role and thus contributes to sustainability and resilience of local communities, rural as well as urban. Contemporary practices such as community supported agriculture, short supply chains and green public procurement are recognized as a valuable climate change mitigation paths. However, it is still to be seen whether those numerous and valuable civic and public initiatives will reach the critical point from which the deep turn toward climate neutrality will be sprawled to reform many other human practices crucial for climate change mitigation.

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ПОВРАТАК ПОЉОПРИВРЕДЕ У ЗАЈЕДНИЦУ: ОДГОВОР НА КЛИМАТСКЕ ПРОМЕНЕ

Сажетак

У данашње време климатске промене представљају један од највећих изазова за развој човечанства. Утицај климатских промјена видљив је у свим деловима света где су забележене промене у хидролошким циклусима и варијабилност у падавинама, промене у температурама ваздуха, тла и мора, повећани интензитет и учесталост елементарних непогода попут олујних невремена, суша, поплава и топлотних таласа, модификација корова, штеточина и микроба, флукуације у нивоима мора, нарушен квалитет вода, деградација тла и губитак биоразноликости. Најрањивији сектори под утицајем климатских промена су пољопривреда, шумарство и туризам. Пољопривредни сектор је истовремено жртва и узрочник климатских промена. Стога, пољопривреда се мора прилагодити климатским променама али и допринети њиховом ублажавању. Уз ублажавање климатских промена смањењем емисија гасова из пољопривредног сектора и повећањем биолошке / копнене секвестрације угљеника, климатска криза може бити ублажена и различитим социјалним иновацијама и праксама које окрећу пољопривреду локалним заједницама. У овом раду су приказане различите праксе у виду локалног ендеогеног развоја у којем пољопривреда има вишефункционалну улогу и тиме доприноси локалном и одрживом руралном развоју. Савремене праксе које су у неким руралним заједницама претворене у пројекте и локалне политике требало би да буду препознате као вредни начини ублажавања климатских промена. Локални рурални и регионални развој је представљен кроз неколико пракси као што су пољопривреда потпомогнута заједницом, локалне сеоске занатлије и локалне енергетске задруге.

Кључне речи: климатске промене, пољопривреда, рурални развој, регионални развој, ендеогени развој.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN SERBIA: INTERNET ACCESS AND SKILLS IN RURAL AREAS⁶⁵

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are an inevitable force of the contemporary social-economic development. The Internet is becoming the “default” medium of communication, performing various activities and doing business. On the other hand, the development of technology and the complexity of applications require an increasingly developed infrastructure and advanced digital skills. The digital divide refers to unequal opportunities to access, use and benefit from ICTs. Although the regional and urban-rural digital divide is decreasing with the growth of Internet access, the inequalities persist. This limits the development possibilities of rural areas and exposes the population and communities to the risks of social exclusion. The subject of the paper is the internet access and skills of the rural population of Serbia as two key prerequisites for rural development based on new technologies. In addition to analyzing the urban-rural divide, regional differences among rural areas in terms of access and skills are pointed out. The analysis is based on the data of the Republic Institute of Statistics (Population Census 2022, the use of ICTs surveys, regional statistics), as well as the use of other sources.

Keywords: digital divide, infrastructure, skills, rural areas, regional inequalities, Serbia

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Introduction

The application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is an inevitable factor of social development today. The Internet is becoming the “default” medium of communication, performing various activities and doing business, and information the most important development resource. Therefore, the relationship between this development and social inequalities is an important research question. There are differences in possibilities of the Internet access and usage between different categories of population, communities, and regions. Unequal access to the Internet affects unequal opportunities to participate in different areas of society, which reinforces existing inequalities and unequal distribution of resources (Van Dijk, 2012, p. 197).

In this paper, we deal with the assumptions of effective use of the Internet (access and skills) in rural areas of Serbia. The application of ICTs by companies and individuals is significant for less developed regions (including rural areas), which could thus mitigate the negative effect of some other conditions (spatial distances, underdeveloped infrastructure). The Serbian village has been facing serious problems (demographic, economic, social) for decades. Falling behind in the application of ICTs in these areas reduces the possibilities of social development and leads to the growth of social exclusion. The research of the conditions (technical, economic, social, cultural) should show the obstacles and limitations to the application of ICTs in the village and indicate the measures that could be applied to improve those conditions.

The subject matter of this paper is the internet access and skills of the rural population of Serbia. We start from the assumption that the development of technology and the complexity of the application require an increasingly developed infrastructure and advanced digital skills so that the Internet can be used for various purposes and that individuals can benefit from it. The study is based on the analysis of data from the Republic Institute of Statistics (Census 2022, the use of ICTs surveys, regional statistics) and reports of state bodies and agencies.

The paper will first briefly outline the theoretical framework of digital inequality research and the most significant characteristics of the use of digital technologies in rural areas. After that, the basic features of Internet access and computer literacy in rural areas of Serbia will be presented. In addition, the regional aspect of the involvement of villages in the “digital society” will be indicated.

Theoretical Framework

Research on inequality in the use of ICTs (especially the Internet) is a new and very dynamic field in contemporary social sciences. The rapid development of technology, new forms of application in all areas of social life and the expansion of the circle of users present a challenge for researchers because the assumptions, purposes and benefits of using the Internet are changing. In this sense, a shift in the focus of research can be observed (e.g. from access to skills and then to benefits), as well as the resurgence of some research problems (e.g. renewed importance of an access that was considered to have been surpassed by approaching saturation).

The term digital divide is used to denote “inequalities in access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), mostly the Internet” (Castells, 2003) among different social groups, communities and societies. There are three levels of digital divide: the first level refers to access, the second to skills and use, and the third to the benefits gained using the Internet (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Norris, 2001; Hargittai 2002; Castells, 2003; Van Dijk, 2012, Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). In the explanation of the digital divide, the theories of the information or the network society are applied (Van Dijk, 2012; Van Dijk, 2013; Castells, 2000), theories on the diffusion of innovations in society (Roger, 2003), theories dealing with social inequalities (e.g. Bourdieu’s theory of capital) and the like.

The initial research on digital inequalities referred to unequal opportunities to access the Internet (division into haves and have-nots), but soon the focus moved to what people do on the Internet. Research shows that “people with better social positions and higher education use significantly more so-called information and career related Internet applications that help them forwards in their work, careers, business and studies, while people with the lesser positions and lower education use more entertainment applications” (Van Dijk, 2012, p. 202). Over time, the Internet becomes a common way of performing various activities in society, so the use of the Internet affects the extent to which an individual benefits or suffers harm.⁶⁶ “Third-level divides, therefore, relate to gaps in individuals’ capacity to translate their internet access and use into favourable offline outcomes” (Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015, p. 30). Inequalities in access, skills, use and benefit gained from the Internet are manifested depending on socioeconomic status, gender, education, work status, household structure, age, motivation, Internet experience.

There are two hypotheses on the future of inequality: normalization (internet penetration has the shape of an S curve and inequalities decrease over time) and stratification (new forms of inequality are created and existing forms are maintained) (Norris, 2001). Van Dijk distinguishes four successive types of access to digital technologies: motivation to access the Internet, physical and material access, digital skills and use. While the gap in motivation and physical access is narrowing, the gap in digital skills and usage is widening (Van Dijk, 2012, pp. 197–204). On the other hand, Castells points out that the initial differences in access are decreasing, but they are being replaced by the difference in the availability of broadband Internet because more and more complex applications require fast and stable flow (Castells, 2003, p. 280).

⁶⁶ The benefits that individuals (don’t) achieve by using the Internet can be: economic (shopping at better prices, finding a job, higher earnings); social (meeting other people, maintaining contact with friends and relatives, meeting partners online), educational (searching for information related to education, attending online courses), political (political participation and online voting), institutional (easier contact with state authorities, information about the work of the authorities, obtaining information about possible benefits for oneself, seeking information regarding health), spatial (leading a mobile life) and cultural (participation in cyber culture) (Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015, pp. 37–38, Van Dijk, 2013, p. 35).

Although relative differences (in skills and use) among people who have the access are getting more significant, “the absolute exclusion of access to digital media remains important, even in the developed countries” (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 31). Research shows that those who do not use the Internet prevail among the less educated and those with lower household income, and the most significant predictor of not using the Internet is age (Kappeler, Festic & Latzer, 2020, p. 16). Bearing in mind the socioeconomic characteristics of the Serbian village, special attention should be given to those who are not users (have-nots).

Digitalization and Rural Development

Digitalization is one of the key forces influencing development worldwide (EBRD, 2021, p. 8). That is why the regional and urban-rural division still remains significant; inequalities in the spread of Internet technology create unequal opportunities for development, which has economic and social consequences (Stern, Adams & Elsasser, 2009, p. 395) and thus deepen the already existing inequalities (EBRD, 2021, p. 35).

From theories on the diffusion of innovations, it is known that those who first adopt the Internet benefit the most (Roger, 2003; Van Dijk, 2012; Castells, 2003).⁶⁷ The development of infrastructure and the use of ICTs first spread in urban areas and in developed regions. With the growth of internet penetration in society, the digital divide between rural and urban areas is decreasing. EBRD data show that the digital divide is more pronounced in societies with lower internet penetration (Table 1).

Table 1. Digital divides are larger in economies with less internet penetration.

Country	Overall percentage of households with internet access, 2019	Differences between percentage of households with internet access in rural and urban areas (percentage points)	Country	Overall percentage of households with internet access, 2019	Differences between percentage of households with internet access in rural and urban areas (percentage points)
MNG	43.30	32.40	SRB	80.14	16.00
MDA	60.76	23.50	HRV	80.52	9.70
UKR	61.88	31.50	CZE	81.13	3.80
BIH	72.03	8.60	FRA	84.01	0.90
MNE	74.25	17.20	HUN	86.20	7.40
BGR	75.07	19.70	SVN	88.96	11.40
ARM	76.00	2.80	KAZ	90.34	1.40
RUS	76.91	12.20	EST	90.42	2.10
BLR	78.59	17.60	DEU	90.80	0.10
MKD	79.32	3.70			

Source: EBRD, 2021, <https://2021.tr-ebird.com/digital-divides/>

⁶⁷ More on the theory of diffusion of innovations, especially regarding rural areas, see: Šljukić & Janković, 2015, pp. 206–229.

Despite the narrowing of the urban-rural digital divide, inequalities in access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs remain significant (OECD, 2018, p. 11; Eurostat, 2022; EBRD, 2021, p. 35; Stern et al., 2009, p. 413). Data for EU in 2021 show that the values of all digital society indicators are lower for the rural compared to the urban population: broadband internet access, frequency of internet use, devices used for access, internet activities, skills and online shopping (Eurostat, 2022).

Based on a review of the literature on rural development in the digital age, Saleminck, Strijker & Bosworth (2017, p. 362) identify two basic broad themes of research: access and involvement. The first theme refers to the supply – “to what extent places and regions are digitally connected and thereby derive economic benefits“. The second theme refers to the demand and is user-oriented: to what extent people have the knowledge, attitude, skills and aspirations to be involved in a “digital rural society”. In that sense, the key prerequisites for ICT-based rural development are access (quality and availability of infrastructure) and digital skills (Feurich et al., 2023, p. 3). Analysis by Stern et al. (2009, p. 412) shows that “the negative consequences of living in rural areas stem from a lack of access to or use of advanced Internet technologies.”

Although access to broadband internet in rural areas is “essential for individuals and communities to reap the benefits of the digital economy” (OECD, 2018, p. 62), differences in the quality of infrastructure between rural and urban areas persist and even grow (Feurich et al., 2023, p. 4). Development of ICTs infrastructure in these areas is hampered by several factors: infrastructure development costs in rural areas are high, and the return on investment due to less population density is lower than in urban areas so private providers may not be interested in these areas or may charge higher prices. Public policy measures can be different: providing services directly by the state, compensating providers for delivering these services in rural areas, or requiring providers to equalize prices for all users, thereby some users indirectly subsidizing others (EBRD, 2021, p. 35). Together with infrastructure, access to the Internet is also influenced by the material status of residents of rural areas – the availability of funds for the purchase of devices (especially more advanced ones) and subscriptions. On the other hand, whether users will use the Internet, what they will do on it and what benefits they will get from it, depends on their motivation, attitudes, knowledge and skills. Inhabitants of rural areas do not live in a technologically saturated environment, the activities that many of them engage in do not encourage the intensive use of ICTs. “If there is no need for an innovation, it will not be adopted, and if the costs of the innovation are too high, it cannot be adopted” (Šljukić & Janković, 2015, p. 211).

In addition, the structure of the rural population affects Internet use. As already stated, “older individuals and those with lower levels of education and income are increasingly being left behind” (EBRD, 2021, p. 5), and precisely those categories of the population are represented above average in rural areas. Apart from resources available to individuals, the resources of the community are also important. Thus, Castells points out that children grow up in different technological environments, so that, for example, differences in knowledge associated with educational inequalities

(technological equipment of schools, quality of teachers, pedagogical styles) will affect future inequalities (Castells, 2003, p. 284). In that regard, the undeveloped infrastructure, the specifics of rural life and the structure of the population have a cumulative effect on the use of the Internet among the rural population. Finally, rural areas are not homogenous – there are significant differences between and within them (Stern et al., 2009, p. 413) which should be taken into account both during research and when designing development policies. Vulnerable groups in rural areas are “rural children, rural youth, rural women, older people, rural patients, or people living in remote areas, such as employees and teleworkers in rural areas, as well as farmers and entrepreneurs” (Salemink et al., 2017, p. 366). The risk of digital exclusion of these groups is increased: as the Internet becomes more and more the default communication medium, the risk of digital exclusion of the members of these groups increases, so they have to rely on their informal contacts (Chen, 2013; according to Roberts et al., 2017, p. 380).

When it comes to the lag in the adoption of new technologies by enterprises in rural areas, the factors that influence it are the distance of rural enterprises from central markets, as well as the industry, sector, geographical context, human capital of the enterprise and the specifics of the technology (Salemink et al., 2017, p. 366). The development of digital infrastructure can be “particularly beneficial for small firms and their workers” (EBRD, 2021, p. 5). However, digitalization also brings risks in business – local companies are exposed to competition from a wider market (e.g. through e-commerce) (EBRD, 2021, p. 8). This can reduce the chances of successful business operation for local firms, but competition can also boost their business (Salemink et al., 2017, p. 364). The availability of information on open positions for jobs through the Internet can influence the growth of migration from rural areas, but developed infrastructure and other conditions can encourage individuals (from villages and cities) to start businesses in rural areas, to employ themselves and others.

Access and Skills of the Rural Population in Serbia

Rural development cannot be viewed independently from the overall development of society. According to the value of the Network Readiness Index for 2022, Serbia ranks 55th out of 131 ranked countries (Network Readiness Index). Tables 2A and 2B show the prerequisites and outcomes of the use of ICTs in Serbia and several selected countries (developed and countries in transition). In terms of conditions, the main limitations of digital development in Serbia are infrastructure and skills. When it comes to outcomes, the use of ICTs by individuals and companies shows a weaker performance when compared to the use in the selected countries.

Table 2A. Preconditions for the use of digital technologies (enablers).

Economies	Enablers				
	Overall	Infrastructure	Skills	Regulation	Government services
USA	95.4	100.0	84.3	100.0	97.5
Estonia	94.7	88.4	93.9	96.3	100.0
Germany	84.3	89.8	79.1	96.3	71.9
Russia	74.6	71.5	76.1	67.6	83.1
Croatia	68.1	67.8	48.1	75.7	81.0
Serbia	68.0	59.9	50.5	82.5	79.1
North Macedonia	59.3	52.2	36.5	71.7	77.0

Table 2B. The use of digital technologies by individuals and firms (outcomes).

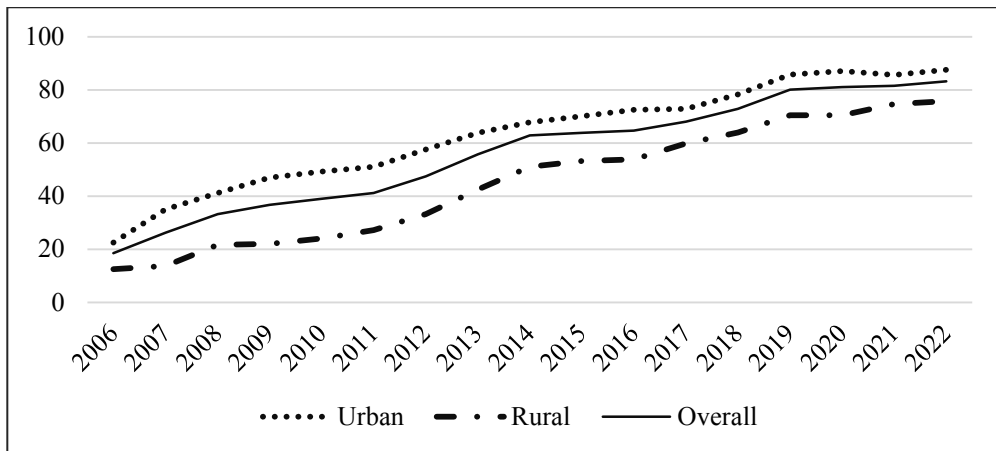
Economies	Outcomes		
	Overall	Individuals	Firms
USA	89.9	86.2	93.7
Estonia	89.7	90.2	89.3
Germany	92.3	84.6	100.0
Russia	62.8	58.2	67.5
Croatia	73.8	65.4	82.1
Serbia	60.8	42.0	79.6
North Macedonia	47.7	41.6	53.8

Source: EBRD, 2021, p. 14, 15.

Internet Access in Rural Areas

As already stated, the differences between rural and urban areas are more pronounced in economies with less internet penetration. Once a certain level of internet access is exceeded, these differences decrease (EBRD 2021, p. 35). SORS data show the rural-urban gap in Serbia in the period 2006-2022 (Graph 1).⁶⁸ The initial difference in internet access between urban and rural areas (10%) increased as the access grew faster in urban areas, so that in 2010 the difference was 25.2%. After that, the gap gradually decreases and in 2022 it amounts to 11.8%. In 2022, 75.8% of households in rural areas had access to the Internet.

⁶⁸ The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia uses the division of the settlements into “urban” and “others” based on the administrative criteria. The data about “other” settlements automatically apply to the rural ones.



Graph 1. Households with internet access by type of settlement, Serbia, 2006–2022. (%)

Source: SORS, 2006–2022.

In addition, rural areas lag behind when it comes to fast and reliable Internet access necessary for using advanced technologies and performing various activities. According to the analysis of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Telecommunications conducted in 2019, there are more than half a million households in rural areas in Serbia where there is no economic interest of commercial operators for the development of infrastructure based on the next generation approach (NGA) (Government of RS, 2020). The data shown in Table 3 indicate the heterogeneity of the Serbian village and the problems it faces. A large number of small rural settlements (1,370) with an average of 52 households do not have access to broadband internet at all. In the second category there are even more villages (1,518) which are slightly larger (on average 166 households), where more than three fifths of the households do not have a possibility to gain access. For these two groups of villages, state incentive measures for the infrastructure construction are needed. On the other hand, in the last two categories (a total of 1,345 medium and large villages), the situation with infrastructure is such that it does not require the state intervention.

This unevenness of rural development is influenced by geographical conditions: in hilly and mountainous areas, villages are far from cities and distant from each other, so the construction of infrastructure is more expensive than when it comes to lowland villages, especially those near larger cities. Also, the overall development of Serbia after the World War II (both during the period of socialism and during the transition) led to the rural demographic decline (more in Mitrović, 1998; Mitrović, 2015; Šljukić & Janković, 2015). This process, accompanied by growing senilization of villages, has affected the whole of Serbia, but is particularly pronounced in the hilly and mountainous areas of western and southeastern Serbia. The problem is far more complex than the lack of internet infrastructure, so when designing policies for the development of rural areas, the economic and social conditions of rural areas must be taken into account and the appropriateness of various measures assessed accordingly.

Table 3. Presentation of settlement categorization by degree of fixed broadband infrastructure availability.

Broadband access	Number of settlements	Number of households	% of the total number of households	Average number of households	The need to implement an incentive measure
Without any fixed broadband access	1 370	70 712	2.84	52	There is
Less than 40% households with the possibility of 30 Mbps+ access	1 518	251 960	10.13	166	There is
40% to 60% households with the possibility of 30 Mbps+ access	436	229 970	9.25	527	Potentially there is*
More than 60% households with the possibility of 30 Mbps+ access	989	894 895	35.98	905	There isn't
More than 40% households with the possibility of 100 Mbps+ access	356	1 039 584	41.80	2 920	There isn't

* It is necessary to monitor the situation and intervene as necessary, after finishing with settlements from the previous two categories Source: Government RS, 2020.

Computer Literacy of the Rural Population of Serbia

In addition to access, appropriate skills are necessary to use the Internet effectively. Census (from 2022) provides data on the “computer literacy” of the population of Serbia over the age of 15. Computer literacy is defined as person’s ability to use basic computer applications in performing everyday tasks (at work, at school, at home) (SORS, 2023, p. 24). It was researched whether a person knows how to perform three operations – processing text and creating tables, searching for information on the Internet, and whether a person has any knowledge in the field of electronic communications (sending and receiving electronic mail, using the applications like Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, etc.). Based on the answers, people are classified into one of three categories: computer literate people (they can perform all three basic activities), persons who partially know how to use a computer (they can perform one or two of these operations) and computer illiterate persons (they cannot perform any of the mentioned operations).⁶⁹

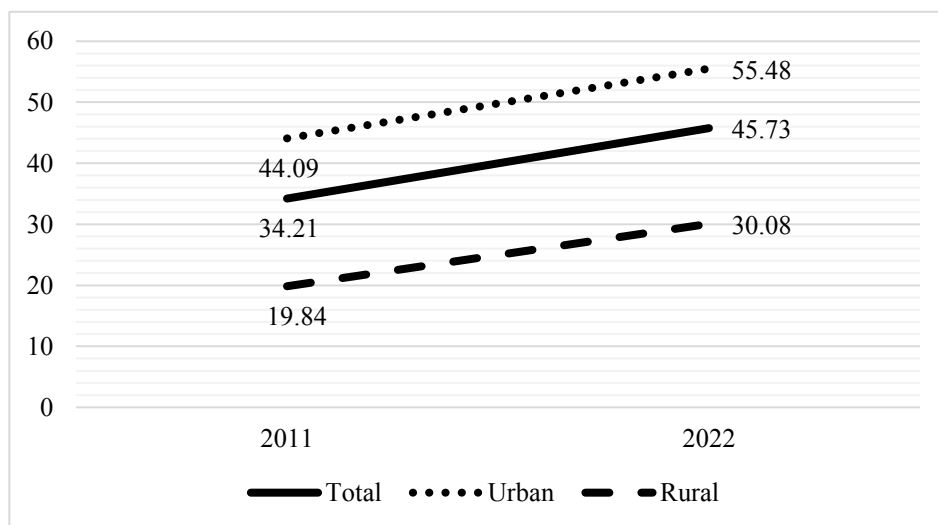
⁶⁹ The concept of “computer literacy”, operationalized in this way, is narrower than the concepts of digital literacy, digital skills, information literacy.

Table 4. Population aged 15 and over according to computer literacy and type of settlement (Serbia, 2022).

Type of settlement	Computer literate persons	Persons who partially know how to use a computer	Computer illiterate persons	Unknown	Total
Urban settlements	1 945 059	896 684	643 342	21060	3 506 145
%	55.48	25.57	18.35	0.60	100.00
Other	657 491	789 140	733 383	5392	2 185 406
%	30.08	36.11	33.56	0.25	100.00
Total	2 602 550	1 685 824	1 376 725	26 452	5 691 551
	45.73	29.62	24.19	0.46	100.00

Source: SORS database.

In the year of the census, 45.73% citizens of Serbia over the age of 15 can be considered computer literate (Table 4). The difference between urban and other (rural) population is pronounced: the share of computer literate population is 25% higher in urban than in rural population; among the the village residents, 30.08% have the necessary skills. One third of the rural population cannot perform a single operation on a computer or mobile phone.

**Graph 2.** Computer-literate population over the age of 15 (Serbia, 2011, 2022)

Source: SORS, 2013, p. 140; SORS 2023, p. 169.

The comparison of data from the 2011 and 2022 censuses (Graph 2), shows that differences between rural and urban areas, when it comes to computer literacy, are not decreasing. The share of literates is growing in both categories, but the difference between them even increased by 1.15% in this period.

Based on the presented data on the internet access, broadband network coverage and computer literacy, it can be concluded, firstly, that the urban-rural digital gap in Serbia is still not decreasing and, secondly, that the population in rural areas largely

lacks the conditions for inclusion into the digital society: one quarter of households do not have access to the Internet, in 1 370 settlements there is no access to broadband Internet, and less than a third of rural residents have basic skills. In the continuation of this paper, based on the available statistical data, we will point to another dimension through which these inequalities are refracted, namely regional inequalities.

Rural areas in a regional perspective

Serbia is a country with very distinct regional inequalities. Measured by gross domestic product per inhabitant, at the NUTS2 level in 2021, the differences amounted to 31%, and at the NUTS3 level (districts) – 36% (SORS, 2023a, p. 11).⁷⁰ More developed regions have more funds for infrastructural development, more favourable conditions for the development of new economic activities, application of advanced technologies and business, more educated workforce and retain or attract a younger population. Therefore, they represent a larger and richer market that attracts investors in the development of digital infrastructure, have a population that has certain skills and a socio-economic environment that encourages individuals and companies to use ICTs. On the other side, underdeveloped regions lack the conditions and resources to attract investments, improve business conditions, retain the population and attract an educated workforce. The demand for telecommunication services is lower in these regions, users have less ability to pay, the structure of the population is unfavourable in terms of acquiring skills, and the social and economic environment does not motivate individuals to advanced use of the Internet for various purposes. Therefore, they cannot take advantage of new technologies to accelerate their development to the extent that more developed regions can. The consequence is that regional inequalities are preserved or increased, which requires appropriate regional development policies that would encourage the competitiveness of underdeveloped areas and raise the quality of life of their residents.

To what extent are these regional inequalities manifested when it comes to the Internet access and digital skills in rural areas of Serbia? Figure 1 in the attachment shows the coverage of fixed broadband Internet in Serbia: areas where there is no access at all include southwestern and southeastern Serbia, while areas with a higher share of broadband Internet users are concentrated around the capital, the north of the country and larger cities. The data in Table 5 show pronounced regional differences at the NUTS3 level: the ratio between Belgrade District and Toplica District is 2.25:1. Four districts where $\frac{3}{4}$ or more households have access to broadband internet (fixed or mobile) are in the north of the country (Vojvodina and Belgrade) and have a GDP above the national average.⁷¹ On the other hand, the

⁷⁰ “The dispersion of regional GDP per capita, according to the Eurostat methodology, shows the average (absolute) difference between national and regional GDP per capita. A lower value of this indicator indicates a slight decrease in the regional dispersion of GDP, i.e. increasing regional differences in the level of GDP per inhabitant” (SORS, 2023a, p. 11).

⁷¹ Bor district has the highest GDP per capita, which is not followed by broadband internet coverage. The explanation should be sought in the economic and social transition of Serbian society. The

districts with the lowest share of households with access are in the most under-developed, southeastern part of Serbia.

Table 5. Access to broadband Internet in Serbia by district.

	Development of GDP per capita* (level index PC=100) 2021	Broadband internet by household
NUTS3		
Belgrade district	162.6	104.32
South Bačka district	113.0	94.01
Srem district	100.1	76.76
South Banat district	100.8	74.76
Nišava district	77.0	72.51
Šumadija district	76.5	71.14
Raška district	53.5	70.22
Central Banat district	75.8	69.37
North Bačka district	86.9	69.03
Podunavlje district	59.0	67.23
Braničevo district	78.0	67.00
Pomoravlje district	67.2	66.48
Mačva district	58.8	63.06
West Bačka district	71.1	62.84
Pčinja district	47.1	61.20
Kolubara district	73.1	60.96
Moravica district	83.0	60.52
Rasina district	67.3	60.26
Bor district	171.9	56.35
Zlatibor district	75.4	55.21
North Banat district	73.4	51.96
Zaječar district	57.0	51.78
Jablanica district	52.2	50.29
Pirot district	77.2	49.90
Toplica district	56.6	46.35

Source: RATEL, 2023, p. 80; SORS, 2023a, p. 11, 15.

These inequalities are also manifested when it comes to the computer literacy of the population. Table 6 shows the districts of Serbia with data on the development of the district, the computer literate rural population and their average age. Age is included because research shows that older age is one of the most significant predictors of not

economy of this district is based on the work of the former socialist mining and smelting giant, which stagnated for two and a half decades, and after privatization has been operating successfully for the last five years. GDP per capita in the Bor district was 81.6% in 2015, and 171.9% of the national average in 2021. This discontinuity in development, along with other consequences of the transition, resulted in a 43.1% decrease in the number of inhabitants in the period 1991–2022 (SORS, 2024, pp. 3–4). The average age of the inhabitants is 47.51, which is 3.6 years more than the national average. The age of the rural population is 51.85 years (the second district in Serbia in terms of the age of the rural population). It is one of the three areas where the share of computer literate population in the rural population is about one fifth.

using the Internet. The most important reasons are the lack of interest, not seeing the usefulness of the Internet, then the feeling that they are too old for it, the lack of knowledge, and confusion with technology (Kappeler et al., 2020, p. 20). Older people, especially in rural areas, have not had the opportunity to acquire skills during schooling or in the workplace and are more likely to have less knowledge about the advantages of using the Internet, and they have fewer opportunities to encounter new technologies in their immediate environment.⁷²

Table 6. Computer literacy of the rural population by district, Serbia, 2022 (%).

	GDP development per inhabitant* (index level RS=100) 2021	Average age of the rural population (Serbia all 43.85)	Computer literate rural population (%) (Serbia all 45.72)
Republic of Serbia	100.0	45.25	30.08
NUTS3			
Belgrade district	162.6	43.49	39.47
Pčinj district	47.1	41.12	38.26
South Bačka district	113.0	43.11	35.18
Raška district	53.5	41.30	33.11
Srem district	100.1	44.40	32.62
Nišava district	77.0	46.12	31.54
Rasina district	67.3	46.79	30.25
North Bačka district	86.9	44.74	29.59
Šumadija district	76.5	46.23	29.00
South Banat district	100.8	44.50	28.15
Zlatibor district	75.4	46.39	28.00
West Bačka district	71.1	46.42	27.98
Moravica district	83.0	47.45	27.73
Central Banat district	75.8	44.81	27.69
Jablanica district	52.2	45.50	27.55
Mačva district	58.8	44.87	27.47
Podunavlje district	59.0	44.61	26.61
Pomoravlje district	67.2	47.96	26.47
North Banat district	73.4	44.58	24.87
Toplica district	56.6	47.01	24.77
Kolubara district	73.1	46.35	22.37
Pirot district	77.2	51.43	21.91
Bor district	171.9	51.85	20.56
Braničevo district	78.0	48.99	20.52
Zaječar district	57.0	52.59	19.53

Sources: SORS, 2023, pp. 169–213; SORS, 2023b, pp. 58–722; SORS, 2023a, p. 11, 15.

⁷² Two fifths of the oldest citizens of Serbia (65–74) used the Internet in 2022 (RZS 2022, 32), and their falling behind in relation to the first and next age category is not decreasing. More about the use of the Internet in Serbia by the elderly in Stojić, 2017.

The data show that the share of computer-literate rural population is twice as large in the Belgrade district compared to the Zaječar district. Additionally, what can be seen from the attached data is that computer literacy is associated with the average age of the rural population. If we observe five districts with the highest share of computer literacy, we see that in all of them the average age is lower than the national average for rural areas. Of those five districts, three are developed, but two are underdeveloped (about half of the national average GDP per capita). However, these are the regions with the youngest rural population (Pčinj and Raška district). On the other hand, districts with the highest average age of rural residents have the lowest share of computer literates, mainly the border regions of the south and east of Serbia, with GDP per capita below 80% of the national average.

Table 7. Devastated areas of Serbia: computer literacy and average age of rural population 2022 (%).

Municipality	Computer literate rural population	Average age of rural population
Republic of Serbia	30.08	45.25
Tutin	28.98	33.82
Preševo	45.31	37.57
Bujanovac	44.48	39.47
Prijepolje	31.84	42.99
Bojnik	26.12	43.39
Trgovište	33.01	43.71
Surdulica	27.92	43.80
Žitorađa	27.42	43.98
Merošina	26.19	45.37
Lebane	22.81	45.73
Vladičin Han	28.56	45.94
Mali Zvornik	28.33	46.61
Medveđa	27.86	48.59
Bosilegrad	25.40	49.22
Golubac	24.55	49.91
Kuršumlija	17.23	50.82
Babušnica	19.55	54.29
Bela Palanka	13.61	55.46
Svrljig	9.98	58.83

Sources: SORS 2023, 169–213; SORS 2023b, pp. 58–722.

There are also inequalities within the district so that comparison of municipalities would show even greater differences. Larger cities, regional centers, university centers, industrial zones increase the values of indicators for the entire region, so that the situation in the underdeveloped parts of the region (small urban settlements, rural areas) remains in the background. Bearing in mind our topic, we will not deal with differences at the municipal level, but we will point out some characteristics of the most underdeveloped local self-governments. In the official classification marked as “devastated areas of Serbia”, these municipalities have GDP per capita lower than 50% of the national average. Out of 19 municipalities, 16 are in southern Serbia, the most underdeveloped area of Serbia. These are municipalities with small

urban centers, often in border areas, with underdeveloped infrastructure and demographically depleted rural areas.

In four municipalities with a population average age over 50, less than a fifth of the population has computer skills. In the municipality with the oldest rural population, Svrljig, just every tenth village resident has basic computer skills. Only four municipalities have a higher share of computer-literate rural population than the national average, and these are municipalities with a significantly younger population.

Final Considerations

ICTs are becoming a necessary infrastructure for the economic and social development of rural areas. The fourth agricultural revolution (smart agriculture, digital agriculture) is changing the way of production on the farms, and the life and work of villagers (Janković, Milić & Novaković, 2023, pp. 61–162). Whether it is agriculture or non-agricultural activities, information flows and networking become essential for realizing economic benefits. In addition, the growing digitization of an increasing number of activities and services in society (trade, banking, state administration, health, education) encourages or forces residents of rural areas to use the Internet, but at the same time increases the risk of digital exclusion. On the other hand, the most significant problems of the Serbian village – poverty, underdeveloped infrastructure, difficult access to health services and education, lack of cultural and entertainment programs – make life in rural areas unattractive (Stojić, 2023). Digitally connecting villages would provide opportunities to alleviate some of these problems.

There are different models of information society development (Van Dijk, 2012, pp. 280–290, Castells, 2000) with different shares of public, public-private and private investment. Policies aimed at boosting rural development include the expansion of broadband infrastructure, as well as various measures, such as investment in agriculture 4.0, smart villages, digital innovation hubs, research projects and the like (OECD, 2018; Feurich et al., 2023).

Prerequisites for the realization of social benefits from advanced technologies are the development of broadband access for all and the encouragement of efficient use (primarily the provision of training for the acquisition of skills) (Roberts et al., 2017, p. 377; Hage et al., 2013). Analyzed data on Internet access, broadband network coverage and computer literacy of the rural population in Serbia indicate unfavourable conditions for the efficient use of advanced technologies for the rural development and raising the quality of life of the rural population.

The application of different measures must take into account the specificities of local environments. The most important characteristics of the Serbian countryside in terms of development are the demographic outflow and the consequent aging of the population, underdeveloped infrastructure and difficult access to public services. These characteristics indicate, on the one hand, the need for increased investments in rural development, and on the other hand, unfavourable conditions for the application of advanced technologies. Therefore, when choosing measures, it is necessary to evaluate their expediency – in which villages which type of incentives would give

the best results (Stojić, 2023, p. 78). Based on the analysis of changes in the agrarian and rural structure in Serbia, Mitrović (2015, pp. 220–221) classified villages into four groups (extinct, disappearing, sustainable, promising) in terms of opportunities for sustainable development, to which the rural development policy should be adapted. He highlights, for example, the potentials of digital technologies for the organization of virtual rural municipalities which would make it possible, without major costs and slow and complicated bureaucratic procedures, to organize local self-governments in rural areas and to interconnect them. When it comes to extinct and disappearing villages (with less than 100 or 200 inhabitants), he indicates the possibility of creating native networks, i.e. connecting residents who left the villages with those who remained in the village (Mitrović, 2023, pp. 38–39).

In terms of infrastructural development, a project to build broadband communication infrastructure in rural areas is underway in Serbia. As planned, 1,000 rural settlements will be connected to the broadband network by 2025 (Government of RS, 2023, p. 128). The project is carried out in cooperation with EBRD and through a public-private partnership. The state will build a broadband network up to rural settlements and connect schools and other public facilities, and operators will build an access network in the settlements.

When it comes to skills, Serbia has adopted a strategy on the development of digital skills [Government of the RS, 2020) with measures adapted to the specificities of the rural population (demographic, economic, cultural)].⁷³ Programs should be designed to target not only the acquisition of skills, but also the overcoming of resistance, the development of motivation and aspirations, especially bearing in mind the share of the elderly population. The planned measures include raising awareness about the importance of ICTs use, non-formal education and the development of mobile literacy.

The least attention is paid to the development of Internet content and applications; “the contents should be customized to fit the needs of rural holdings while the applications should be accessible to rural population” (Stojić, 2023, p. 78).

One example from practice can indicate opportunities, problems and the role of support for expanding the use of ICTs. Since 2023, the *eAgrar* information system has been introduced in Serbia, in which all agricultural households must be registered, and through which applications for state subsidies for agricultural production are submitted.⁷⁴ The goal is to make these procedures more efficient, simpler and faster for both the state and agricultural producers. In addition to the notices and instructions of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (website, social networks, call centre), the Agricultural Professional Advisory Service has been included in support of farmers. Some local governments have

⁷³ Promoting the use of the Internet among groups of non-users will be more effective if the use of technology meets the needs of those people and if it fits into the daily life and culture of their community, taking into account the specificities of local communities (Salemink et al., 2017, p. 365).

⁷⁴ <https://eagrar.gov.rs>

organized assistance to farmers through their professional services. Even so, some of the farmers faced problems and relied on the support of the community (younger family members, other farmers who successfully registered).

Benefits from the application of new technologies in society reflect existing and create new inequalities, but also provide opportunities for social development that would improve the quality of life of deprived groups and communities. Scientific research should show how individuals and communities integrate technology into everyday life and use it for economic and other benefits, as well as how rural-urban digital divide manifests itself.

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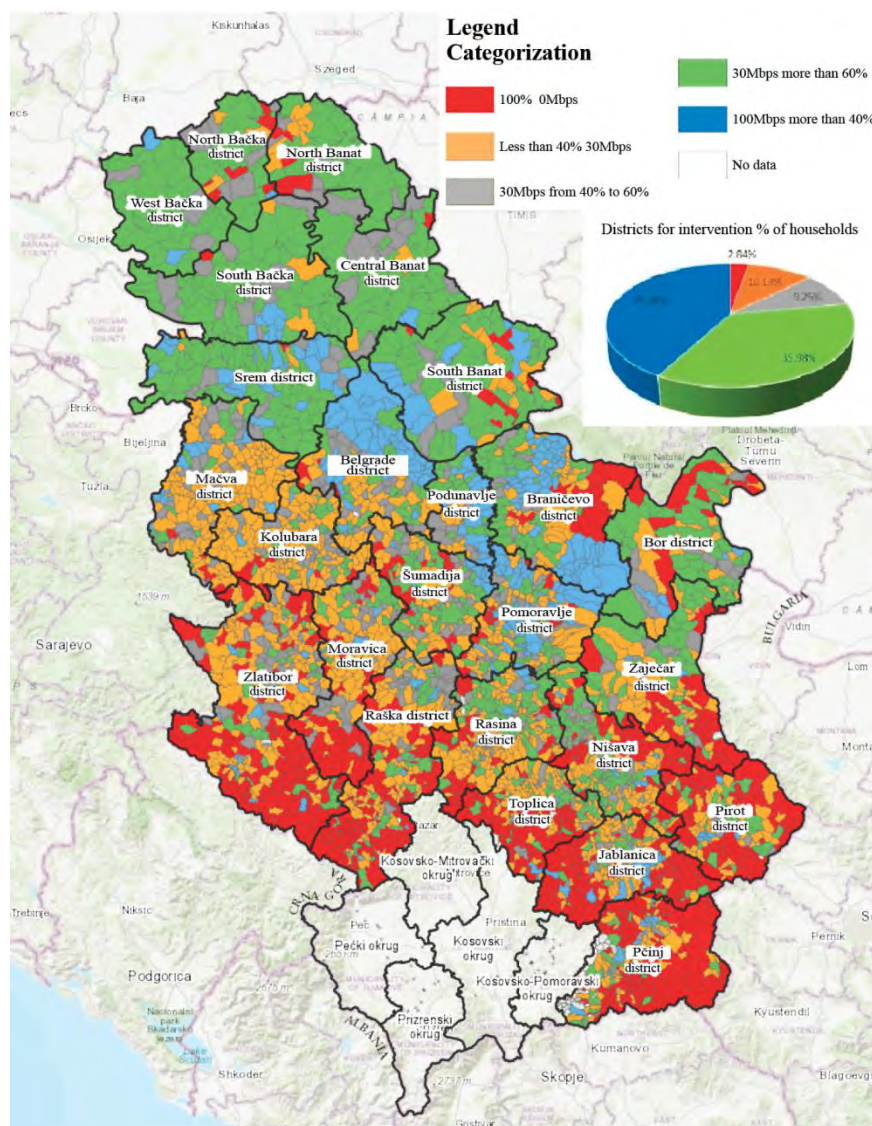
ДИГИТАЛНА ПОДЕЛА У СРБИЈИ: ПРИСТУП ИНТЕРНЕТУ И ВЕШТИНЕ У РУРАЛНИМ ПОДРУЧЈИМА

Сажетак

Примена информационо-комуникационих технологија данас је неизбежан чинилац друштвеног развоја. Интернет постаје, с једне стране, „подразумевани” медиј комуникације, обављања различитих активности и пословања. Са друге стране, развој технологије и сложеност апликација захтева све развијенију инфраструктуру и напредне дигиталне вештине. Дигитална подела се односи на неједнаке могућности приступа, употребе и користи од ИКТ. Иако се регионална и урбано-рурална дигитална подела смањује са растом пенетрације интернета, неједнакости и даље опстају. То ограничава могућности развоја руралних подручја, а становништво и заједнице излаже ризицима друштвене искључености. Предмет рада је приступ интернету и вештине руралног становништва Србије као два кључна предуслова за

рурални развој заснован на новим технологијама. Поред анализе урбано-руралне поделе, указује се на регионалне разлике међу руралним областима у погледу приступа и вештина. Анализа се заснива на подацима Републичког завода за статистику (Попис становништва 2022, истраживања употребе ИКТ, регионална статистика), као и коришћењу других извора.

Кључне речи: дигитална подела, инфраструктура, вештине, руралне области, регионалне неједнакости, Србија.



Attachment: Figure 1. Categorization of Serbian settlements according to broadband Internet coverage.

Source: Government of RS, 2020, p. 6.

PART FOUR

IDENTITY ASPECTS AND DYNAMICS OF REGIONS AND REGIONALISM

SEVERAL THESES ON THE FUTURE OF “TRADITION”

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The fundamental neo-traditionalist narratives [were] constructed or, more precisely, reinvented, in opposition to the communist regime, which was then considered responsible for the deep political, economic, and social crisis in Serbian society... Tradition, historical memory, and national identity became the key concepts of the day. Memories from the ‘glorious past’ were reshaped in these narratives... Revived, reinterpreted, and in some cases reassessed, these memories were considered by some to be blueprints for the future. Thus, a repertoire of useful ideas, symbols, and values stemming from Serbian tradition was compiled, a repertoire that was expected to gain great importance during the tumultuous political events that would soon follow.

Slobodan Naumović (Naumović, 2009, p. 56)

Abstract

Transition from socialism to capitalism is inevitably determined by the ‘question of identity’ as a constituent part in the establishment of a nation’s ideology. Such endeavor is usually referred to as ‘return to tradition’. In other words, the birthplace of a nation lies in the depths of traditional past. But ideology is built upon a fundamental ideologeme. In this case, it is indeed traditional, a place where retraditionalization is built. Yet, since ideological reminiscences of the past imply a Gleichschaltung of that same past, they reinvent the modern, present-day, appropriate ‘past’. In theory, this is well-known as the “invention of nations”, necessarily accompanied by the ‘invention of tradition’, which involves complete rejection of the

truth that no past can be revived simply by returning to it in its genuine form and especially to its ideologized version.

In such a transitional effort to make a radical departure from the fallen 'communism', there has been a long-standing 'patriotic struggle' devoid of any clear and rational outcome, aimed at establishing 'traditional values', i.e., 'tradition' as a value- and life-exemplary monolith to be built into the foundations of the national fortress, the fortress in which all Serbs will be at 'their hearth and home'.

The question of identity is the cornerstone of this ideological construction and its definition is quintessential for the revival of 'tradition'.

Keywords: tradition, retraditionalization, ideology, identity, nation

Introduction

For a long time now, seemingly without a clear and rational reason, there has been a 'patriotic struggle' among politoids and Kulturträger for the establishment of 'traditional values', i.e. 'tradition' as a normative and exemplary monolith that will be built into the foundations of our sacrosanct national fortress. A fortress where all Serbs will gather around one hearth. It will provide a safe haven even for non-believers, atheists, agnostics, as well as for those of another nation, on the condition that they sing "God, our hope, protect and cherish / Serbian lands and Serbian race!" in unison from the heart. And in such a way to forever be – firm, etched in stone, unchangeable. Otherwise...

The transition from socialism to capitalism entailed a turn towards proper legitimization. It could no longer be the class, and even less so the partisan ethic. Admittedly, the partisan ethic as a moral norm was abandoned, except in slogans, within a decade after the war. Just as one badge of legitimacy was found in the 'non-communist' past (nationalism), so the other badge was *identity*. In such a political and ideological framework, identity is inseparable from tradition.

At any rate, in a nutshell, what is identity? "The idea of human beings having an identity or identities has come to replace previous notions of character. Whereas identity is assumed to be socially constructed and invented, character signified individual attributes that were fixed and permanent. Identity then has an inter-subjective dimension. It is by "taking the attitude of the other" that we learn reflexively to monitor our identities and present them to others. Identity is formed out of the constant ebb and flow of conversation between ourselves and others. When there is a conflict between the demands of the community and the self, individuals are thrown back on themselves in a reflective attitude, thereby examining whether their values and beliefs are in need of revision. On this reading all identity is reflexively produced." (Stevenson, 2006, pp. 277–278).

However, identities are desirable self-determinations, especially in the current era of neonationalism and neotraditionalism, which seemingly paradoxically coexists with a postmodern attitude that turns all grand ideas and utopias – the so-called narratives

– into ashes and dust. As Stuart Hall wrote, “[t]hough they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming, rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. [Identities] relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself, which they oblige us to read not as an endless reiteration but as ‘the changing same’ ” (Hall, 2001, p. 218).

Slobodan Naumović partially differentiates the terms *pseudotraditionalism* and *neotraditionalism*. Pseudotraditionalism is the practice through which “radical novelties in motives and goals consciously don a symbolic attire of tradition so as to be accepted as legitimate. In the paper, this typology is primarily given heuristic importance. Thus, it is understood not as a verbatim depiction of reality, but as a convenient framework for it to be pondered” (Naumović, 2009, p. 18).

And Serbian neotraditionalism can be understood “rather as a product of the emerging Serbian intellectual elite, which drew ideas from a symbolic core consisting of historical memories of medieval glory, turning them into a symbolic instrument for legitimizing all the sacrifices that the only existing social base of the emerging national state – autarchic peasantry – had to endure” (Naumović, 2009, p. 300).

Nevertheless, the problem of defining traditionalism is still present. Georges Balandier believes that the notion of traditionalism remains imprecise. “It is seen as *continuity* [...] It is usually defined as conformity to *timeless* norms, those affirmed or justified by myth or dominant ideology.” Yet, such definition, according to Balandier, has no scientific force and lacks rigour. It first requires a differentiation “between the various *present-day* expressions of traditionalism. The first of these expressions – and the one closest to the current use of the term – corresponds to a fundamental traditionalism, an attempt to safeguard the values and the social and cultural arrangements most hallowed by the past” (Balandje, 1997, p. 228). Those arrangements are then infused into values – ‘folk’, ‘national’, or ‘traditional’ – only because such ‘arrangements’ are easily retained in the memory and easily observed if values are assigned to them, values exclusive by nature, no less. In addition to fundamental traditionalism, Balandier also writes about formal traditionalism, which coexists with fundamental traditionalism, but insofar as it presupposes “the maintenance of institutions and of social or cultural structures, the content of which is modified; only certain means are preserved from the past – the functions and aims have changed” (Balandje, 1997, p. 229).

About the (mis)use of traditions

In order for tradition to be alive, i.e. active, it must have the potential to act today and tomorrow – to have a future. Therefore, the ‘tradition’ calls for the future, which means a future based on traditional past. To be active, it must then be hypostatized, an aureole must be added to it. With the aureole, it is powerful, and its practitioners are moral heroes because how else would respect be cultivated, i.e. what is there to

respect? Hence, tradition is the constitutive place of the nation. And the nation has exclusivity over other nations – it is inevitably the best in the world of nations. It is always and everywhere the spoken biography of the collective. Therefore, it is the future that has already happened, that is happening, and that will happen. It is timeless. “The conventional view of the nation – a notion deeply rooted in the collective historical memory of members of present-day nation-states – insists that that very nation has existed since ancient times. Indeed, it had been once obscured, shrouded, put to sleep until it awakened or was awakened again, thus regaining self-awareness. It is therefore considered an ahistorical socio-ontological collective” (Ulrich-Veler, 2002, p. 43).

Most often, it takes on a form tailored to the needs and interests as described, determined, and imposed by some influential ‘authority’... In order for this to be achieved, there is one necessary condition – that the bearers of traditionalism should assume as powerful a control of the public sphere as possible. Because without control, ‘tradition’ as an active, constitutive element of the ‘survival of the nation’ cannot be practiced. It cannot be useful. Because free action and free thought, by virtue of being free, cannot be confined within the courtyard of epic fantasy. Thus, such thought is rejected and disparaged, going as far as ostracism of those who dare to ‘speak against the world’. To establish these ‘values’ as absolute, it is necessary to implement them (to deliberately use this trendy and empty term of anonymous politics-trägers and Kulturträgers) through structures of power, control, and education of the ‘people’ (yet another bleak stereotype).

Hence, it seems that church-traditional customs modified to serve the interest of the ruling classes are used as means to acquire political power and financial influence, and as tools to shape social behaviour in line with the ‘mandate of the ancient’ neo-conservatism. Such are the cases, for example, of the long-forgotten religious processions (*litiyas*) in Montenegro aimed at overthrowing a political faction from power. And in Serbia, *litiyas* are used as a nationwide resistance against the so-called looming ‘ideology of homosexuality, which aggressively threatens to obliterate our god-pleasing peaceful national life’. There are no more processions, but there is indeed brutal violence against those deemed ‘unsuitable’. As far as is known, people practice a wide variety of lifestyles. Homosexuality is also one of the ways of social life and a specific sexual orientation. All ways and styles of life are equal, except when they aggressively attack society. It is not known that homosexuality, as a way of life, poses any social threat. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Homosexuality was equally present in that hypostasized tradition as it is today. The only difference being that, faced against the hostility of intolerant culture and just as intolerant customs, it was never publicly expressed out of fear. It existed and still exists even within the confines of religious buildings. Homosexuality, of course, is not an ideology. However, even in the case of a harmless carnival-like parade by members of the LGBT community, the Serbian Orthodox Church openly and organizationally acted as a fearsome medieval inquisition. For now, the church remains silent about it, but it has pinpointed another ‘threatening’ target – gender-sensitive language. And so it goes *ad infinitum*.

On the other hand, in the political sphere, as separate from the ecclesiastical (but by no means from the believers), the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) acts as an exclusive political factor. Even in a declaratively secular state, some time ago, in the monastery of Ostrog, under the chairmanship of church authorities, a secular authority with attributes of holiness was formed. All of this resembles pre-modern methods of political activity by the church. However, even then and within such manner of activity, the political leadership, with consent and cooperation of the church, was not under the firm ideological grip of the church authority. Now, the dominant politics takes a big step towards a deep archaism that could not be seen even during the uprisings against the Ottoman rule in the early 19th century. But it could indeed be seen during the Byzantine Empire period. At the time, there was a ruling symphony at work – the unity of church and state power, with the state, of course, being theocratic. However, such was the practice throughout Europe in that historical period until the independence of rational thought, because in order to be rational, thought must cast doubt. Only from wonder can new knowledge be born. Thanks to the Renaissance, Europe once again read rejected and forgotten ancient texts and encountered, perhaps, the most significant principle of knowledge. “To sum up: The source of philosophy is to be sought in wonder, in doubt, in a sense of forsakenness. In any case it begins with an inner upheaval, which determines its goal. Plato and Aristotle were moved by wonder to seek the nature of being” (Jaspers, 1973, p. 138).

Nor is art devoid of doubt. “And what does doubt matter, and what does it matter that the desire is never quenched! What does it matter if we feel, escaping from us at every moment, that monstrous truth which we think to grasp at every moment and which ceaselessly flows out of us and beyond us, because it is living just as we are and because we create it every day and condemn it to death by the mere fact that we have wrested it from ourselves! What does it matter that there should be, from age to age, broken voices which tell us that we shall never know everything! That is our glory. [...] If our love for the Renaissance is so intoxicating, it is that our love consented to suffer in order to bring forth from the night those moving truths whose exhaustless power of creation we are barely beginning to perceive to-day, and this again is because they are inseparable from all the truths that ever were and all that are still to come” (Faure, 1955, pp. 15–16).

In our circumstances, the call for a return to tradition implies precisely the rejection of doubt in the name of unquestioning faith and belief in ‘traditional values’. This call of the political and religious ideology for a return to tradition and its ‘values’ largely undermines tradition itself. Because, after all, tradition is not a strong enough springboard for a leap towards the core of political and cultural power. Therefore, let us briefly examine some aspects of past tradition towards which the current ‘traditionalist’ movement is completely indifferent.

For the vast majority of the population, that former way of life was suffused with a heavy and painful struggle for survival. For example, in the absence of state-organized healthcare, infant mortality and child mortality at an early age were high and life expectancy was short and burdened with untreated diseases. Here are some

data on infant mortality and life expectancy during the dominance of 'traditional values' (Yugoslavia between the two World Wars) and in post-war Yugoslavia.

High birth rates in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, reaching 26 newborns per 1 000 population in 1939, were accompanied by high infant mortality rates, which stood at 16.5% of all newborns in 1931 and decreased to 13.2% in 1939. From 1947 to 1966, the trend of high birth rates continued, ranging from 20 to 30 newborns per 1,000 population, but from then until 1990, it fluctuated between 14 and 19 newborns per 1 000 population, with a mostly constant downward trend. At the same time, infant mortality decreased. For the period after 1945, the first data are available for 1949, when infant mortality, relative to the total number of live births, was 10.2%. From 1949 to 1958, this percentage fluctuated in the entire country of Yugoslavia between a maximum of 13.9% and a minimum of 10.1%, dropping and staying below 10% after 1958: 8.6% in 1958, 5.9% in 1968, 3.4% in 1978, and 2.4% in 1988. Significant differences existed between individual republics and provinces in this regard. The most favourable situation was in Slovenia, where infant mortality was 8.3% in 1950, 2.5% in 1970, and 0.8% in 1990. Although in 1950 all republics except Slovenia exceeded a rate of 10%, the worst situation in 1950 was in the province of Vojvodina, where 14.5% of infants died that year. It is important to note that Vojvodina was an area of intensive immigration from areas that otherwise had a high infant mortality rate, attributed directly to low health culture. By 1990, infant mortality in Vojvodina had decreased to 1.4%, but the overall life expectancy also significantly increased. In 1931, life expectancy was 46.1 years for women and 45.1 years for men. By 1948, these figures had increased to 53 years for women and 48.6 years for men, with significant regional differences that persisted into the first post-war decade. For instance, from 1952 to 1954, the shortest average life expectancy was in Kosovo for both men (48.6) and women (45.3), while the highest was in Slovenia – 63.0 for men and 68.1 for women. By 1981, life expectancy in Yugoslavia reached 73.2 years for women and 67.7 years for men. These numbers continued to grow to reach the life expectancy of 74.9 for women and 69.1 for men in Yugoslavia in 1990, with significantly reduced regional differences (the range was as follows: for men, from 67.4 in Vojvodina to 72.8 in Montenegro, and for women from 74.2, also in Vojvodina, to 78.2, also in Montenegro). A particularly noticeable improvement was observed in Kosovo, where by 1990, the life expectancy of both men (70.5) and women (74.9) dramatically increased compared to the Kingdom period and the early years of socialist Yugoslavia. (Milošević, 2017, pp. 333–334).

If the reader will allow me, I shall use my own family as an example, which is by no means an exception. My grandmother gave birth to seven children, four of whom died before reaching the age of one. In addition to this, wars were integrated into the fate of the poor. Because even in warfare, it was the poor who sacrificed their heads, limbs, and livelihoods for the ideals of freedom, while the privileged children (with

some exceptions) were under no obligation to do so. Take the son of Nikola Pašić, who lived as a layabout and purveyor in Paris, while lines of soldiers and refugees were freezing their tails off in the Albanian mountains and while the children of the poor bravely fought in bloody battles on the Salonica front and Kajmakčalan. Even in the liberated state, the poor could not provide enough food from their small plots of land. After the liberation, one of these brave warriors took his eldest child, an eleven-year-old son, by the hand and led him on foot from their village at the foot of Suva Planina across Babička Gora, to work as a servant to a proprietor in Leskovac. And this in the country for whose freedom he was wounded seventeen times on the battlefield. There was much more silent weeping of mothers and heavy sighs of fathers for their servant children than there was public mourning for the youth cut down in battles and wars for freedom. These children, it seems, are the saddest and most distressing aspect of our tradition in the lives of our respected ancestors. For his service in the Balkan Wars and World War I, my father's father received an Albanian Commemorative Medal from the state at the time, and only received a pension from the state during Tito's era, although he openly and unequivocally stood for the king and the country until the end of his life. And his servant son fought with the partisans in the subsequent war. He returned to his native village with a medal for bravery on his chest, which he earned at the age of 18.

I remember, while I was still a schoolboy, when the two of them, the father who fought in Salonika and the son who was a partisan fighter, sitting on stools in the village yard under the pear tree with two 'čokanji' [small bottles] of rakija⁷⁵, resolved their ideological family dispute in a few brief sentences. Grandpa had the final word: "We both fought the Jerries". They never talked about it again. And that afternoon, I was boyishly truly happy. Moreover, three of my uncles on the side of my mother, who was a member of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, were taken from the artillery sheds in Kragujevac in October 1941 and driven to Šumarice, etc.

So there, that is the most genuine and deepest traditional value for me. And for many others like me.

Here is another traditional legacy. The custom known as "lapot" (a form of senicide), or rather, patricide, was most often practiced for economic reasons, i.e. due to poverty, when it was necessary to dispose of the hungry mouths of those who could no longer provide. Today, the origin of lapot is still debatable. Some authors place the custom in the realm of myths. Others, however, present certain material findings. Nevertheless, patricide is both a myth and reality that accompanies humanity. In our traditional culture, it has its own horrific place. Even the saying "ready for the axe" refers to the elderly, those unable to provide for themselves or others and unable to work. The elderly who have become a "nuisance and burden." In this regard, we present the words of Tihomir Đorđević, which show what this custom was like and why it was abandoned. Therefore, there are no eternally

⁷⁵ Traditional fruit brandy.

observed customs, nor is any period of time set in stone. Here is what Tihomir Đorđević wrote:

According to a folk legend in the village of Prisjan near Pirot, as recorded by Mr Trojanović, when someone grew old and feeble, their family decided to kill them. The killing was done publicly, in front of everyone. The town crier would go from house to house, shouting: "Come, there is a lapot in such and such village, in such and such house, come to the funeral feast!" In front of the gathered crowd, the family would beat the old man or woman, mostly with sticks, occasionally with stones or an axe. Anyone taken to the lapot went without any fear, hoping for a better life in the afterlife. The killing was primarily done by their own children. In Krepoljin and some other places in eastern Serbia, the household members would make *proja* [Serbian corn bread – our remark], put it on the old person's head, and strike it with an axe until they were dead. They did this to make it appear as if it were not them who killed the elders, but rather the *proja* (Đorđević, 1923, p. 149).

The elderly were killed for economic reasons imposed by poverty. They were unable to work, yet they had hungry mouths to feed. However, Đorđević mentions another reason associated with religious mythology. Just as rulers of certain nations were killed when their divine power dwindled, so were heads of the household killed in Serbia, as they were rulers within their families and possessed divine qualities. However, over time, it was realized that their experience and knowledge could be beneficial.

I believe all that has been said is supported by our folk tradition, which suggests that the elders were killed when they were no longer useful, and that the killing stopped only when people became convinced that rational judgment had not disappeared from them, but rather that they possessed it more than young people (Đorđević, 1923, p. 151).

The question is: Would our advocates of traditional values calmly watch as the old custom (family value) of lapot took away their fathers and elders, what is more, the fathers who undoubtedly respect, know, and uphold tradition much better than these political 'traditionalists'?

Moving on. The impoverished servants at their masters' houses are by no means an important topic in today's trendy political litiyás. For our political traditionalists, such tragedies of bygone eras are not suitable pieces in the construction of their enormous mosaic of ideologically idealized constructs, which enables them to conquer the state heights allowing them to dominate and assume command. Kitsch pastoral scenes instead of true history. And all this in the midst of today's indignation and existential uncertainty of vast segments of the population.

Furthermore, there is no mention of the traditional culture of solidarity and equality that prevailed in familial, friendly, and neighbourly life. A beautiful and noble traditional value and old custom called "moba" among the folk has been erased from their slogan-designing minds. During harvests, house construction, and so on, rela-

tives, friends, neighbours, and fellow townsfolk would gather and work together with the head of the household who needed a helping hand. The next day, that same head of the household, with his kin, would do the same whenever it was needed. And yet, in the time of this clerical neo-conservatism, both the word and the custom have been suppressed.

Tradition is also a long, fierce, and bloody struggle against various regimes for workers' and peasants' rights. Advocates of 'traditional values' remain silent on this matter. They remain silent because their symbols of traditionalism – monarchy, proprietors, and church – lived luxuriously on the back of the poor.

Exploitation was uncontrolled. Child labour was a normalized constant. Dimitrije Tucović described the terrible fate of child workers in the factories of Leskovac – the "Serbian Manchester", as it was romanticized in songs in our media. On 5 May 1914, a short article entitled *The Wretched Youth from Leskovac Factories* was published in *Radničke novine* (The Workers' Newspaper). We present it here in its entirety so that the reader may witness the cruelty towards children, which is also part of our tradition, but the genuine one.

These are the children from textile factories in Leskovac whom the industrial inspector interrogated. Among them are seven boys and the rest are girls. Out of forty-seven, six of them started working in the factory at the *age of seven*; fourteen at *eight*; twelve at *nine*; eight at *ten*; seven at *eleven*.

Thirty-five of them never attended primary school, not even for a day, and four of them attended school for one or two years.

Seven work in the factory for 12 hours for a daily wage of 0.20 dinars. Seventeen work for 0.30 dinars. Sixteen work for 0.40 dinars. Seven work for 0.50 dinars. And one works for 0.60 dinars.

Seventeen children are used for work during both regular hours and "shifts". This refers to work scheduled for specific periods during the day and night.

Out of these children, nine have *tuberculosis*; seven have *scrofula*; twenty-nine are *sickly* and *weak*. Not a single child was found to be healthy!

When one looks at the children, one would not think they looked a day over 6 or 7. However, their ages are: four at eight, five at nine, seven at ten, ten at eleven, sixteen at twelve, five at thirteen, and one at fourteen. All these children are stunted and of irregular, distorted posture, which is a consequence of early-age work in factories where they have all spent *from one to five years*.

And there, just like that, factory owners Ilić, Teokarević, and Petrović keep ruining the children within their companies' premises. They even

beat them there, and when they collapse almost lifeless from all the work and torture, their parents come at night to *carry them home*.

Entire generations of these children have been ruined, and today the factory owners are trying to win over the police, who are supposed to commit wild violence against the others and against them!

Among the wretched young'uns, many are also maimed at work, like the boy on the right of the picture showing his right hand with three fingers cut off.

The picture also displays three elderly women, one aged 78, one aged 80, and one aged 83, who work for a wage ranging from 0.60 to 0.80 dinars.

A machine cut off the hand of the old woman Neda Vukosavljević, and she now works with only one hand.

After such imagery from the factory hell in Leskovac, we ask, we quite seriously ask: are there any humane people among the bourgeois public and among journalists? – If there indeed are, it is their duty to speak out against these horrific crimes! (Tucović, 1980, pp. 256–257)

There have been numerous cases of violence against children and women. However, one will also remember that our ancestors knew how to club those who raped or abused someone's wife, daughter, mother... But such punishment was not always carried out. There were also shameful occurrences of turning a blind eye or remaining silent in the face of any oppressor shielded by power or money. It was a useful way to instil fear in people. Thus, both senseless tyrants and despicable thugs were thrust into the machinery of demonstrating the power and will of the authorities. And thus, recently, the party's propaganda yellow press outlet *Informer* bestowed attention and media space upon a repeatedly convicted rapist, publishing an interview with him at the end of 2022. Soon after the widespread public outrage, *Informer* removed the interview from its website. And the authorities, supposedly propelled by a 'moral' act of that tabloid propaganda service, hastily, demonstratively, and ostentatiously sent the rapist to prison. Similar incidents in Priština had previously sparked mass and angry demonstrations, which the government supported. Our government, however, dismissed such demonstrations because they were launched under a 'morally unacceptable pretext' against the regime's boulevard newspaper. Throughout history, in tyrannies, one rule applies – an attack on propaganda is an attack on the regime. Thus, there were no 'traditional value' *litiyás* organized in protest of this dark event.

Or, the 'traditional' opinion is by nature pre-theoretical and pre-reasoning in the contemporary perspective. It is the foundation of self-evident 'knowledge' upon which all subsequent theories and all later knowledge must rely. Writing about the reworking of Christian tradition, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann also wrote about the mechanism of reworking tradition:

As in all theorizing, new theoretical implications within the tradition itself appear in the course of this process, and the tradition itself is pushed

beyond its original form in new conceptualizations. For instance, the precise Christo logical formulations of the early church councils were necessitated not by the tradition itself but by the heretical challenges to it. As these formulations were elaborated, the tradition was maintained and expanded at the same time. Thus, there emerged, among other innovations, a theoretical conception of the Trinity that was not only unnecessary but actually non-existent in the early Christian community. In other words, the symbolic universe is not only legitimated but also modified by the conceptual machineries constructed to ward off the challenge of heretical groups within a society (Berger & Luckmann, 1999, p. 125).

Finally, we have reached the point where textbooks and literary works for schoolchildren are being included in the newly emerging *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Because they too are suspicious and ‘not in keeping with tradition’. In historical terms, such an index is only a small half-step away from the public burning of ‘unsuitable’ books (as was the case, for example, throughout Germany in 1933). A hundred years before that shameful Nazi era, the German poet Heinrich Heine penned a dreadful warning verse: “It was just the prelude... Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people, too” (Heine, 1908, p. 28). And indeed, this burning of people happened, both in centuries before Heine and in times after him.

Instead of a conclusion

In addition, advocates of ‘traditional values’ either do not want to understand or simply cannot grasp an undeniable truth about tradition. Every tradition was once new and novel when it emerged, surpassing, opposing, or conforming to the previous tradition. Today’s modernity will become tomorrow’s tradition. Every tradition inevitably carries within it the seed of the new. This new often signifies progress (which does not necessarily possess any axiological determinants). Progress simply means movement because human communities cannot exist or live as immobilized, stagnant, temporally and spatially preserved entities... Life itself is woven from continuous movement – from amoeba to man. Therefore, what is progress in essence? This concept was coined in the Latin language, because *progressus* means stepping, walking, advancing, beginning, succeeding... Even litiyá procession participants, as they march profoundly meaningfully, act contrary to the very slogans they chant. As much as influential or majority members of a community or society resist change, as much as ‘traditional values’ are held ‘in high regard’, and as much as the different experiences or emerging practices are distrusted, that community or society will still move in some direction. If not in any other way, new generations will inevitably adopt, even in small chunks, a new way of life. Even the entirely closed off small indigenous tribal communities in the jungles of Mato Grosso inevitably change upon contact, first with travellers and explorers. One might object that they have lived within their tradition for thousands of years. In the fabric of time, thousands of years are but a moment. One small movement, even a bad one, is an inevitability of existence. And then, again inevitably, a new revolutionary movement will be born to fight against whatever is currently causing trouble.

Major societal issues are not a reason to turn to tradition for help, but rather a reason to deviate from tradition, because it lacks the much-needed answers. This was demonstrated during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Searching for a way out, people did not turn to tradition. "The Great Slump confirmed intellectuals, activists and ordinary citizens in the belief that something was fundamentally wrong with the world they lived in. Who knew what could be done about it? Certainly, few of those in authority over their countries, and certainly not those who tried to steer a course by the traditional navigational instruments of secular liberalism or traditional faith, and by the charts of the nineteenth century seas which were plainly no longer to be trusted" (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 102).

Ultimately, it is necessary to first become familiar with tradition before upholding it. However, it should never be used – either for politics or for 'national interests' – because in that case, it will deprive us of all its values.

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НЕКОЛИКО ТЕЗА О БУДУЋНОСТИ „ТРАДИЦИЈЕ”

Сажетак

Транзиција из социјализма у капитализам је нужно одређена „идентитетским питањем” као конститутивним у творењу идеологије нације. Тај се подухват именује као „повратак традицији”. Другим речима, изворно место нације почива у дубинама традиционално минулог. Али идеологија се гради на темељном идеологему. У овом случају, то јесте традиционално, као место градње ретрадиционализације. Но, будући да идеолошке реминисценције на прошлост ту прошлост глајхшталтују, оне изнова стварају савремену, данашњу, подобну „прошлост”. У теорији, одвећ познато као „измишљање нацијâ”, уз нужно „измишљање традиције”. Одбија се, у овом случају, истина да се никоја прошлост не може оживети враћањем ка њој. Нити оној каква је она уистину била, а тек никако оној идеологизованој.

У таквом транзицијском настојању да се начини радикални отклон од палог „комунизма”, већ дуго траје, без јасног и рационалног исхода, „патриотска борба” за успоставу „традиционалних вредности”, тј. „традиције” као вредносног и животног узоритог монолита који ће бити узидан у темеље народне утврде. Утврде у којој ће сви Срби бивати на „свом огњишту”. Идентитетско питање је у овој идеолошкој конструкцији угаони камен. Његово одређење је пресудно за оживљавање „традиције”.

Кључне речи: традиција, ретрадиционализација, идеологија, идентитет, нација.

BELONGING AND IDENTITIES OF THE SECOND GENERATION OF EXILES – THREE CASE STUDIES⁷⁶

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Abstract

The paper deals with searching for an answer to the question as to how the descendants of exiles self-negotiate the issue of personal, family and collective identity and belonging, in the light of the experiences of the collective trauma their family members were exposed to during the wars of the 1990s. Our starting assumptions are that family and collective tragedies are kept like family secrets, that the descendants of the unfortunate ones have little knowledge of those experiences and that they are right in supposing that the stories about those events have reached them only in fragments. Furthermore, as descendants of exiles, they face incomplete belonging; they are neither here nor there. They do not have a clear idea of where their home is. In order to examine these hypotheses, we spoke to three young men who were born after the exile of their families and the collective from their centuries-long hearths. Our respondents confirmed that family tragedies were rarely spoken about, but that the thought about the existence of such secrets occasionally penetrates their conscience and

⁷⁶ The article was written as a result of the work on the project supported by the Ministry of Education, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, within the funding of the scientific and research work at the University of Belgrade – the Faculty of Philosophy (Agreement No. 451-03-47/2023-01/ 200163).

causes a series of unpleasant feelings. They constantly self-negotiate about who they are and where they belong. They are unable to have a clear opinion about their identity, but they are kept in that conditionally called confusion by their parents' strong belief that they themselves belong somewhere else, as well as by the fact that all three of them were exposed to peer resentment in the environment in which they grew up because they were recognized as *different*. These findings should concern us and encourage us to deal with the topic of exile and identity both in the domain of public discourse and in the scientific field, since a substantial number of residents of our country have in their (in)direct experience the exile trauma and, as it can be rightfully assumed, the feeling of homelessness. In the end, it is not ethical to remain silent when encountering such human suffering.

Keywords: exile, collective trauma, identity, home

Introduction

Although it seems that the concept of human rights has long found its place in the legal systems of most modern, developed societies, it is not the actual state of affairs. The foundation of all human rights (Banović, 2016) – human dignity, has been denied today globally to at least 35.3 million people (UNHCR, Refuge Data Finder) who have been forcefully displaced from their homes⁷⁷ (Hynie, 2018, p. 265). These people are called refugees.

The anticipation that matters concerning forced migrants may become further complicated is corroborated by statistical data. In fact, the number of refugees is constantly on the rise: in the mid-20th century, about 1.9 million people had the refugee status. In 1970s, this number increased to 2.4 million; by the beginning of the new millennium, it rose to 12.1 million, and 14 years later it was higher by another 2.2 million people (Sangalang & Vang, 2017, p. 745). From then until 2022, the number of refugees doubled: last year, throughout the world, there were as many as 29.4 million refugees. It is particularly concerning that most of these people (76%) live in underdeveloped and developing countries⁷⁸, most often (in almost 70% cases) in the countries bordering their homeland (UNHCR, Refuge Data Finder).

Now we will return to the claim from the beginning of this text – that refugees are people deprived of human dignity. The first argument for this claim is offered by During's formula for measuring this supposedly indisputably human property (Banović, 2016). Namely, dignity is violated when a man is reduced to an object, a mere means, a replaceable value, to something unimportant, and that is exactly how those exposed to mass exile and genocide are treated (Banović, 2016). Furthermore,

⁷⁷ According to During, dignity is not something to be gained, but something that a man himself must possess, independently of his racial, religious, national, age or class affiliation (Banović, 2016).

⁷⁸ Germany is one of the countries with the largest number of refugees – there are eight forced migrants in 1,000 inhabitants, while that ratio in Sweden is 23 to 1,000. Lebanon is at the top of the list, with 160 refugees in 1,000 domicile inhabitants (Hynie, 2018).

refugeedom is not only forced eradication, but it also implies alienation of its own. As Zia Rizvi properly observes, a refugee seems to belong to another race or another subhuman group (Harrell Bond & Voutira 1992, p. 7, according to: Grubiša, 2019, p. 15). A refugee is a Foreigner, the Other and the Different one who endangers domicile population. He *takes up* material resources of a society (jobs, apartments, and becomes burden to the healthcare system), and that is why there is pronounced odium towards him, particularly among those whose social status may be threatened (Hyne, 2018, p. 267).

However, the actual truth is that a refugee is, first of all, an unhappy man (Ljubičić, 2016, p. 205); the discourse about a refugee as the invasive Other is supported by political elites (Ignatieff, 2017, p. 224), thinking that projecting social troubles in a single vulnerable group that has no capacity to defend itself may bring *easy* political points.⁷⁹ For example, the Middle East refugees who have found/are trying to find a refuge in today's Europe and the USA, are associated by an inclination to violence and criminality by right-oriented politicians and a group of left-oriented ones (Ignatieff, 2017). This approach describes well the concept of "crimmigration" (Hynie, 2017), which denotes practices of connecting criminal and immigration laws and leads to spatial segregation and conditioning of the refugees' human rights.⁸⁰ In the end, this process of framing refugeedom consequently dehumanizes⁸¹ these people (Hynie, 2018, p. 268).

Reduced to lower than human beings (Kronfeldner, 2021), they are, as a rule, on the margins of society. They face uncertainty and depend on other people's mercy. They are objects of humanitarianization, but paradoxically, by depoliticizing refugeedom, humanitarianism further endangers their human rights and citizenship status. Consequently, refugees have been recognized as passive and powerless victims (Malkki, 1996; Petrović 2013; Grubiša, 2019, p. 16). They are expected not only to show their submissiveness to domicile population (Kurtović, 2017) but are also required to integrate in the recipient society. However, whether they will be successfully

⁷⁹ Ignatieff (2017, pp. 223-224) lists examples of three European countries – Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary – whose political elites, facing the migrants from the East, gave up their discourse about a refugee as a person with human rights, describing them as a serious risk to the health of their own population (Czech Republic, Poland), or moral and Christian values (Hungary).

⁸⁰ Hynie (2018), citing Bloch & Schuster (2002), also lists a series of examples of the policies which restrict spatial mobility of refugees, as well as the possibility of access to employment, education, social care or healthcare. Here we must recall the exile of more than 200,000 Serbs from the territory of Banija, Lika, Kordun and Dalmatia during Operation Storm (there are serious debates about the exact number of the displaced; see Opalić, 2003, p. 465), the operation of the Croatian Army in August 1995 (<https://kirs.gov.rs/lat/aktuelno/oluja-nikad-nece-biti-zaboravljena/4413>). The refugee column was directed towards the south border of the Republic of Serbia, and these people could not go to other destinations.

⁸¹ From the perspective of dehumanizing, the object to which this process is applied can be harmed without any responsibility or consequences. We should also recall that a physical injury or wound is not the only form of dehumanization. It has a number of subtle, seemingly less violent forms, such as the projection with which we put unacceptable parts of ourselves into others, without risking their recognition as part of our unconscious. In the last instance, dehumanization also justifies exploitation of the Different (see: Kronfeldner, 2021).

integrated does not depend solely on refugees, but this process is to a large extent shaped by public policies, as well as by the attitudes regarding refugeedom and the relationship of domicile population towards people with the exile experience⁸² (Fantino & Colak, 2001).

The outcomes of these *encounters* may be different: a number of refugees remain on the margin, some of them are forced to be segregated from domicile population of their own will, of the will of domicile inhabitants, or mutually. Others have been assimilated in the new environment to such an extent that they seem to have completely forgotten their origin,⁸³ while a number of them are said to be successfully integrated (Brar-Josan, 2015; Jones Christensen & Newman, 2024).

Yet, what does it mean to be (successfully) integrated?

Integration: What is It?

We do not know precisely. So, Fantino & Colak (2001, p. 591) nicely illustrate this dilemma by reminding of the claim that refugee children easily adapt to their new environment. Since this statement is not followed by the questions *What do they adapt to, who to and at what cost?* the authors say that the concept of integration is still unclear. Ager & Strang (2008) have similar reasoning and, citing Robinson (1998), they claim that it is a chaotic concept used by many, but most often in completely different meanings (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167).

However, regardless of our inability to clearly define what integration actually is⁸⁴ or what components it contains (Brar-Josan, 2015), a number of authors (Sirilnik, 2002; Ager & Strang, 2008; Ljubičić, 2019) believe that this process, when successfully completed, inevitably includes the existence of the feeling of belonging. It is an intersectional experience, which depends on the historical, cultural and sociopolitical context (Shiqi & Schweitzer, 2019) and personal opportunities (or the absence of them). In that process, a refugee always negotiates about plural forms of belonging

⁸² This is a relational process in which the key role is played by subjective experiences and feelings of refugees, their previous traumas, the perception of belonging and safety. Furthermore, the degree of integration success also depends on the nature of the relationship between refugees and other members of society, general attitudes and beliefs prevailing about newcomers in the community, which form their everyday experiences. Finally, the integration process is inseparable from the policies that define the status of the refugees and the practices of treating them (Ager & Strang, 2008).

⁸³ It should be noted that this is a mechanism which renounces previous identities, more or less of one's free will, with the aim of being accepted in the new environment and/or new circumstances. This is proved by a conscious decision of a few members of minority communities in the neighbouring Republic of Croatia to declare themselves as a majority nation regarding their nationality. This decision is indisputably of a rational character and should protect them from existential and any other type of threats (see: Ponoš, Vukobratović, 2022). However, here we must also recall the fact that "people with amnesia cannot give any meaning to what they observe" and that "depriving them of their former identity makes them second-class subordinate citizens" (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 66).

⁸⁴ In the most general meaning, integration implies keeping balance between one's own culture and origin and the adoption of values and norms of the new social environment (Brar-Josan, 2015).

with the hosts, the country of origin and with himself (Krzyzsnowski & Wodak, 2007, according to: Shiqi & Schweitzer, 2019). It could be defined as a person's relatively permanent feeling that he/she is an integral part of the community (Brar-Josan, 2015). In other words, it would be the one who finds themselves valued, necessary and accepted in the new environment and fits into it (Brar-Josan, 2015, p. 13): in the new environment, they feel (as if) at home (see: Korać, 2012, p. 35).

A particularly significant question, especially having in mind that this concept is the key word both in official policies and in the projects directed towards refugees (see: Ager & Strang, 2008), is whether belonging can be measured by some objective indicators. In all probability, the answer is negative. Namely, it is quite possible that even those people who have gained the citizenship right in the new environment and participate actively in social life (Brar-Josan, 2015) do not see themselves as members of the community in which they are now, among other things, because they are not accepted by that community (Grubiša, 2019; Shiqi & Schweitzer, 2019). They remain stuck in the interspace: they are neither there – they do not belong to the places from which they were displaced, nor here – in the new environment (Ljubičić & Vuletić, 2018).

Considering this, we find it justified to claim that the feeling of (non)belonging can be concluded solely on the basis of self-evaluation, although in our country's science this opinion is not usual. Namely, the fact that about 350,000 people displaced from the territory of the former SFRY, who found their refuge from the wars in the 1990s on the territory of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, applied for and were granted the citizenship of the country to which they were forced to migrate⁸⁵ (<https://kirs.gov.rs/cir/izbeglice/integracija>), is interpreted as an expression of their integration (see: Ljubičić & Vuletić, 2018; Ljubičić, 2019). There is little to corroborate this claim because, among other things, this issue has not been more substantially dealt with by researchers. In fact, researchers do not find the topic of domicile exiles in the past twenty years interesting at all – with rare exceptions (see: Ljubičić, 2019).

In our opinion, such attitude towards the research of this issue is not justified, particularly because this is a highly vulnerable population that has been exposed to personal, family and transgenerational collective traumas and that, unfortunately, quite often faces plenty of prejudice⁸⁶ and indifference.

Speaking of the latter, it can be noticed that modern societies do not have much sympathy towards the so-called losers, among whom refugees can be categorized (Ljubičić, 2019). To illustrate this claim, we do not have to go too far, either in spatial or temporal terms. It is enough to look at our own backyard! The mass exodus of the Serbs from the territory of the former SFRY is unheard of in the recent history of Europe, and today, after more than three decades, it is associated with the

⁸⁵ According to the 2021 Census, in the Republic of Serbia there are 25,330 people with the refugee status coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from the territory of Lika, Kordun, Dalmatia, Banija and Slavonija (<https://kirs.gov.rs/cir/izbeglice/integracija>).

⁸⁶ In that respect, they share the fate of all refugees throughout the world.

violation of the human rights of the refugees and those who *stayed at home*; in 2023, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Croatian Army's Operation Storm, the most respectable daily newspaper in the recipient country, *Politika*, published only three texts about it (two published on 9 August and one on 11 August). All three texts had a political connotation, and it seems that the conclusion reached by Grujić (2005) – that the refugees are exposed to political abuse in which media play a significant role – is completely valid.

(Domicile) exiles are excluded from scientific and public discourse, while stories about their losses remain hidden in the personal, intimate space because the public fails to hear such tragedies. "They make us tired with their misfortune" (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 79), and the public space will take only what is "socially acceptable" (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 192). Listeners who do not want to assume that role must be understood after all: stories about the trauma, collective suffering and bestialities the exiles were exposed to, have the potential to upset (see: Opalić & Lešić, 2001; Opalić, 2005; Ljubičić, 2019).

However, we must say that the fact that they have been exposed to the *silent treatment* both in the public and in the scientific discourse, further traumatizes people with direct exile experience, while the unrecognized and unappreciated experience of personal, family and collective suffering forms not only their lives, but also the lives of their descendants.

Having this in mind, we must wonder whether the generations born after their parents' exile feel integrated and whether they have the feeling of belonging to the environments to which their fathers and mothers were forced to migrate. The findings of several foreign studies show that in their case there is also emotional and cognitive confusion about where these people belong. For example, McMichael, Nunn, Gifford & Correa-Velez, (2017) find that the majority of their young respondents – the second generation of the refugees born in Australia – experienced non-acceptance when visiting their parents' country of origin. To their relatives and members of their community, they have remained foreign and different, and the fact that they were treated as different bothered them very much, particularly those who looked at the homeland as the key item in identity creation. Finally, it resulted in the creation of an ambivalent attitude towards the question of belonging. Ambiguity about where one belongs and the feeling of shame because of the refugee background have also been expressed by our respondent – the boy who was born after his parents' exile (Ljubičić, 2016). He is somewhere in between – between there (his parents' homeland) and here (the recipient country), but he does not dare speak about his origin because he is convinced that he will be rejected by his peers.

Sirilnik (2002) notes that the only way to leave this conundrum is to realize its meaning, to "establish inner balance and serenity", which is possible only if "the person with a hurt soul... creates a story about his misfortune in order to address society that will... recognize value" (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 179). Otherwise, it can be expected that the trauma will be passed on from one generation to another.

About the Transgenerational Trauma: What is It?

The transgenerational trauma has been a frequently discussed topic in scientific research by foreign authors. There are many findings about the content, meaning and mechanisms of transferring the suffering experience from one generation to another thanks, to the greatest extent, to the studies about the Holocaust survivors and their descendants (Last, 1988; Fossion et al, 2003; Shrira et al, 2011; Giladi & Bell, 2013; Cohn & Morrison, 2018). It is a common place that the collective trauma to which the parents were directly exposed indirectly affects the mental health and well-being of their children. They are preoccupied with death and disastrous expectations. In the domain of affinities, it is possible to see anxiety, increased sensitivity to stress, the feeling of loss and regret, and unresolved conflicts in terms of the emotions of angers and sadness (Kellermann, 2001). The survivors' daughters and sons are more prone to mental problems in comparison to the control group of respondents. They suffer from mood disorders, they are more vulnerable to stress, more depressed and of poorer general disposition (Cohn & Morrison, 2018). In addition, they believe that they are responsible to the feelings of their trauma-surviving parents (Sangalang & Vang, 2017).

A number of authors (Barocas, & Barocas, 1980; Last, 1988; Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Sagi-Schwartz, 2003) claim that these outcomes are expected because, while growing up, these children were exposed to emotional abuse and neglect by their parents who do not have the capacity to look after their offspring in an adequate manner. However, it should not be forgotten that even when fathers and mothers assume their parental roles properly, they do not tell their children about their own suffering, but the children directly manage to learn about it. For example, in his qualitative study of a family of refugees from Bosnia to Sweden, Maček (2017) finds that, although their parents do not talk about the war – in their stories there is no true war: no grenades, death, losses of other kinds, or of moral judgment, the children catch and revive through their drawings the father's (uncommunicated) anger and the parents' sadness because of losing their home. Finally, the findings of a series of studies corroborate that the experience of personal, family and collective traumas is usually not communicated to descendants for the purpose of their protection (see: Ljubičić & Vuletić, 2018). Nevertheless, family secrets about suffering have proved to affect the relationships formed by the descendants with other people and their feeling of not belonging to the community in which they live (see: Sangalang & Vang, 2017).

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the parents' traumatic experience affects different aspects of the descendants' life (Kellermann, 2001, p. 259). In the domain of the self, the problem of identity arises. The survivors' children identify themselves with their parents' status (victim/survivor); they feel the need to be *white knights* in order to compensate for their parents' losses; they bear the burden of the replacement role for the killed ancestors/relatives. They do not ask their parents about their *wounds*, even when their presence is unconsciously sensed, in order not to hurt them (Kellermann, 2001, p. 259).

However, it should also be said that “every sorrow is... bearable” only if it is “turned into a story” (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 154). It is our only way to be understood (or create an illusion of being understood) by somebody, to be accepted, even when our “soul has been wounded” (Sirilnik, 2002, p. 154). It is only by talking that we can start belonging (somewhere) and (again) make home (Xenos, 1996; Korać, 2012, p. 37). This topic is extremely important in our society, in which many exiles have found refuge – now neutralized or, to put it more precisely, forgotten. Whether the children of the forcefully exiled ones – the first generation born after the mass exodus to the new environment – feel at home, where they belong and what they know about the suffering of their next of kin – these are the questions to which we must have answers. In our study, we deal with the search for the answers.

Methodological Framework

Subject and Aims of the Research

Our study attempts to find an answer to the question as to how the descendants of the exiles – the generation of children born after their parents’ mass exodus in the 1990s – build their personal, family and collective identity and belonging. We have considered their stories about who they are and where they belong having in mind their refugee background and the experience of family and collective suffering of their next of kin.

The aim of our joint search was to describe their personal, family and collective identities and the feeling of belonging, and to understand the factors mediating identities and belonging. Our starting assumption, based only on rare domestic research of this topic, is as follows: the stories about suffering – about family and collective traumas are kept away from the descendants like family secrets, but they can still sense them. Moreover, we believe that it is a well-known hypothesis that, as descendants of exiles, our respondents face a feeling of incomplete belonging: they are somewhere in between and therefore have no clear idea of where their home is.

Data Collection Method and Research Questions

We devised and realized our study as a qualitative one. We conducted an in-depth interview with our respondents – the second generation of exiles. The interview topics covered three timeframes – the past, the present and the future, as well as different aspects of belonging and identity. These two dimensions are hard to separate, but we separated them solely for analytical purposes and, together with our respondents, we searched for them, asking the respondents who they are, talking about their family past and the family and collective origin and identity, about the feelings that connected them to (family) roots and belonging to the collective, and about the meanings of their origin for them (Table 1). We particularly dealt with the question of home, and indirectly concluded how the personal identity – the answer to the question *Who am I* – is perceived through the family and the collective identities.

The interview was transcribed and then we applied the qualitative content analysis to it. The basic analysis units were the topics: *I*, *identities* and *belonging*. In defining the topics, i.e., categories, we applied the deductive approach. We should also add that the interview topics were at the same time the research questions:

Who am I?; What do I know about the family history?; What do I know about the collective to which I belong?; Where do I belong and what is home to me?

Table 1. Identities and belonging – analysis units.

Topics	
Personal identity	Who am I?
Family identity	Knowledge and sources of knowledge a) about the family's origin and arrival in the new environment b) about the family's suffering in the country of origin
	Meanings and feelings accompanying the stories about suffering because of (un)learnt facts
	Need to know more/less
Collective identity	Knowledge and sources of knowledge a) about the collective to which their parents belong about collective suffering
	Meanings and feelings accompanying knowledge about the collective
Belonging/Home	Where do I belong? Where is my home?

It should also be said that we separated the analysis units for analytical purposes, but they will prove to be so intertwined that they make the backbone of the narrative. With that in mind and trying to understand the content and meanings of the stories about identities to our respondents, we did not separate them in the course of the analysis, nor do we think that it would have been justified from the methodological perspective.

Sample

Our sample included three respondents. The sample is adequate – formed as a snowball: one of the respondents referred us to the second respondent, and the second to the third one. All three respondents fulfilled our three key criteria for selection: 1. they were of the same age; 2. they had a refugee background; and 3. they were born outside their parents' homeland.

Our three respondents – Marko, Veljko and Luka – are all 26 years old; their parents were exiled during 1995, i.e., during 1999 (from Kosovo and Metohija). Marko's and Veljko's others were exposed to the exile trauma several times. Veljko's mother and her family fled Zagreb and went to Kozarska Dubica, and then to Serbia. Veljko is an only child, born in Belgrade. He lives with his parents⁸⁷. Marko's mother passed a similar road with her family: they fled Zavidovići and went to Kosovo and Metohija in 1995 (to Peć) and then, in 1999, during the NATO bombing, to Montenegro, where they still live. Marko was born in Peć. Luka's family was forced to

⁸⁷ Veljko's mother passed away several days after this interview.

migrate from the territory of Krajina to Kosovo and Metohija in 1995, and then his parents went to Banja Luka, where he was born. Then their relocation followed from Banja Luka to Belgrade. Marko and Veljko completed university studies and are both employed, while Luka is studying and working. His parents are divorced; Marko's father and mother live in another country, while Veljko lives with his parents. Their families are relatively well-off: they all have a place to live, and the parents are employed.

Who am I? Or: About Identities

The question with which we opened the stories of our young respondents was: How would you introduce yourself to someone who does not know you? All three of them opted to introduce themselves using the characteristics they find particularly important but may not be visible from outside. Veljko talks about himself by choosing his job as a referential point. He says that he is "...serious and responsible", a hard worker. "I am committed to everything I do, and I never leave anything to chance". This image about himself is corroborated by his employers who "praise him to the maximum".

Luka's self-image is somewhat different. He is fixed on his status of the "eternal student" and, when asked whether he would add anything else to that image – to what manner he would introduce himself – he answers: "By my name and surname. That is my name and surname", he says and continues: "Behind my name and surname stands my family, the heritage". When asked to share with us what his family's heritage was, he answers: "Painful!" Of course, he exempts himself from this experience: "Although I didn't go through all those things" and, from the perspective of complete understanding, he adds: "My family did. Constantly moving, both during and after the war". Immediately afterwards, he completely clearly identifies a particular family tragedy – the feeling of homelessness! "I would say that my family is still undergoing that transition", he says and reveals that his family members have "not yet found their home". He feels that "the process has not been completed although it is practically over".

Marko also begins talking about himself by revealing his personal traits. He says: "I am ambitious; I have a desire to do something for myself and for others. I am a little lazy" – probably because of the delay in his master's studies. However, immediately afterwards, at a deeper level, he expresses doubt about who he really is: "Who knows what I am? I am nobody and nothing!". The confusion about the identity then becomes clearer – the key word helping us to understand why Marko reduces himself to "nobody and nothing" is belonging or, more precisely, non-belonging. "When you ask me who I am, my first association is the feeling of belonging. My impression is that I don't belong to anyone." This feeling is tinted by the family experience. His parents look at Peć at their home, while his home is the small seaside town in which he grew up. "That's why I say that I am nobody and nothing". On the other side, Marko understands why his father and mother still feel that their home is the place to which they will never return. In the new environment, his parents were not accepted, and they could not accept "new people and mentality.

They showed resistance... And then they, both consciously and unconsciously, became distant from the place and from the people. They didn't accept local customs. When I wanted to wear a costume at a carnival or a celebration, they didn't let me. *Just forget that nonsense*. They corrected my newly acquired pronunciation and accent. When I became aware of national affiliation, of the fact that there are Montenegrins and Serbs... That the former raise two fingers and shout *Viva Montenegro*, and that at home my parents say that we are Serbs... It all confused me. Am I Serbian or Montenegrin?" When asked how he resolved this dilemma, he answers that he never did and clarifies it by saying: "I have complete resistance towards all of it. Here I want to be Montenegrin, and there – to be Serbian". His impression is that his parents do not understand the "discrepancy" in him.

These three young men, speaking about who they really are, raise the topics of family and collective identities: how they see themselves is inseparable from their family history and collective belonging which, in Marko's case, is not completely clear. Luka has no dilemma in that respect: his family is "from Krajina", although he does not assume that identity for himself. Nevertheless, he has an idea about who Krajina people are: "Somehow... I think that Krajina people were generally cheerful people in all their troubles. They were cheerful, had a positive attitude towards life. Now it is concealed due to life circumstances because they don't have a circle of friends with whom to share it and be understood. Those people can endure more than other nations". He gives an example from his family history, saying that his grandmother, mother and aunt "went through hell and survived".

Veljko apparently does not relate the story about his identity to the family and the collective, but when asked about it, he completely clearly says that he is "a Serb from Republika Srpska born in Belgrade". Building the threads of his narrative further, he says: "I wasn't happy when we left Bosnia for Serbia. Only my uncle and aunt and my two cousins are alive, and we have no other relations, while literally all of them live in Dubica. All of them! In all the neighbouring houses. I am too attached to the place and the people and it's hard for me every time when I go back to Belgrade". Then, as if negotiating with himself, he states that he does not regret living in Belgrade, but it might have been better if he had stayed "... down there. I wouldn't be so homesick now".

However, it will turn out that our three young respondents knew little about their family history: about the arrival of their families in the new environment or about the suffering of their next of kin. For example, Luka knows very little about how his family arrived in the Republic of Serbia. "In 1995, after the war. I don't know how many days they travelled to get here. I don't know either what happened first. I don't know many things. It is hard to connect what happened at a particular time, why and how. I understand that there was a war, that the Ustasha attacked the town where my grandma, mom and aunt lived. It was a political decision to make Krajina surrender, although it shouldn't have happened. But it did". Then, completely identifying himself with the people in the refugee column, he adds: "I don't see that we had another option but the mother country".

He knows very little about what actually happened in the refugee column. “I don’t know what happened in the caravan. I never even asked”. He says: “I didn’t find it particularly interesting. Probably because it is so far from me. They stayed safe and sound, they pulled through”. Then he reveals seemingly real reasons why he has never been interested in the happenings in the refugee column. “I can’t bother them. Details kill you! That detail can take you back to the emotion, as if you are living it now. Pain, sadness, injustice – those are the emotions I feel”.

Marko’s memories are not different. He knows where his mother ran away from. “From Zavidovići in 1992, but she doesn’t talk about it. And my father – from Peć”. He knows few details about his family’s arrival in the new environment:

1. The story goes that his paternal grandfather had to be carried out of his house because he did not want to leave his town. “If I remember the story well, he grabbed the wardrobe, and they had to peel him off because he didn’t want to leave”.
2. The others did not have a dilemma, to them it was important to “get away safe and sound”.
3. The family faced apprehension for his father’s life because he had stayed in Kosovo and Metohija during war operations. He has learnt a little about how his parents dealt with separation and apprehension from their letters. “I’ve read their letters. Mother’s letter is like a report. Everything is declaratively listed. *We are fine, we are here and there*, while dad’s letter was more emotional. He wrote about his feelings, how he couldn’t wait to see us and for everything to be over, that he missed us and loved us”. And, finally,
4. The conclusion that the place where they came to was not their own choice.

Veljko has slightly more information about his family’s exile. “My mother was born in Zagreb, and from Zagreb they went to Kozarska Dubica because at the beginning of the war the military police came to take my uncle and make him fight for Zenge units⁸⁸. My grandpa said that his son wouldn’t lose his life for them and then they changed houses. I don’t know how it was for them in Zagreb at the beginning of the war. My mother’s life remains incompletely described. We haven’t talked about that topic. My father is from a village near Sanski Most. When the war broke out, they had to go to Dubica. It was very hard. They slept under the tractor, covered only by some nylon. They had no accommodation”. He says that his father’s house was burnt down by the enemy soldiers. “A Muslim wrote on the wall that he’d burnt the house down – he even left his name and his phone number. It was so hard for me to listen about it”.

Just like Luka, Veljko is not interested in learning more about that event, but soon we found out that that there was a defence mechanism behind his alleged lack of

⁸⁸ Zenge is the abbreviated name of the National Guard Corps, the Croatian military formation founded by Franjo Tuđman in April 1991. (Wikipedia, National Guard Corps). They are notorious for the bestialities against the Serbian population and for their attacks on the then still official armed forces of the Yugoslav National Army. They were almost never held accountable for the perpetrated crimes (The perpetrators are known, but there is no punishment even 30 years later, 2021).

interest because it was hard for him to think about it. "When I imagine that situation, I am shaken", he says. Neither he nor the other two respondents want to ask too many questions. "If they don't want to talk, I won't press them", he says. Why their parents are reluctant to talk openly can be found from the following segment of the interview.

We asked our young respondents what they knew about the suffering of their families during the wars waged in the 20th century. As it will turn out, very little. Luka remembers his grandma's stories about the war (she died in the meantime). His grandmother told him about how they lived at the time, what they did, what they dealt with, and Luka had the impression that "she mostly told anecdotes and funny things". She also told him that Luka's uncle, at that time a student at the University of Priština, had been wounded in Kosovo and Metohija during the NATO bombing. He also heard "the stories from the warfront, how someone lost an arm or a leg". All those stories were told Luka at his own initiative: "I happened to be present when they talked about it", except for once. He remembers sitting with his grandmother in the yard. He was interested in what had happened, in hearing the "event timeline". His grandmother then told him about the massacre in Medački džep in the 1990s and about the slaughter of the Serbs in the Glina church back in 1941. However, his grandmother failed to share with him the fact that several members of his close family had been bestially killed both in the last war and in the Second World War. Therefore, when asked *Did any of your family members die in these wars?*, this young man answers: "I don't know!" He would not like to find out about it either. He also says why not: "I am burdened by it. I can't take so much information. It isn't the time for it. What should I accept from all of it", he wonders. Who was who, what decisions they made, how they were killed, who they were killed by. It would be burdensome. And how would it affect my life? "Well... It would only deepen my feeling of isolation and loneliness. I don't deal with it because it looks like a trauma that would take me time to heal", he reasons correctly.

Marko's knowledge about family tragedies related to the war is also quite scarce. He knows that his mother's uncle, who she was quite close with, was killed, but Marko does not know exactly how and where. In fact, this is what he says: "Believe me, I don't know anything about it". The reasons for it do not lie in his lack of interest: "I'd like to know more", but in the fact that it is indirectly forbidden to start this story. "My mother doesn't like talking about it. Neither does my grandma, and I don't ask them much in order not to hurt them". Marko feels torn between the need to protect his mother and grandmother, who never talked about her dear brother's death, and his own discomfort for being reproached for not knowing what happened. "It's logical to know more about it". No one has ever told him anything about the WW2 suffering and, when asked how he explains it, this young man answers: "Hmmm, why? They went through two wars in their lifetime and that's probably why they didn't think about it". We believe that what Marko wanted to say is that they wished to leave everything in the past, to forget everything.

He is not familiar with what happened in his father's family either. In the last war (1999), no one from the family was killed. "I've asked questions", Marko says, "but

no one has ever told me anything, so I guess that no one was killed". However, there is a story about suffering that has been cut deep in his memory. He learnt about it by accident. "One day, a CD was sent to my father. It was a gift from a *gusle* player and that was the first time I saw my dad crying. I was about 10 or 12 at the time. My father told me a few things about what had happened and who the musician had sung the song about – the man who took part in rescuing their village. The Albanians caught him and tortured him several days before killing him". He says that his father still talks reluctantly about that event, only when Marko insists on it. However, he does not ask too many questions. "I don't want to burden them. I have the impression that, in case I raised a difficult topic, they'd start thinking about it and become sad. I protect them in a way by not asking any questions", he adds.

Veljko learnt from his father what had happened in the last two wars. In fact, when it comes to his family suffering during the Second World War, he says that he knows "literally nothing. I know only that my grandfather was among the bravest fighters on the front and that he was awarded a medal after the battle of Sutjeska. That is only what my dad knows too because little was spoken about it. As my dad says, grandfather avoided talking about those topics". He knows very little about the last war although he is interested in what actually happened. He gets an opportunity to learn something only when his father and his uncle meet, because others do not discuss those topics. "The two of them talk about it. Perhaps more in a comic way, not to frighten me with terrible things", this young man concludes correctly. "They skip some parts and tell me interesting things with fewer grim details. They usually say that *a friend was killed there* and put a stop to it. We don't go into details". He has an impression that he does not know enough. When asked whether he would like to know more about the events mentioned by his father and uncle, Veljko answers: "I am both interested and not. Why should I make it hard for them when it's already hard for them to talk about it", he seems to wonder.

When it comes to stories about the suffering of the collective to which they belong (?), Luka, Marko and Veljko identify themselves with victims, talk about their own feelings and, despite feeling fury and anger towards executioners, as well as towards those who initiate forgetting, they show an enviable degree of maturity. For example, Marko feels anger, disappointment, injustice, negative emotions, negative emotions at the somatic level. "My stomach is virtually upset", he says, recognizing fury towards the killers of his father's friends, "towards the NATO Pact, towards the West, towards all those I consider guilty, and towards our people and society because it could have been prevented". Nevertheless, he adds. "Who is guilty and who is not? I don't even know what to think".

Although he did not feel any suffering, as he says, "on his own skin", Veljko sympathizes with the families of the killed Serbs. "Those people are gone... Many of them got married before going to war and then they were killed. And what are the children of those dead fighters now doing? That is what crosses my mind", he says and adds. "For God's sake, may it never repeat and may no one ever experience anything similar". Luka is convinced that the stories about the collective suffering are "politically tinted" and that "some terrible things are predicted. I feel resistance to it.

It affects me, especially when the number of casualties is reduced". He is particularly embittered by those he finds responsible for keeping such suffering from oblivion. "The government must do that, it must be done at the Republic level", while his impression is that "everything is just opposite. As if they wanted everything that had happened to be forgotten".

Forgetting the family and collective suffering, although they know very little about it, is unacceptable to all three of them. When asked about the future, when they as parents will decide whether to tell these stories to their children, all three of them are certain that they will tell their children, when they are old enough, about their (exile) origin, about the family and collective suffering. To Luka, it is important because: "my children should know where they come from, that they are not rootless, that they have some Krajina blood". He thinks that he will not "poison his children from the earliest age. No, because I could hurt them emotionally by making them take on the load that does not belong to them". This young man reasons quite maturely: he does not want to let the stories about the family and collective suffering affect the relationship his children will have to other nations and nationalities. Veljko is also certain that he will tell his children about where they come from. "I bet they will also be interested in it just the way I was. I will take them to Dubica", and immediately adds: "It needs to be known where someone comes from. You cannot go around the world without knowing it".

But where do these three young men belong? Where is their home?

Belonging and Home: Where are Actually Those Places?

In the very first words they said, Marko and Luka revealed ambivalent feelings about the question of belonging. Or, to put it differently, the two of them are neither here nor there. "As if I don't have my own place anywhere", Luka says and, as if self-negotiating, he adds: "Maybe it is the town in which I was born?". Then he answers: "Not even there". Marko also says that there is not a single place where he feels that "he is on his own land. Wherever I go, some questions trouble me. I don't consider Belgrade my home. Neither is Prčanj, although I would like to live down there".

These stories about non-belonging and not having one's own place are not difficult to understand. Both of them faced peer non-acceptance. Marko was discriminated "because others knew his parents were Serbs. I was undesirable in the company. Once I played with a boy whose father was a Montenegrin radical. Then an older boy asked him *why he played with me because I was a Serb.*" Knowing that Marko's family had fled Peć, children at school called him "Shqiptar", and his family has not been accepted even now by the environment in which they live. "They say that the restaurant owned by my parents is a *chetnik* place".

Veljko's feeling of non-belonging is less pronounced. However, he says that he does not consider himself a Belgrader, although he was born there. "Maybe my children will feel like that one day", he says, associating his home and belonging with another, much closer place. "My family comes from the foot of Grmeč Mountain". He adds that his father and mother ("always inseparable") live for the day when they

will return there because they are not complete here. "They always miss something; they miss being there, across the Drina River". He admits: "I also miss it!". We should add that Veljko, just like Luka and Marko, also experienced discrimination by his peers. "I had many problems in primary school. They called me Muslim because of my different dialect. I was ostracized. That badly affects children of that age. It affected me too. I was depressed and kept crying. And I was glad when I finally left my primary school". Finally, his family was not accepted in the new environment either. "My mom and dad were asked *what they were doing here because they were refugees!*" Immediately afterwards, he maturely concludes: "You can't talk like that about someone because you don't know what they've been through".

Discussion

Our starting assumption that the segments of family and collective history related to suffering were insufficiently familiar to these young people proved to be justified. In fact, all three of them probably conclude quite correctly that they know very little about it. These stories are kept like family secrets and our respondents think that those secrets should not be revealed because in that manner they would sadden their parents (Marko and Veljko), on the one hand. On the other hand, one of them – Luka – stays away from those stories because they produce the feeling of stronger isolation and loneliness in him. In fact, neither Marko nor Veljko are deprived of these feelings: pain, sorrow, disappointment.

The answer to the question *who they are* has revealed significant threads of their identity. Their personal traits – an insufficiently successful student, an ambitious yet lazy young man, or the one praised for his diligence by his employers – are only introductory parts of the story about their identity. Namely, who our Luka, Marko and Veljko are also determines the question of their belonging to the collective and then the place of their home. Since he has the impression that he does not belong anywhere, that he does not have a place of his own and that he is neither here nor there, Marko says that he is "nobody and nothing in that respect". Luka also states not having a metaphorical home – the place that is his, while he tries to negotiate his unfortunate life position and make it better by recalling his family's heritage and origin. It is very difficult, but at the same time magnificent. Veljko does not seem to have such dilemmas – after all, he belongs more to those "living at the foot of Grmeč Mountain".

It seems that in the image about who they are, Marko, Luka and Veljko are not defined only by personal traits, but also by their family and collective heritage, and that an important role in it is played by their answer to the question: Where is my home; where do I belong?

Home and *belonging* are particularly difficult topics for them. The former cannot go without the latter. For something to be a home, "it takes people, friends, family. It is important for me to be accepted in the environment in which I live and also to accept those people myself. It is two-way" (Marko). Home is "the place where I feel good and to be like that, people must be normal, look at you like a man and not like a

refugee” (Luka). “Home is the place where my whole family lives. The place where your heart takes you” (Veljko). The three of them, in particular Marko and Luka, feel that they do not belong anywhere. They are neither here nor there. One of them feels “like a foreigner”, while the other has the impression that he “does not have a place of his own anywhere”. Unlike them, by looking pointedly at his “Dubica”, Veljko has realized that his home is “across the Drina River”. That little Bosnian town becomes a mythical place in his narrative – so special that this young man cannot find words to describe it (“that’s the way Dubica is!”). He is equally unable to describe the relief he feels when “he gets there”.

We believe that the physical space gives a framework for the formation of the identity and belonging, while its absence and/or contamination by contradicting attitudes about the questions of home creates confusion and emotional pain. There are certainly other factors involved in that process and, thinking about the factors modelling the feeling of non-belonging, of the absence of a place that would be marked as home by these young people, we observed at least one astonishing similarity. It is not being accepted in the new environment – their families faced discrimination, but they themselves were the object of peer ridicule because of the dialect they used and their supposed origin. In the primary school, Luka, Marko and Veljko were labelled as Croatian, Albanian or Muslim. These wrongly ascribed identities have a malignant effect on those whose families have been traumatized by family and collective suffering. About what it means to the “refugee schoolboy” (Demić, 2008: 115) to be made equal to “...his pursuers, who do not leave him even in his dreams”, Mirko Demić nicely says: “This type of cruelty falls on (his) already wounded back. He falters and crawls under every blow. And he finds it harder to recover.”

Conclusion

These days we have stood witness to the shocking reality: according to official data found on the UN website, as many as 88,000 people have fled Nagorno Karabakh in Azerbaijan and went to Armenia (UNa, s.a.). Other sources claim that the number is even higher, amounting to about 100,000 refugees (UNb, s.a.). Palestine and Israel have met their downfall: the escalation of the decades-long conflict has reached terrible proportions, and it is quite likely that innumerable Palestinians from Gaza will lose their homes and/or lives.

Such conflict outcomes could not be expected in the time we live in, in which human rights are put to the forefront. However, we know very well that the extent of enjoying the rights is reversely proportionate to man’s economic and social status and, doubtlessly, related to his national affiliation as well. There is a series of testimonies to the latter, and we will draw the reader’s attention to the evidence provided by official reports of the Serbian National Council from Zagreb (see: Serb National Council, s.a.). Just a brief look at the status of the Serbian community in its homeland reveals discrimination in the domain of the right to employment, education, property and other rights. Moreover, the members of the Serbian community are exposed to hate speech and crimes. However, neither their homeland

nor, presumably, their mother country, is interested very much in their status. There is mostly silence about their troubles. Their compatriots, the people who were exiled from Banija, Kordun, Lika, Dalmatia and Slavonija and who decided to stay in their mother country, are in a similar position. It is not spoken about the horrors their families and the entire collective went through during the wars in the 20th century. In fact, it seems forbidden to open up these stories, except in those cases when it can bring political points. Nevertheless, we know from experience that denying reality does not make it disappear. The refugees, excluding those 25,330 who kept that status, may have been naturalized, whatever it means, but the cruel reality is that “the seal of refugeedom is indelible and undeniable, because that experience cannot disappear” (Demić, 2008, p. 115).

The tragedy of the society in which the exiles found themselves and of their personal, family and collective suffering lies in the fact that refugeedom never ceases, even when we formally become citizens of a new country. It is the experience and belief that we do not belong either here or there, or that we belong both here and there, but nowhere completely. Moreover, it seems that such feeling and experience *of not having the place for oneself anywhere* can be passed on trans-generationally. Non-belonging is in all probability a trauma because it is a permanent testimony of metaphorical homelessness. And to belong, to be rooted, as Fromm teaches us, is one of the basic human needs.

In the end, we need to mention again our three respondents. We believe that these young men are deeply wounded by the tragedies of their families and of the collective they belong to, and we ask whether there is anyone responsible for their feelings and what needs to be done in order to make them heal. Without denying individual and family responsibility for personal welfare, we believe that the community in which they live and the one that has renounced them have a crucial role. The fact is that these sufferings are not spoken about and that it is imperative to forget the horror stories. Such request sent to the victims and their descendants by the recipient society as well as the one that traumatized them can be classified as the most serious crime (Hulsman, 2009). Therefore, the only medicine is to open and release these stories.

Our heroes' wounds otherwise will never heal because what has been taken away from them – and everyone who has been exiled knows what it is – will quite possibly remain “unattainable” forever (Demić, 2008, p. 115).

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ПРИПАДНОСТ И ИДЕНТИТЕТИ ДРУГЕ ГЕНЕРАЦИЈЕ ПРОГНАНИКА – ТРИ СТУДИЈЕ СЛУЧАЈА

Сажетак

У раду се бавимо трагањем за одговором на питање како потомци прогнаника самопреговарају око питања личног, породичног и колективног идентитета и припадности у свјетлу искустава колективне трауме којој су у ратовима 90-их година XX вијека били изложени чланови њихових породица. Претпоставке од којих смо кренули су –

да се трагедије породица и колектива чувају као породичне тајне, да наши млади саговорници о томе имају мало сазнања и да оправдано претпостављају да су приче о тим догађајима до њих стигле тек у фрагментима. Надаље, како се потомци прогнаника суочавају са „крњом припадношћу”: нису ни овдје ни тамо, немају јасну представу о томе гдје је дом. Да бисмо провјерили ове хипотезе, разговарали смо са тројицом младића који су рођени након прогона њихових породица и колектива са вијековних огњишта. Наши саговорници су потврдили да се о породичним трагедијама ријетко кад прича, али мисао о постојању таквих тајни повремено „прелива” у њихову свијест и изазива низ непријатних осјећања. Они стално самопреговарају око тога: Ко су и гдје припадају? Не могу да се изјасне око питања идентитета, а у тој условно речено забуни, одржава их чврсто опредјељење њихових родитеља да и сами припадају негдје другдје, као и чињеница да су сва тројица била изложена одбацивању од стране вршњака из средине у којој су одрастали јер су били препознати као *другачији*. Ови налази би требало да нас забрину и да нас подстакну да се и у домену јавног дискурса, и у научном пољу више бавимо темом прогонства и идентитета, будући да добар дио становника наше земље у свом (не)посредном искуству носи трауму прогона и оправдано је претпоставити осјећај „бездомства”. Коначно, у сусрету са оваквом људском патњом није етично ћутати.

Кључне ријечи: прогон, колективна траума, идентитет, дом.

THE IDENTITY OF BELGRADE: RECOGNIZABILITY AND SYMBOLS⁸⁹

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the identity of Belgrade based on Nas' modified typology of urban symbolism. The city's identity is defined as a set of "unique features that ensure its continuous recognizability and distinguish it from any other city". Urban symbols are recognized as the basis of the city's identity and can be divided into the following categories: material symbolism (material urban configuration), discursive (stories about the city), personal/iconic (famous personalities), behavioral (patterns of collective behavior), emotional, gastronomic and sign symbolism.

The paper has two main goals: to examine which symbolisms are present in the identity of Belgrade and to identify the most significant symbols that form the core of Belgrade's identity based on two exploratory surveys realized by the Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy as a part of the project "Territorial Capital in Serbia – Structural and Action Potential of Local Development", conducted at the end of 2018/beginning of 2019 and in April/May 2021, respectively.

Keywords: urban identity, symbol, behavioral symbolism, Belgrade

Introduction

The paper begins by determining the urban identity as a whole of "unique features and characteristics that ensure the permanent recognition of the city" based on which

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the city is unique and different from other cities (Backović & Spasić, 2014). The identity of Belgrade is analysed using Nas' modified typology of urban symbolism (Nas, 1998; Nas, Jaffe & Samuels, 2006; Nas, De Groot & Schut, 2011; Spasić & Backović, 2017). Exploring urban symbolism is based on data from two empirical exploratory surveys realised as part of the "Territorial Capital in Serbia—Structural and Action Potential of Local Development" project. Surveys were conducted with different experts: foreign experts who lived and worked in Belgrade at the time of the research, local experts whose work is related to foreign companies, and representatives of the academic community in Belgrade.

There are two main goals of the paper. The first is to examine which symbolisms are present in Belgrade's identity, and the second is to identify the most significant symbols that form the core of Belgrade's identity. Additionally, although it is not possible to directly compare the identity perceptions of different professionals, it will be noted whether differences are observed.

Theoretical Framework

In analysing the recognition and symbols of Belgrade in this text, the typology of symbolism is applied. It has been previously used in the analysis of the identity of Belgrade⁹⁰ (Spasić & Backović, 2020), as well as other cities in Serbia (Backović & Spasić, 2016; Spasić & Backović, 2017), and it follows Nas's typology of symbolism (Nas, 1998; Nas, Jaffe & Samuels, 2006; Nas, De Groot & Schut, 2011). Urban symbols stand out as the main elements of a city's identity through which the city is recognised. As there are different types of urban symbols, Nas et al. create a typology of symbolism formed on urban "symbol bearers" and distinguish between material, discursive, personal/iconic, behavioral and emotional symbolism.

Material symbolism mainly consists of material urban elements that include various symbols, such as the architecture of the city (including the main street, old center, and buildings in general), historical monuments and structures (namely religious sites, historical landmarks like fortress walls and old towns), cultural institutions (like theaters and museums), and archaeological sites. This category also includes the relationship between the built and natural environment, including incorporating the city into nature or the presence of nature, i.e. green areas, in the city.

Discursive symbolism refers to narratives about the city and its (self) presentation in official presentations (publications of the city administration, official websites), tourist guides, works of art such as films, literature, and paintings, as well as in popular culture, newspapers, television, the internet, maps, street names, advertisements, and logos. Some of these narratives may represent a stereotypical image of the city or region and include jokes, anecdotes, and specific traits of local characters.⁹¹ When a city is recognized by famous persons who were born or created

⁹⁰ Starting from a different theoretical perspective, Bogdanović presents an important insight into Belgrade's identity from the point of view of children (Bogdanović, 2022).

⁹¹ When this type of symbolism also includes characteristic features of local mentalities, it overlaps with the behavioral type.

in it, it is a matter of personal symbolism (in Nas's typology, it is called iconic). Famous artists (writers, actors, painters, singers), athletes, historical political figures, and also contemporary politicians can become the symbol of a particular city.

Behavioral symbolism refers mostly to collective behavior patterns such as exhibitions, festivals, and fairs. Additionally, it covers other structured and regular behavior patterns that occur within a city, including festivals, ceremonies, processions, parades and demonstrations. Secondly, it implies a unique activity that characterizes and develops in a particular city, and since it is recognized outside the city, it is connected to its identity. Emotional symbolism represents a transversal dimension that is refracted in other types of symbolism, and it is made up of the residents' feelings towards the elements (places, symbols) of the city's identity. Different emotions can be developed according to each type of urban symbol. These emotions can change over time, and all city inhabitants don't have to share them. Also, emotional symbolism can function as a separate category. Asserting this category as a particular type of symbolism makes it possible to single out cases in which emotions play a more important role than elsewhere.

Gastronomic symbolism is also included in the typology of symbolism because food and drink are important elements of city identity in the self-description of cities in Serbia. This symbolism includes specific foods and drinks that are associated with a particular city/area. Also, sign symbolism is added to the typology. It consists of abstract symbols that function as "signs" of the city's identity; it is the most saturated of all with symbolization because materiality recedes and gives way to signification. Examples of sign symbolism are the city's coat of arms, the city's charter or a "localized marker" (a material object that has become a city metaphor) (Spasić & Backović, 2017, pp. 28–34; Spasić & Backović, 2020, pp. 572–573).

Methodological Framework

Analysis of the urban identity of Belgrade is based on data from two surveys. In the first research, "Territorialization of transnational discourses and practices in Belgrade", interviews were conducted with experts – local population (21) and foreign citizens (21)⁹² who live and work in Belgrade. The research was conducted at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. The second, online research "Everyday life in a globalizing city – discourses and practices of employees at universities in Belgrade" was conducted in April and May 2021. The sample comprises 230 respondents – members of the academic community in Belgrade employed at the University of Belgrade and the University of Arts. The Institute for Sociological Research team carried out both research projects.

⁹² For interviews, codes were used: RD for local professionals, RF for foreign professionals, and the serial number.

Analysis of Belgrade Identity – Recognizability and Symbols: 24/7 & Kalemegdan + Confluence

The perspective of foreign and local experts

The study of Belgrade's urban identity begins with the presentation of the results of the first research. According to the findings, the axial dimension of Belgrade's identity is behavioral symbolism (Spasić & Backović, 2020, p. 573). Belgrade is recognized as a city with a soul, a lively city where people are open and friendly, and a city with a rich nightlife. However, it is essential to note that the city's atmosphere is not only about the vibrant nightlife but also about the impression that the city lives 24 hours a day. This means you can have a good time all day because everyday life takes place in cafes, bars, and restaurants at night and during the day.⁹³

People are much more outgoing then in any other place that I've been to. (RF12)

On the positive side, it is alive 24/7. I've noticed that in many cities I've been to, there's no place you can go after certain hours. Also, a social moment concerns the hospitality of people in Belgrade. (RD6)

A peculiar type of disorganization, chaos, and inconsistency also marks Belgrade's identity. This can be seen in the city's bad traffic and inadequate maintenance of its streets and buildings.

Unfortunately, Belgrade is dirtier than other cities: many cigarettes and dog poop. (RF9)

As I said before, the negative side is related to the disastrously organized traffic. (RF1)

Other European cities are more orderly, cleaner and walkable but also emptier. I think it's not good that some things work 24 hours a day, which is not good from the point of view of employees; it's good from the point of view that you have access to everything. While in European cities you can say fixed working hours and that's it, there is no life after that. (RD13)

That disorganization refers to behaviour and structure and it can be viewed positively and negatively. It is related to breaking some rules that are not possible to break in other European cities. For example, some shops stay open 24 hours a day, and smoking is permitted indoors. This unique feature adds to the city's atmosphere and charm and makes it more lively. It should also be mentioned that the modification of the urban matrix indicates unplanned development of the city. Radical "cuts" were implemented in the city space, during which the existing urban

⁹³ More about the relationship between pedestrian zones and restaurant facilities, and commercialization of space in Belgrade in Radović, 2023.

configuration and heritage were not considered (Kadijević, 2017).⁹⁴ This kind of urban development is different from the development of other major European cities. Although Belgrade throughout history tried to organize and develop according to European standards, the intention was not fully realized (Stojanović, 2008). In addition, or because of this, the city space has not been commercialized to the same extent as in other European cities, so no artificial/generic city has been created. The city centre is not exclusively a tourist location, and real life is more present in it, which also contributes to creating a specific city atmosphere. Foreigners/tourists have the opportunity to get to know the city and its inhabitants better, thus one of the peculiarities of Belgrade is the experience of the town in which people live.

Belgrade doesn't strike me as a really tourist city compared to other places that I've seen in Europe, just feels more like a place to live. (RF11)

In other cities there are specifically tourist centers, the downtown is for them exclusively, everything is in English, there is always a tourist route that you take. And on the other side there is the section where inhabitants live. Here, it's all jumbled, so tourists find it a little bit harder to find their way, but I still think this is better because they can feel the spirit of the place. (RD8)

Discursive symbolism has a role in Belgrade's identity – there are stories that influenced the formation of the city's image as a city of entertainment. Some respondents criticize such an image and start a discussion about whether such an image of the city should exist since, in that way, the city's cultural offer and its cultural and historical heritage are neglected. And the city is all about having a good time.

It's terrible that we only offer those rafts, it's terrible and terrible, there are more valuable things... And I believe that we, as Belgrade, have a much better offer, historical and cultural, than we present, and that's what chronically stresses me out. Because we became known for rafts, going out and parties... (RD9)

Material symbolism is also present in the city's identity. When choosing the city's symbol, as expected, Kalemegdan and the river, the Sava and the Danube, the confluence, the view of the rivers, and the view of the city are most often cited. These landmarks are frequently mentioned together as they are often experienced as a whole. The city of Belgrade is recognized by the magnificent panorama visible when crossing the Branko's Bridge – on one side, there is a view of New Belgrade, while on the other side, there is a view of Kalemegdan fortress and the Cathedral Church⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ The city's unplanned development affects both behavioral and material symbolism. Material symbolism was also influenced by wars throughout history; in the 20th century, Belgrade was destroyed, in the First and Second World Wars and in 1999. These impacts are a complex topic that requires a separate analysis.

⁹⁵ Cathedral Church of St. Archangel and Michael (church of the Orthodox population).

I think it's Kalemegdan, that is. 'Pobednik'⁹⁶ and that view of the rivers, or the view from the other side, from the side of Novi Beograd and Zemun, the view of the river and the fortress. I think that the position of Belgrade is phenomenal... and it is a powerful symbol of Belgrade. (RD18)

For me, that symbol of Belgrade is Kalemegdan... This image when you come from Zemun, from the direction of Zemun across the bridge, and you look at that panorama from the Cathedral Church, Kalemegdan. (RF21)

Individual buildings recognized as city symbols include the Temple of St. Sava, Knez Mihailova Street, the Knez Mihailo Monument, the Cathedral Church and Gardoš.⁹⁷ The urban green areas of Topčider and Košutnjak⁹⁸ are mentioned, although not often.

It should be emphasized that an important motif of material symbolism is visual-stylistic, but also historical diversity and mixture. It fits into the already described pattern of contradictions – Belgrade as a place of influence of various cultures because it was at the border throughout history.

There is a socialist architecture that can be seen in the centre and the suburbs, then a mix of pre-war architecture, then something from the Milošević era, as well as some more modern buildings. It all ends up looking like some magical realism. (laughter) It is impossible to categorize Belgrade into something that has already been seen and accepted. (RD3)

If you go to Zemun, it's a bit of Austria or Hungary. If you are in Kalemegdan and look behind you, that is Turkey. For me, that is so interesting, a mix of everything. Even the language has Turkish words and words from many countries. (RF6)

If we talk about combining different types of symbolism, the point of connection, the materiality of the city's soul and its specific atmosphere are cafes, restaurants and *kafane*⁹⁹. These are the places that make it possible to lead that life. In particular, Skadarlija stands out; in this case, three types of symbolism are combined; in addition to the behavioral and material, there is also a gastronomic one.

The perspective of academia

The following text presents the results of the online research conducted with members of the academic community in Belgrade. Compared to previous research, the question in this survey explored the recognition and symbol of the city in a

⁹⁶ The Monument of the Victor (known as Pobednik), a statue in Kalemegdan Park, the work of Ivan Meštrović, a famous Croatian and Yugoslav artist. It was built in honor of the victory of the Serbian army in the Balkan wars and the First World War with the support of King Aleksandar Karađorđević.

⁹⁷ Neighborhood located in Belgrade's municipality of Zemun, located on the slopes of the hill of the same name. With its tower and preserved old architecture, Gardoš is the major historical landmark of Zemun.

⁹⁸ Košutnjak and Topčider are park-forests and neighborhood of Belgrade.

⁹⁹ About changes in *kafana* more in Milanović, 2018.

somewhat different way¹⁰⁰, and due to that, material symbolism dominates. Tables 1 and 2 provide answers to the question of what makes Belgrade recognizable/what is its symbol (first answer and total). Most respondents chose one of the categories of material symbolism (57.6%), especially Kalemegdan fortress 27.4%, as the city's most recognisable feature. This is followed by responses that can be classified into the already recognized category of behavioral symbolism, such as lively city, nightlife, atmosphere, bars and restaurants, which accounts for 19.8% of responses. The category of behavioral symbolism also includes people who contribute to the lively atmosphere of the city with their openness and hospitality. Members of the academic community in Belgrade (10.8%) also mentioned negative features such as bad traffic, crowding, criticism of nightlife and accelerated commercialization of urban space. In addition, perceived disorganization, which is one of the negative features, also shapes the atmosphere of the city.

Table 1. What makes Belgrade recognizable?¹⁰¹ (first answer).

	frequencies	%
Bihevioral simbolism		
Lively city, nightlife, atmosphere, bars, restaurants	42	19.8
People - openness and hospitality	25	11.8
Negative features	23	10.8
Material symbolism		
Kalemegdan fortress	58	27.4
Rivers, confluence	36	17.0
Dorćol, historical core of Belgrade	1	0.5
The Temple of Saint Sava	2	0.9
Tradition, history	2	0.9
River island Ada Ciganlija	2	0.9
The Avala Tower	3	1.4
Skadarlija, bohemian part of the Belgrade city	1	0.5
Cultural offer ¹⁰²	3	1.4
The statue "Pobednik", in Kalemegdan park	5	2.4
City center, Knez Mihailova Street	1	0.5
New Belgrade	3	1.4
A blend of traditional and modern	5	2.4
Total	212	100

¹⁰⁰ In the first survey, the respondents were asked two questions: what is Belgrade recognizable by, and what is the symbol of the city? In this research, only one question was asked: In your opinion, what makes Belgrade recognizable (symbol of Belgrade)?, which influenced respondents to answer more specifically.

¹⁰¹ The question was open-ended, and respondents' answers were subsequently coded. Material symbolism is represented by individual indicators; it is a matter of concrete symbols. Since behavioral symbolism is a more fluid category, it includes more indicators related to the special atmosphere of the city and related features.

¹⁰² Where there is more emphasis on cultural content, e.g., festivals – BITEF, FEST, BEMUS – this category belongs to behavioral symbolism. Since the respondents didn't mention them and thought of institutions that provide culture, they are classified as material symbolism.

In the category of material symbolism, the rivers and confluence were singled out by 17% of respondents. Although it is not often seen separately from Kalemegdan fortress, 'Pobednik' can still be recognized as an independent city symbol (2.4%).

The following table presents all the answers to Belgrade's symbol/recognizability, regardless of the order in which the respondents stated them. If we analyze all the answers regarding the symbol of Belgrade, we can see that Kalemegdan fortress (21.4%) does not dominate to such an extent as when we only observe the first choice, the category of behavioral symbolism – lively city, nightlife, atmosphere, bars and restaurants, almost is approaching (19.1%). However, when we look at all the categories of material symbolism together, 61.3% choose them, while 37.9% opt for the categories of behavioral symbolism.

Table 2. What makes Belgrade recognizable? (total).

	frequencies	%
Bihevioral simbolism		
Lively city, nightlife, atmosphere, bars, restaurants	73	19.1
People - openness and hospitality	43	11.2
Negative features	29	7.6
Material symbolism		
Kalemegdan fortress	82	21.4
Rivers, confluence	60	15.7
Dorćol, historical core of Belgrade	6	1.6
The Temple of Saint Sava	10	2.6
Tradition, history	5	1.3
River island Ada Ciganlija	8	2.1
Park-forest Košutnjak	3	0.8
The Avala Tower	5	1.3
Skadarlija, bohemian part of the Belgrade city	11	2.9
Cultural offer	9	2.3
The statue "Pobednik"	12	3.1
City center, Knez Mihailova Street	7	1.8
Gardoš, Zemun	4	1.0
New Belgrade	7	1.8
A blend of traditional and modern	9	2.3
Total	383	100

Respondents then pick rivers and confluence by 15.7% (material symbolism), and people – openness and hospitality by 11.2% (behavioral symbolism). It should be noted that when they chose the symbols of the city, they usually listed several of them; however, when they highlighted negative characteristics, it was mostly a description of the condition, so it was coded as one response. For this reason, this category of behavioral symbolism is less represented in the total number of responses (7.6%).

The category blend of traditional and modern belongs to material symbolism, but it is also reflected in the atmosphere as an unexpected mixture. This category shows the connection between material and behavioral symbolism. Skadarlija also contains

a combination of behavioral, material and discursive symbolism, which was also noticed in the first research. Belgrade has a unique atmosphere and is known for its nightlife and 24/7 entertainment, and Skadarlija (2.9%) stands out as one of its symbols.

Nightlife (I rarely go out, but foreigners who come to visit us say that this is what Belgrade is known for). (IS107)

Nightlife, feeling safe (foreigners mostly say this). (IS125)

The life and liveliness of people that lasts 24/7 do not go out and do not die down. It is fantastic, in contrast to the world's metropolises, where sometimes, in the centre of a large European city, there are no pedestrians after 8 p.m. (IS130). (IS130)

Meeting people in cafes, bars, and restaurants, friendliness and openness. (IS144)

Streets, cafes, and shopping centres are full of locals at all times of the day :) To me, Belgrade has a certain spirit. (IS156)

Skadarlija, Kalemegdan, Temple of Saint Sava. (IS37)

The category of negative characteristics, in addition to poor traffic and infrastructure, includes criticism of nightlife and the image of the city as an entertainment city. However, it should be emphasized that the focus is primarily on the direction of the city's development.

The possibility of cheap entertainment, good food, oriental music, and rather unrestrained behavior that is considered a culturally acceptable integral part of local folklore. (IS50)

As I hear, specific "turbo" nightlife (rafts, etc.). (IS67)

Belgrade's contemporary development is dominated by space commercialisation, which leads to the loss of local specificities. The respondents clearly acknowledged this trend and expressed their disappointment with the city's current situation, much more than in the first research.

There are fewer and fewer specificities that Belgrade has compared to other cities. Of the remaining: Kalemegdan, Skadarlija, Ada Ciganlija, Avala. (IS36)

Everything that was destroyed – Savamala, the banks of rivers + people. (IS58)

Subjective: Position (Kalemegdan + confluence, the image I think of when I think of Belgrade, which is now obscured and corrupted by Belgrade on the water). (IS96)

Kalemegdan, formerly Skadarlija, but it is becoming more and more commercialized and losing its identity. (IS162)

Nothing more, he turned into a shapeless mass that can be seen everywhere in the world. Even though the people are not what they used to be, arrogance and arrogance prevail. (IS163)

Honestly, I don't even know what the symbol of Belgrade is anymore. My family has lived in Belgrade for a whole century... but that Belgrade no longer exists... (IS177)

Now nothing more, they destroyed everything they could; beautifully preserved houses built between the two wars (the thirties) are still being demolished, every other house (shop) on Knez Mihailova Street is closed, the windows are plastered with wrapping paper, the city centre is depressed... (IS190)

To fully encompass the identity of Belgrade, it is important to pay attention to the less frequently mentioned answers. Apart from the Pobednik, the Temple of Saint Sava is also considered as a specific symbol (2.6%). Furthermore, Belgrade is perceived as a space of fusion and mixing of influences that are manifested in visual diversity, stylistic heterogeneity and the soul of the city (2.3%). This feature adds to the already described contradiction, which is one of the defining elements of the city's identity.

Its cultural-historical heritage, geographical location, parks and ambient units. All this together gives it features of antiquity and modernity, as well as a specific atmosphere. (IS81)

Geographical location. A fusion of Western and Oriental cultural heritage. (IS105)

Objectively: a mixture of everything. (IS96)

It is a combination of tradition, luxury, socialism, and poverty. It is a city of great contrasts – and I think that makes it special. (IS203)

The parts of the city that stand out are Dorćol (1.6%), the city centre¹⁰³ (1.8%), Zemun (1%) and New Belgrade¹⁰⁴ (1.8%). Socialist heritage is especially recognized as a peculiarity, and therefore, New Belgrade and its modernist/brutalist architecture.¹⁰⁵

Facilities on the rivers, urban units adapted for artists (Cigлана nine¹⁰⁶, Cetinjska¹⁰⁷, Savamala¹⁰⁸, BIGZ¹⁰⁹), brutalist architecture in New Belgrade. (IS73)

Everything that bears the stamp of socialist heritage in a positive sense. (IS103)

New Belgrade, “world of concrete and steel”, post-apocalyptic. (IS154)

¹⁰³ Especially Knez Mihailova Street.

¹⁰⁴ New Belgrade is urban neighborhood of Belgrade, the business center and the example of the socialist modernism in Yugoslavia.

¹⁰⁵ More about the possibilities of using modernist architecture in emphasizing the recognizability of Belgrade in Manić & Backović, 2010.

¹⁰⁶ The building in the old industrial part of the city adapted for cultural events.

¹⁰⁷ Cetinjska street is located in the Belgrade municipality of Stari Grad and is synonymous with the night life of the city.

¹⁰⁸ Savamala was one of the oldest and poorest parts of Belgrade, today it is a modern city quarter on the banks of the Sava River.

¹⁰⁹ BIGZ Palace is the work of architect Dragiša Brašovan, built in 1940. At first it was used as the premises of the State Printing Office, and then as the premises of one of the most respected publishers in Belgrade, after which it was named.

Concluding Remarks

The paper examines two objectives: which symbolisms make up Belgrade's identity and which are the city's most significant symbols. Based on the presented results, it can be concluded that the identity of Belgrade mainly consists of behavioral, material, and discursive symbolism, while personal, gastronomic, and sign symbolism are not present. Emotional symbolism can be seen as part of behavioral – negative features, and discursive – not accepting the image of the city as a place of nightlife.

Belgrade is perceived as a lively, vibrant city with a friendly population. However, this description of Belgrade does not indicate the existence of a specific image of the city. This portrayal has a positive connotation, in contrast to respondents who talk about the image of the city as a place of entertainment. In these cases, the city's nightlife and the reduction of the city just to a party place are criticized. It is notable that the image of Belgrade as a place of entertainment is only mentioned in a negative or neutral context, such as when criticizing or stating that foreigners perceive it that way, and it is never cited as a positive example. In a way, the city's atmosphere is also influenced by recognized negative features – lack of infrastructure maintenance, bad public traffic and traffic congestion, disorganization. The deterioration and decline of Belgrade's spirit were also observed due to unregulated changes in the urban landscape and the uncontrolled intensive commercialization of space; it is especially highlighted in the second research.

Belgrade is a city that has been shaped by its unique geographical location, which has brought together the influences of the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy throughout history. As a result of this border location and the intertwining of various political and cultural influences, a unique pattern of contradictions and mixtures has emerged. The mix, as a peculiarity, also includes the socialist heritage. This pattern represents an important characteristic of Belgrade's contemporary urban identity. Although it belongs to material symbolism, it also shapes behavioral symbolism to a certain extent. The mixture is especially emphasized in the first research.

Material symbolism encompasses Kalemegdan, the Sava and Danube rivers, Ušće, a view of the rivers, but also a view of the city. Kalemegdan was most often chosen as the symbol of the city, but it's important to consider less-mentioned answers to fully represent Belgrade's identity. Pobednik (can be viewed together with Kalemegdan, but also separately), the Temple of Saint Sava, the city centre, but also other parts of the city, Dorćol, Zemun and New Belgrade, are also recognized as city symbols.

Although it is a research study, it can be seen that there are no essential differences in the perception of Belgrade's identity between foreigners, domestic experts, or representatives of the academic community. However, it should be noted that local experts are more critical of the image of Belgrade as a city of entertainment and that the members of the academia in the second survey expressed a more critical attitude towards the direction in which the city is developing.

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ИДЕНТИТЕТ БЕОГРАДА: ПРЕПОЗНАТЉИВОСТ И СИМБОЛИ

Сажетак

У раду се анализира идентитет Београда на основу модификоване Насове типологије урбаног симболизма. Идентитет града се дефинише као целина „јединствених особина и обележја које граду обезбеђују трајну препознатљивост на основу којих је један град *посебан* и различит од других градова”. Урбани симболи који чине упориште идентитета града представљају хетероген скуп и деле се на следеће категорије: материјални симболизам (материјална урбана конфигурација), дискурзивни (приче о граду), персонални/иконички (познате личности), бихевиорални (обрасци колективног понашања), емоционални, гастрономски и знаковни симболизам.

Рад има два основна циља: да испита који симболизми су присутни у идентитету Београда и идентификује симболе који чине основу његовог идентитета на подацима два експлоративна истраживања која је спровео Институт за социолошка истраживања Филозофског факултета у оквиру пројекта „Територијални капитал у Србији: структурни и делатни потенцијал локалног развоја”, крајем 2018, као и почетком 2019. године и у априлу /мају 2021. године.

Кључне речи: идентитет града, симбол, бихевиорални симболизам, Београд.

CULTURE OF HONOR AND VIOLENCE: A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTROL?

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Abstract

This paper begins with the premise that the culture of honor is a primitive and forceful means of social control. The goal is to explore existing theories on the connection between the culture of honor and violence. The paper introduces different perspectives, including cultural-psychological, (bio)sociological, evolutionary-psychological, and feminist approaches. It then delves into aspects of the culture of honor, examining its role in directing social behavior, establishing social hierarchies, retaliatory violence, and regulating the (sexual) behavior of women. Following this, the paper discusses dilemmas surrounding the relationship between the culture of honor and violence, with some questions challenging this link and others reconsidering causal connections by focusing on alternative factors.

Keywords: culture of honor, violence, revenge, social control, regulatory authority

Introduction

The concept of honor is an important segment of the history of human societies, especially concerning violence. Since the beginning of honor theory, it has been viewed in contrast to the sense of shame and is linked to social reputation and recognition (see Peristiany, 1966). Although there is a vague division between

private and public honor, it can be considered a distinctly social and relational phenomenon and that one's honor depends on the social environment, social hierarchy, and relationships with others. As such, it was originally considered a moral dimension of one's behavior, which is an outdated view from the point of view of modern science (French, 2002).

It is necessary to distinguish between the concept of *honor* and what is called *the culture of honor* in the social sciences. Also, the culture of honor should be distinguished from *ethnic honor* which refers to the subjective sense of superiority due to belonging to a specific ethnic group (Weber, 1922/1976). These phenomena are connected, but they do not mean the same thing. When it comes to the culture of honor, it is reasonable to assume that it represents the universal history of human societies as a form of social control. Today, in some environments it is not present, and in others it has persisted, so prehistoric and modern societies with a present tradition of frequent conflicts and revenge violence are also called societies with a culture of honor (LeBlanc, 2014). In the modern environments where it has taken hold, its influence has weakened (Grosjean, 2014). In the context of honor culture, honor refers to one's self-worth or self-esteem that is based on reputation (mostly male) and subjective judgment of what others think. So in cultures of honor, a great emphasis is placed on the one who is ready to act aggressively, in some cases even lethally, to take revenge when he judges that someone else has hurt his honor, family, or values (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Atari, 2018). Although there is a stereotype that low self-esteem is a frequent cause of violence, there are data that indicate the opposite situation. A very common cause of the violent reaction is "threatening one's ego" i.e. challenging or threatening one's tentative, emphatic, and unstable notion of self-worth (Ostrowsky, 2010).

The culture of honor is present in different regions of the world, even in more developed societies such as the USA, where one of the first empirical studies of the relationship between this culture and violence was carried out by social and cultural psychologists who studied the differences in aggressive behavior between southerners and northerners (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle & Schwarz, 1996).

Some authors believe that reactive aggressiveness in humans has declined compared to the prehistoric period¹¹⁰. In this regard, they conclude that this type of aggressiveness is more present in modern societies with a culture of honor compared to other societies (Wrangham, 2019, p. 37). They explain this by saying that reactive aggression is subject to cultural and socio-economic influences, as well as the frequency of uncontrolled, thoughtless and irrational violent situations that sometimes have a fatal outcome (Wrangham, 2019). In experiments by social and cultural psychologists, young men from the American South, where there is a culture of honor, reacted more aggressively to an insult compared to men from other parts of the USA (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). In addition to the presence of frequent conflicts

¹¹⁰ The aggression of humans (but also animals) can be categorized into two general types, namely proactive (instrumental, predatory) and reactive (impulsive, defensive) (Wrangham, 2018, p. 246).

and revenge violence, correlations between the presence of a culture of honor and a higher homicide rate have been observed (Grosjean, 2014).

When it comes to the connection with violence, it can be said that the culture of honor manifests as a continuum from *everyday interpersonal violence* to preserve the reputation of individuals, families, or groups to *extreme forms of violence* that end in murder, such as blood revenge, but also private and public executions in members of different cultures of Asia, Africa, South America, as well as around the world due to migration (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). A very common fatal outcome of the culture of honor is the killing of a woman as a punishment if she is considered to have violated the so-called family honor with her sexual or any other behavior. The perpetrators of this violence against women are usually family members, partners, or relatives (Cooney, 2014).

Regardless of the fact that in the Balkans (especially in Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) the culture of honor with its violent form of blood revenge has persisted for a very long time, there is surprisingly small number of works related to this topic (Karan, 1973; Boehm, 1986; Đurić, 1995; Herco, 2012). Even if the phenomenon of blood feuds was considered, not much emphasis was placed on its connection with the culture of honor (or the culture of face) in these areas (Yao et al. 2017). It was mainly considered from the point of view of legal sciences, which can be linked to the social control that preceded the laws on its prohibition. In this sense, a blood feud is considered a customary law or an informal way of regulating social life and sanctioning generally accepted social norms and values (Herco, 2012). In other words, blood feud is a violent way of managing and resolving violent situations and disputes that are common in cultures of honor between families, and clans, as well as within them, and especially within tribal communities (Boehm, 1986).

The connection between the culture of honor and violence is also evidenced by the data on the correlation between the culture of honor and mass murders in schools in modern societies, regardless of their development (Brown, Osterman & Barnes, 2009). Some authors believe that one of the causes of such murders is the perpetrator's sense of threatened social identity, i.e. the experience of a threatened reputation (perceived honor) where one wants to prove or demonstrate it through a violent act. In addition, a correlation between the culture of honor and violence towards oneself was observed, i.e. suicidal behavior, as well as the correlation with sexual aggressiveness and domestic violence. Potential reasons for suicidal behavior, as well as sexual aggression and domestic violence, are strict gender roles and stereotypes, dissatisfaction, and hypersensitivity to reputation (Osterman & Brown, 2011).

So although perhaps in history or prehistory the culture of honor had some inevitable importance for survival, in modern organized societies there is no need for this form of social control. Despite this, in some societies and traditions, it has persisted collectively or through individual cases with all its bad consequences and various forms of violence.

Theories about the Relationship between the Culture of Honor and Violence

There are various theories concerning the relationship of the culture of honor, each differing in the importance they assign to this cultural influence on violence, the causes they emphasize, and the type of violence they focus on as a consequence of this culture. The question arises about the relationship between the universality of evolved human nature and cultural diversity. Despite potential disagreements among social scientists, these two phenomena are not mutually exclusive. Several approaches to studying the relationship between the culture of honor and violence will be highlighted: (1) the cultural (social) psychology approach, emphasizing the influence of social norms on behavior and even biology of actor; (2) an evolutionary approach, emphasizing the development of these cultural norms under environmental influence, viewing violence as a consequence; (3) sociological approaches emphasizing situational and neurophysiological factors in the relationship between the culture of honor and violence; and (4) a feminist approach explaining the consequences of honor culture on violence against women, including sexual violence, domestic violence, and femicide.

Advocates of the cultural psychology approach posit that norms derived from the honor culture, such as those characteristic of the American South, influence cognition, emotions, behavior, and even physiological responses (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle & Schwarz, 1996). Social differences among cultures affect beliefs about the outside world, the nature of that world, cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena, inherent epistemology, and the nature of cognitive processes of members of different cultures (Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001, p. 291). Similar assumptions apply to other societies with a culture of honor from different time periods and geographical areas where similar norms prevail. Experiments with white men from the American North and South demonstrated different reactions to insults, indicating that social norms of the culture of honor directly influenced these differences regarding aggressiveness. The core of these norms justifies violence for self-protection and maintaining a reputation for strength, defending one's honor (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle & Schwarz, 1996, p. 945).

However, evolutionary psychologists argue that the authors neglect other factors, such as material ones, as men from the South were characterized by a worse socioeconomic position and lower incomes (Daly & Wilson, 2010, p. 230). The value system of the culture of honor is considered a product of the interaction of evolved psychological mechanisms and the specifics of material and environmental circumstances in which societies exist (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Evolutionary social scientists hypothesize that the culture of honor evolved due to the lack of effective regulatory authority in harsh environmental conditions. This assumption is connected to the fact that the culture of honor has been maintained in societies with similar circumstances, while its influence has diminished in societies with efficient institutions (Nowak et al. 2016).

The culture of honor has roots in the retaliatory violence of prehistoric people (Boehm 2011). Unlike chimpanzees, whose social hierarchy includes alpha males as authorities, hunter-gatherers in small egalitarian groups did not have an authoritarian

peacemaker regulating revenge violence. Similar behavior persisted with the transition to agriculture, as seen in some modern tribal societies. The culture of honor began to decline with the emergence of the state as a form of centralized social control (Boehm, 2011).

The profound impact of the culture of honor on its members' lives is evident in ethnographic research conducted by Bourdieu in Algeria, among the Kabyle ethnic group (Bourdieu, 1979). Honor holds a crucial role in the social dynamics of this traditional community. Bourdieu emphasizes cultural influence on behavior and conceptualizes honor as a relational phenomenon between two actors - one bearing honor and the other shame. Dishonoring involves both shaming someone and establishing dominance, thus positioning honor within a framework of violent social hierarchy and dynamics (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 96). According to Bourdieu, the honor culture of these Algerian peasants, rooted in sacred beliefs and an ethos of honor, tends to perpetuate their symbolic capital through social practices, often marked by violence (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 133).

The violent dimension of honor culture finds an explanation within Randall Collins' theoretical framework (Collins, 2008). Violent interactions and reactive aggressiveness in these cultures stem from emotions of tension and fear, largely arising from the cultural norms and values of the honor culture. It is presumed that members of this culture harbor a pervasive fear of embarrassment and the tarnishing of masculine reputation against the backdrop of honor (Thomas, 2022).

The culture of honor is not limited to underdeveloped traditional environments; it exists in developed cities, particularly in impoverished areas (Anderson, 1994). It is also present across different ethnic groups. Urban ethnographic research in the 1990s in the USA exploring the relationship between race, class, violence, cultural influences, and violence in impoverished city neighborhoods revealed a distinctive code of behavior akin to the culture of honor. This "code of the street," comprised of informal rules emphasizing reputation and marked by reactive aggressiveness, is prevalent among men and even observed in women imitating dominant male behavior. The development of this behavior is attributed to various factors such as poverty, job scarcity, involvement in criminogenic activities, and racial stigma faced by African Americans residing in such neighborhoods (Anderson, 1994).

Sociologist Alan Mazur, studying the relationship between hormone levels (mainly testosterone) and behavior, emphasized the reciprocal influence of cultural and biological factors in the manifestation of aggressiveness. Hence, heightened wakefulness is presumed to elevate testosterone levels, fostering competition for dominance that often culminates in violence, especially in impoverished stressful neighborhoods influenced by the culture of honor. Mazur's study (1995) found higher testosterone levels in younger black men with low education compared to white counterparts with similar education levels. However, the root cause is attributed not to racial differences but to the environmental conditions prevalent in poor neighborhoods and the influence of the culture of honor, which predominantly develops in such environments (Mazur, 2016). This clarifies that the increase in

testosterone occurs in men with lower education levels, who are more susceptible to the impact of the culture of honor.

Mazur's reciprocal model of hormones and behavior (Booth & Mazur, 1998) finds confirmation in this research. In impoverished neighborhoods, young men, influenced by a culture of honor, are in a constant defensive state to preserve and enhance their status and reputation. Elevated testosterone levels encourage further competition, creating a cyclical pattern of interactions marked by dominant behavior, sometimes resulting in violence (Mazur & Booth, 1998). The influence of the specific environment on neurophysiological changes is underscored by research showing no significant differences in testosterone levels among men from different ethnic groups. In a study analyzing data from the *Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey*, including whites, blacks, and Hispanics, Mazur (2009) observed no significant difference in testosterone levels between whites and Hispanics. While a slightly higher level was noted in black men aged 20 to 69, this could be partially explained by other indicators such as low percentage of body fat and poverty (Mazur, 2009, p. 66).

Testosterone plays an indirect role in violence manifestation by encouraging competitive behavior, both a cause and consequence of such behavior. In environments fostering competitive behavior, like honor cultures, increased testosterone secretion increases the likelihood of unintended and often trivially triggered violent outcomes (Mazur, 2013). Mazur (2009) suggests connecting the biosociological theory of dominance and aggressiveness with Collins' theory of violence (2008), providing a biological basis to interpret vague concepts such as "emotional energy" in Collins' theory. The neurophysiological functioning of hormones, according to Mazur, can straightforwardly explain the emotional mechanisms in physical encounters and violent situations as proposed by Collins (Mazur, 2009).

In honor cultures worldwide, various norms and values related to reputation are intertwined, with significant emphasis on male, female, and family reputation. Violating these norms or values results in severe punishment, often leading to femicide. Consequently, feminist theories addressing honor crimes against women have emerged globally (Loza, 2022). According to the beliefs of honor culture members, a woman's perceived infidelity or even a wrongful perception thereof damages her partner's male reputation or a family reputation, justifying frequent violence against women within the family (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). In such cultural environments, sexual aggression towards women by partners and others is also more prevalent (Brown, Baughman & Carvallo, 2018).

Furthermore, in honor cultures, particularly in the Middle East and globally, family honor is often measured by the social and sexual conduct of female family members, such as daughters or mothers. The virtuous behavior and chastity of women hold high value. Deviations from these norms result in severe punishment, with the most extreme form being murder, sometimes carried out by the entire community or family members. These norms have profound consequences on the well-being and lives of women, especially in rural areas where traditional and patriarchal values exert a stronger influence (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001; Loza, 2022).

Honor Culture as Violent Social Control – Revenge

Common across all cultures of honor, regardless of rural or urban residence, ethnic, racial, or religious characteristics, and geographical location, is the prevalence of revenge violence, with murder representing its ultimate and extreme form. Such violent retaliations stem from perceived violations of values and norms that members of the honor culture believe harm their personal or family reputation. Revengeful behavior, a form of social control, existed in most prehistoric societies as a response to violence and as a deterrent against potential attackers due to a man's strong reputation. These norms and values are also associated with attempts to establish male control over women and deter female partners from infidelity (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). While not all individuals are equally predisposed to vengeful behavior, those who engage in it often experience satisfaction, and these vengeful feelings may persist even after revenge has been taken (Crombag, Rassin & Horselenberg 2003).

In contemporary societies, honor killings or violent revenge are generally prohibited, though they persist to varying extents. This is influenced by factors such as the strength of regulatory authority, trust in that authority, religious beliefs, and the natural environment. The culture of honor, as a rudimentary form of social control, differs from legal laws primarily because its norms are implicit and subjective, unlike the clear, explicit, and objective norms that laws should aim for.

The culture of honor represents a robust social phenomenon, with its norms and values, centered on reputation and revenge, serving as a means to coordinate people's actions and manage conflicts (Frey, Nguyen, Kwak-Tanguay & Germinaro, 2021). Among young adolescents accepting the norms of the culture of honor, regardless of ethnicity, a strong emphasis on personal reputation and the social environment was observed. They justified vindictive behavior by citing concerns for personal safety and power relations (Ibidem).

Retributive emotions, integral to vindictive behavior, functioned historically as a form of social control arising from life in a group or society. While revenge carries certain costs and is not in the personal interest of individuals in modern society, it persists in some societies. Two types of norms that have different influences on the motivation for vengeful behavior have developed: norms about honor and norms about moral responsibility. In honor culture, the normative focus is on the offended or harmed, whereas in moral responsibility, the focus is on the one who offends or harms others (Sommers, 2009). This distinction may explain the difference between honor culture as a form of social control and normative secular laws, where individuals in a culture of honor seek to preserve their reputation through aggressive or vindictive behavior, while most secular laws hold the perpetrator accountable.

The importance of a strong reputation and revenge violence emerges as a cross-cultural variable varying from society to society, with food production hypothesized as a factor influencing it. Past research indicates that the culture of honor is more prevalent in pastoral communities compared to agricultural ones (Grosjean, 2014). The prevalence of these culture in modern nomadic tribes and prehistoric hunter-

gatherers, and fishermen as a special type of forager, remain open for further exploration (Figueredo, Tal, McNeill, Guillén 2004).

A key factor associated with honor culture is a weak regulatory authority. Cultural psychologists and social scientists link the higher homicide rate in the American South to the settlement of ranchers from the fringes of Britain in the 18th century and weaker institutional functioning. These cultural norms persisted across generations, diminishing in significance as institutional quality improved (Grosjean, 2014).

In contemporary contexts, it is increasingly evident that the quality of institutions plays a crucial role in determining the prevalence of violence. Countries with robust legal, political, and socio-cultural institutions are better equipped to address violence and crime in the long term, regardless of their economic conditions. This is substantiated by the observation that countries with similar levels of income per capita can exhibit varying rates of violence and crime. States with weaker institutional systems create an environment conducive to criminal activities by inadequately punishing offenders and allowing room for misconduct, negligence, and manipulation of the law (Tebaldi & Alda, 2017). These findings are supported by the presence of violent norms from the culture of honor even in developed countries like the USA, particularly in impoverished neighborhoods of large cities where there is widespread distrust in institutions for various reasons (Anderson, 1994).

In this context, the social factor represented by the norms of the culture of honor emerges as a highly significant predictor of higher violence rates. Economic factors may or may not be directly linked to the culture of honor, but in American cities where the culture of honor is prevalent, there is often a correlation with poverty. Consequently, socio-economic status is believed to contribute to the perpetuation of honor culture and reactive aggressiveness (Henry 2009). Research in the USA indicates that areas with greater income inequality in cities are associated with an elevated risk of aggressive behavior (Pabayo, Molnar & Kawachi 2014).

Does a Culture of Honor Exist?

When examining the relationship between the culture of honor and violence, establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship proves challenging. Authors who emphasize the impact of honor culture norms on violence often face criticism for overlooking the connection between socioeconomic status and violent behavior. Consequently, determining the correlation or causation between these two phenomena remains complex. Some argue that a worse socio-economic status may be a more influential factor in the manifestation of violence, rather than the norms of the culture of honor (Henry, 2009). This perspective is justified by the assertion that the mechanisms linking livestock regions to the culture of honor have not been empirically tested. While the homicide rate in ranching regions of the American South is higher than in agricultural areas, this could be related to status differences in the country or the theory of low-status compensation. According to this theory, individuals of lower socio-economic status may resort to aggressive behavior as a form of self-defense against social stigma (Henry, 2009).

Another question that arises is whether it is feasible to determine the existence of a specific cultural influence and how it could be “measured.” In cross-cultural research, a widely accepted answer to this question can be found within Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Cultural dimensions that influence the values and behavior of members of different cultures include (1) power distance, (2) uncertainty avoidance index, (3) collectivism or individualism, (4) valuation of traditional gender roles of masculinity and femininity, (5) long-term and short-term normative orientation, and (6) valuing restraint versus indulgence, i.e., the degree of striving to satisfy desires (Hofstede, 2011). In this context, the values of the culture of honor could be associated with cultural dimensions characteristic of more traditional societies, such as a high valuation of patriarchal gender roles, collectivism versus individualism, and a significant power distance, i.e., inequalities.

Thirdly, there is a debate among the authors about whether there are distinct values that can be named a culture of honor, which leads to the question of distinguishing a culture of honor from a culture of victimization or a culture of carrying weapons (gun culture) (Felson & Pare, 2010). Some argue that the concept of honor lacks clarity due to its multiple interpretations in the social sciences and its subjective nature. According to this view, there may not be something universally called the “culture of honor” because the dynamics of the relationship between honor and shame vary significantly depending on the social and cultural context (Flanders, 2019, p. 162). For instance, there is uncertainty about how similar the so-called honor culture in black neighborhoods of American cities is to the honor culture in the Middle East or the American South. Moreover, distinctions are not always clear between the *culture of honor*, the *culture of honor and shame*, the *culture of dignity*, the *culture of face*, the *culture of weapons*, the *culture of victimization*, and so on (Felson & Pare, 2010; Yao et al. 2017). In this sense, the culture of honor (or honor and shame) is seen as closest to the culture of dignity and the culture of face because all three highly value male reputation and family reputation (Yao et al. 2017). The relationships between the culture of honor, the culture of victimization, and the gun culture are complex and require careful distinction.

Some authors argue that, in addition to the culture of honor, there exists a subculture of victimization in black ghettos and urban areas with members of an inferior socioeconomic position (Walsh, 2009; Walsh & Yun, 2016). This subculture further contributes to a violent environment, with some explaining higher participation in violent crimes by black individuals as an adaptation to a historically hostile environment imposed by whites. The subculture is fueled by mistrust towards whites, particularly in areas with a high population of blacks. The consequence of the subculture of victimization is a rejection of a sense of individual responsibility, which permeates various aspects of life for its members, leading to a worse socioeconomic position and challenges in areas such as child welfare (Walsh, 2009, p. 55).

While the culture of honor and the subculture of victimization are often connected, some authors argue that they should be distinguished. According to this perspective, the subculture of victimization is a form of social control in reaction to violated

dignity, primarily targeting victims of violence, often minorities and women. Therefore, the subculture of victimization is considered a consequence of violence rather than its cause, with historical roots and contemporary manifestations in microaggressions (Campbell & Manning, 2018).

Furthermore, regional and urban differences in the tendency to carry weapons in the United States correlate with the high rate of violence. For example, whites from the South and West are more likely to carry guns than whites from the North, and blacks from poor neighborhoods are also more likely to carry weapons. This behavior is driven by the fear of potential attacks and the need for self-protection. Some authors suggest that what prevails in these societies is the gun culture rather than the culture of honor (Felson & Pare 2010). However, establishing clear correlations and cause-and-effect relationships in this context, i.e., whether carrying weapons is a cause or consequence of a culture of honor and violence, remains challenging.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the culture of honor stands as a significant and influential social phenomenon, shaping the behavior of individuals across different geographical areas, socio-economic contexts, and physical environments. It is closely associated with various forms of violence, particularly revenge violence, with consequences ranging from murder and femicide to suicide and mass murder. The roots of honor-related norms can be traced back to prehistoric societies, suggesting that certain aspects of the culture of honor, such as vengeful behavior and control over women, have historical continuity.

The manifestation of the culture of honor varies based on environmental factors, whether in rural or urban settings. Its presence is noted in rural parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South America, as well as in urban areas, particularly in impoverished neighborhoods. This variation underscores the importance of regulatory authority and trust in shaping how the culture of honor expresses itself.

Scholars from diverse disciplines have approached the study of honor culture with different lenses. Cultural psychologists emphasize the implicit influence of honor norms on violence rates, while sociological approaches delve into the environmental, biological, and situational factors influencing honor culture. Evolutionary perspectives trace the development of honor culture as a response to environmental conditions and evolved psychological mechanisms, while feminist theories highlight the negative repercussions for women's lives and well-being.

While the culture of honor is considered by some as a rudimentary form of social control, persisting due to distinct environmental conditions and trust in authority, numerous questions and doubts surround this phenomenon. The terminology itself, encompassing honor culture, dignity culture, face culture, among others, lacks clear distinctions. There is an ongoing debate regarding whether the culture of honor is the primary cause of increased violence in specific areas, or if socio-economic factors and the availability of weapons play a more significant role. The representation of this culture across different regions, emphasizing individual reputation and reflecting historical and contemporary defensive and revenge violence, poses

intriguing questions about human nature. As a result, the culture of honor remains fertile ground for research within the social sciences.

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КУЛТУРА ЧАСТИ И НАСИЉЕ: ОБЛИК ДРУШТВЕНЕ КОНТРОЛЕ?

Сажетак

Овај рад полази од претпоставке да је култура части примитиван и насилаан облик друштвене контроле. Циљ рада јесте преиспитивање постојећих теорија о односу културе части и насиља. У оквиру рада представљени су различити приступи проучавању односа културе части и насиља, а то су културно-психолошки, (био)социолошки, еволуционо-психолошки и феминистички приступ. Након тога, анализирани су аспекти културе части као друштвене контроле кроз усмеравање друштвеног понашања, друштвену хијерархију, осветничко насиље и контролисање (сексуалног) понашања жена. Након тога, изнете су дилеме у вези са односом културе части и насиља од којих неке чак доводе у питање тај однос, док друге преиспитују каузалну повезаност у том односу стављајући фокус и на друге факторе.

Кључне речи: култура части, насиље, света, друштвена контрола, регулаторни ауторитет.

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