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MULTICULTURALITY, REGIONALIZATION AND INTEGRATION

In this paper multiculturalism, regionalization, minorities' rights and integration are not only perceived as closely related issues, but are also treated as unresolved problems, meaning that the author is entirely aware that there is a high level of theoretical and practical discrepancies. In other words, all of these problems are disputable and carry serious and complex theoretical and practical assumptions and implications.

Therefore, at the very beginning, it is necessary to define the basic terms used in the paper. Namely, the key words are as follows: region, regionalization, regionalism, multiculturalism, multiculturalization, multiculturalism, minorities' rights, integration and transition. It is important to note that all of the terms used are placed in the specific context - relating to Vojvodina and Serbia.

It should be noted that the term *regionality* or *region* (Latin *region* = area, district, zone, county, territory) is not defined clearly enough. This notion is rather elastic – both in quantitative and qualitative sense. It can refer not only to some a smaller or larger territorial unit within one country that has (or that could have) more or less complete independence (*intra-region*), but also to a more stable or loose unity that comprises parts of two or more countries (*inter-region*), or even more countries, as, for instance, is the case with “the region of South-East Europe” (*trans-region*). The important thing is that the regions in all the above mentioned instances are “natural” and not “artificial” creations, meaning that they represent *a separate, spontaneously created and relatively homogeneous geographical, historical, economical and socio-cultural unity which enables its inhabitants to realize their needs, values and interests they have in common more efficiently, i.e. to express their specific regional identity in a more successful and complete way.*

If the notion is determined in this way it is possible to make the distinction between “static” and “dynamic” perception of region, and also between their “objective” and “subjective” features. Regarding the former perception, regions represent clearly limited and permanently separated wholes, with precisely established rights and obligations, both vertically and horizontally; regarding the latter, they are flexible, functional, even potentially changeable wholes which are constituted and reconstituted, depending on particular needs and rational choice, while the modern means of communication con-

siderably facilitate connecting and accomplishing such elastically set objectives.

If the suggested distinction is accepted, then connecting at the levels of sub-regions or regions – as well as inter-regional connecting – is possible to be realized not only permanently but also temporarily and occasionally – with the purpose of solving some particular problem of mutual interest.

It is understood that it is only *the dynamic concept* of the region that facilitates establishing of smaller or wider networks of relations, while the latter may mean going across the borders of national states without questioning or jeopardizing the state sovereignty. This concept also relativizes the very sensitive and frequently disputable issue of region borders. In any case, region is not supposed to be solely a spatial/physical entity, but also *a functioning and functional entity*, the justifiability of which is always measured by rationality realized at the regional and global level.

Defined in this way, a region represents a great basis for *regionalization*, perceived as *the process of spatial and functional reorganization of a state and society, on the principles of optimal distribution of rights and responsibilities both vertically and horizontally (at the central, regional and local levels), with the purpose of fostering social development and improving the inhabitants' living conditions.*

Generally, there is a long tradition of dealing with these issues in sociology, but the interest has been renewed lately, after it became possible to recognize the need for rearrangement of contemporary societies, which, in their certain aspects, have become more and more heterogeneous while, in some other aspects, have become more homogeneous. In this respect, the aim of regionalization should be *establishing a new type of integration*, both for intra-social and inter-social situations. The fundamental principle and the main significance of regionalization could, namely, be expressed in the following way: *respecting, expressing and stimulating old and new elements and factors of social heterogeneity - among others, also through searching for regional identity and multicultural particularities – without jeopardizing homogeneity, which is now being just re-examined continuously and redefined on new bases.*

Generally speaking, regionalization can be planned, organized and autonomous, i.e. realized on the principles of basic consensus on the most rational models of organization of the society and state; or uncontrolled, spontaneous, heterogeneous and conflicting, i.e. lacking such consensus. In practice, it is frequently *a mixture* of the two “ideal types”, in which the elements of the former or the latter one prevail.

Accordingly, the following basic criteria and indicators of “good” or “desirable” regionalization could be outlined: (1) that it is based on specific shared features formed more or less spontaneously in a longer period of time; (2) that regionalisation contributes to opening and not closing of own region,

other territorial units, the whole society and its smaller and wider outer environment; (3) that it functions in favour of development of the society and of raising the quality of people's lives, both regarding the region and wider entities to which the region belongs, and with which it is connected; (4) that it contributes to resolving, reducing or soothing the existing social conflicts and prevents provoking new ones; (5) that it establishes the appropriate proportion between the inevitable centralization and desirable decentralization; (6) that it provides greater authorizations to regional units, but also expands their responsibility for own development as well as the development of the society as a whole, etc. (Tripković, 2002: 6-7)

Insisting on regional particularities is justified only if regional contains also all the relevant features of universal: that is actually general and universal perceived through special and individual, therefore enriched and transformed. Particularities of the regional do not justify going below or missing the highest achieved level of universal. The process of regionalization should, in that sense, be observed as belonging to a wider set of issues related to transformation of *vertical* perception and arrangement of social environment, which should be supplemented and modified by its *horizontal* perception. Unlike the former, in which the crucial relation – thus also the basic contrast – is *top-bottom*, in the latter it is the *centre-periphery* relation. Therefore, an appropriate solution of this problem would be finding the optimal point of intersection of the two coordinates, which is not easily achieved, but – from the perspective of further development of the society – it is certainly inevitable.

Regionalization, thus, is about carefully *balanced division of authorities*, both in the vertical dimension (central, regional, local), and the horizontal one (legislative, juridical and executive). This enables a harmonious *pluralisation of authority*, under the condition, however, that we are dealing with a democratic society. However, if a society is non-democratic, or is insufficiently democratic, then things take different appearance and sense, and consequently have to be interpreted in a completely different way.¹

Anyhow, difficulties and risks of successful regionalization are not negligible, especially for societies in transition, and notably for the societies with late and unsuccessful transition, as it is the case with Serbia. One of the leading problems is caused by the fact that very often there are some other problems behind regionalization; sometimes these problems could be covered by regionalization, or are unsuccessfully attempted to be solved by it *but these problems – although related to regionalization – cannot be solved by it.*

1 The division of authorities between a state and a region resides on two basic principles, applied cumulatively: first, the principle of political decentralization, which means division of power between different levels and their mutual limiting; and second, the principle of subsidiarity i.e. assuming the authority by the local community, which means that the local community – as a primary form of self-government – performs all the tasks that are not restrictively placed within the authority of higher levels of authorities. This serves for achieving not only decentralization, but also democratization of power.

This primarily applies to *the problem of excessive centralization of power* with expensive and inefficient state, and to *the problem of excessive and outdated regulation* functioning as a compulsion or a rigid state or maybe broader social control, instead of operating to foster development, and finally to *the problem of absence of democracy* or the numerous deviations of democracy found in practice.

Concerning Serbia, the resistance to decentralization is primarily expressed as a fierce struggle for keeping some form of authoritarian power, which has a long tradition here; in the same time, the demands for decentralization are mainly manifested as tendencies to seize and keep some of that authoritarian power – by simply lowering to the regional or local level. In either case, (de)centralization proves to be an important stake in the struggle of political and economic elite for (re)distribution of power, which is still insufficiently democratic.

One of the outcomes could also be a model of a smashed or “disintegrated country”, in which each newly created independent part is inclined to and capable of maintaining old structures and political practices in new circumstances, i.e. there could be a real danger of self-reproduction of a certain form of authoritarianism. Accordingly, numerous pre-modern forms of organization of social life and their corresponding patterns of behaviour, thinking and practice may appear, for instance, patrimonialism, familiarism, clientism, provincialism, localism, and so on, which can be devastating for all the spheres of both public and private life.

Difficulties and risks of regionalization are not, however, placed only in the sphere of struggle over power (authority) and related to ideologization, but have also some other, more or less immanent and autonomous outcomes, features and manifestations, such as: how to appropriately articulate and rationally harmonize global (national), partial (regional) and personal (collective and individual) aims and actions; how to affirm the principle of competition, without neglecting the principle of solidarity; how to ensure a balanced regional development through the necessary redistribution of resources, without jeopardizing the autonomous rights and obligations of certain regions; how to balance decentralization and deregulation, which inevitably accompany regionalization on one hand, with equally inevitable coordination at the global level on the other, and so on.

The basic and major objective of regionalization should be *decentralized power (authority) accompanied by high integrity of the society*, although this ideal situation, for which one should certainly strive, in Serbia is not only difficult to reach, but almost impossible to even come close to. This is due to the fact that political affairs here have been moving mainly between these two extremes: *centralized power (authority) and low integrity of the society*, on one hand, and *decentralized power (authority) and also low integrity of the society*, on the other. The situation is even more unfavourable for region-

alization because the former case can actually be understood also as a *false concept of decentralized power (authority)*, as the centralized *power (authority)* simply moves, or tends to move – more or less unmodified – for just one level down: from a (former) federal state to a republic, from a republic to a province, from a province to a region, from a region to local self-governing.

So, if the decentralization of power (authority) and high integrity of the society are desirable objectives of regionalization, *the most likely real outcome of regionalization in Serbia at the moment will be false decentralization with low integrity*, which is a good basis for compromising of the very idea of regionalization, and therefore also for *another return to high centralization and low integrity of the society and the state*.

Accordingly, in the case of Serbia, *regionalization should primarily be observed as having the purpose of transforming an authoritarian and closed society into a democratic and open one*. Regionalization in this respect is closely related to the requests for democratization, decentralization and deregulation, and also to finding new ways and more adequate forms of integration, through which it would be possible to express regional particularities more appropriately, which would also secure acquiring greater responsibilities for functioning of smaller communities and improvement of the overall quality of life both in them and in a global society. Appropriate regionalization, among other things, serves also to prevent negative tendencies of withdrawing and closing within confined boundaries of local and minorities' areas, which is no less harmful than violently imposed rigid centralization – based on favouring mono-cultural pattern – which usually serves to disguise certain partial interest of the privileged elite, who is places in the centre of a social space.

That leads us to the problem of *regionalism*, understood as an ideology and a corresponding political organizing and acting based on that ideology, guided by the tendency to have complete regional and provincial independence. Regionalism usually has the appearance of extreme local patriotism, or narrow-minded and self-sufficient acceptance of provincialism and confinement within its limits. Sociology provides no precise terminology regarding the issue, sometimes turning it into a real confusion as the terms regionalism and regionalization are mixed up; regionalism, however, in a broader sense can be understood as *a theoretical concept and a practical project – as well as a corresponding ideology and political movements arising from it – which basically have the tendency to realize full or at least a high level of autonomy of a certain region or its joining with other regions on the territory of a country*. If such aspirations aim at changing the borders of the existing countries, then regionalism turns into separatism and irredentism.

Therefore, a clear distinction should be made between regionalization, which represents a justified demand and a desirable process, and regionalism, which is an ideology disguising a struggle for (re)distribution of so-

cial power. Properly understood regionalization differs not only from the rigid and non-rational centralism, but also from aggressive regionalism, as a form of egoistic particularism and narrow-minded provincialism, the consequences of which could be equally devastating: instead of contributing to decomposing of authoritarian and traditionalistic structures, regionalism – as a specific ideology and political action – can foster the pretended metamorphosis of these structures and enable their survival (but at somewhat lower level and on some extent different basis) conserving the existing unfavourable state and hindering social development.

This leads to the conclusion that if political motives are predominant in a certain model of regionalization – and especially if there are aggressive and violence-oriented political forces – it reveals the hidden ideological matrix of that regionalization, marked here as “regionalism” and understood as a justification and shield in the struggle for (re)distribution of power; and *visa versa*, if there are significant economical and culture identifying motives, like those immediately related to fostering the quality of people’s lives, it sets off the demands for regionalization away from ideologization and struggle over power (authority).

It is possible, accordingly, to state that the more the central authority of one insufficiently democratic, very heterogeneous, and to a great extent disintegrated, excessively centralized, extremely undeveloped and rather neglected society – as is the case with the Serbian society – is resistant to the demands for its rearrangement on some new principles, the greater are the chances that the issue of regionalization will be radicalized and that it will turn into regionalism. (These new principles, among other things, refer to establishing the balance between the top and bottom of a social pyramid, and also between its centre and periphery – and this applies to all the levels and all the segments.)

Moreover, the fact that the social space of Serbian society is peripheral – as well as the fact that there is no universally acceptable and ubiquitously applicable model of rational (de)centralization of the state and society – clearly contributes to creating favourable conditions for turning the rational regionalization into irrational regionalism; thus, it is possible that the firm defence of the central power – established with the excuse of firm defence of “state unity and sovereignty” – turns into serious jeopardizing of that very “sovereignty” and with more or less violent breaking or ultimate weakening the state unity, with numerous calamitous consequences for the development of the country.

Regarding Serbia and Vojvodina, a well-conceived and properly implemented regionalization – which would avoid the traps of centralization and regionalism – would prove to be one of significant mechanisms fostering the shift from criminalized, elitized and politicized authoritarian system to the healthy market pluralistic-democratic model. That will certainly be an

extremely difficult and very unpredictable process, in which realization of good interaction between the formal (laws, regulations, etc) and non-formal factors of transformation (tradition, customs, habits) will be extremely important.

It is important, however, to bear in mind that regionalization itself, as a complex and lengthy process, resolves nothing unless it is placed in a broader context of other global processes, marked with rather imprecise terms of “modernization”, “democratization”, “decentralization” or “deregulation”, and also “globalization”, and the general term “crisis of modernity”. These contexts make it possible to create a substantially different pluralistic society differing from the one we are acquainted to today, but these contexts also give rise to other possibilities which can challenge even the existing level of plurality.

Analogous to the difference between the region (state) and regionalization (process), it is possible to make the difference also between multiculturalism, multiculturalization and multiculturalism. *Multiculturalism*, in the sense of the real cultural pluralism, is one of the basic and permanent features of every society. Thus, for instance, a specific multiculturalism is reflected already in the fact that within the same so-called “general culture” there are always numerous subcultures and countercultures. Furthermore, if there are identical exterior circumstances, intra-cultural differences can sometimes be the same as or even exceed inter-cultural ones, due to the probability that in the same situation reactions can be completely different (great difference), similar (slight or moderate difference) or identical (the lack of difference).

Therefore, while multiculturalism refers to a real *state*, *multiculturalization* signifies a *process*, based on the idea or ideal about a tolerant, unbiased, harmonious, interactive (co)relation and (co)existence of different cultures and subcultures within a different area of a social space (local, regional, state, inter-state or world’s social space). Although every society is more or less multicultural, *not all the societies pursue multiculturalization* – as such tendencies and demands today, however, are still more an exception than a rule. This means that the ideal of multiculturalization – nowadays frequently written and spoken about – in practice easily slips into ideology of *multiculturalism*, which refers to a system of ideas in which certain partial positions, interests and values of an individual or social group are supported under false pretence of supporting “general” social interest.

Due to the fact that multiculturalism becomes more and more undisputable and “generally accepted” value/ideal, there is a danger that in reality it transforms into a mere declarations and verbal “political correctness”. Besides, it is disputable how to actually realize the ideal of multiculturalization in contemporary societies, which are dominated by the universal mass culture which more and more rapidly dissolves and nullifies almost all the particularities of certain cultures and subcultures or simply marginalizes them. However, it is important to ascertain whether different cultures – when in

direct or indirect contact – get closer and interact or get more alienated from each other and shut themselves from each other; it is equally important to discover what is the cause and what is the basis of the process of getting closer or alienated, i.e. interacting or shutting themselves from others.

Multiculturalization is supposed, in the same time, to achieve self-confirmation and accepting the other as equal, i.e. confirming others and accepting ourselves as different. That is a complex game of similarities and differences, of closeness and distance, self-consciousness and consciousness of someone else, which enables numerous combinations: spatial closeness and cultural distance, cultural closeness and spatial distance, cultural distance and spatial distance, etc.

The issues get more complex when the “game” is influenced also by gender, marital status, generation, education, social status, place of residence, religion, etc. Furthermore, in the case of Vojvodina, there are certain features that bear special significance, such as belonging to the majority/minority group, to old-timers/ new-comers, while each of the categories can be further divided according to the national, confessional or some other criterion. Thus, for example, new-comers can belong to one or the other nationality and/or confession (including atheists); furthermore, they can origin from different or same regions, or can be old-colonialists, new-colonialists or refugees, and each of these categories can further be the result of organized or unorganized migrations: mass migrations, group or individual migrations, then voluntary or involuntary migrations, concentrated or dispersive migrations, then migrations performed in relatively short time span and caused by certain crucial historical events or alternatively achieved gradually in longer periods and performed regularly, etc.

Accordingly, regionalization and multiculturalization can be understood as *searching for new identity* – searching which is instigated by the general process of *individualization*, which dissolves the previous forms of solidarity and attempts to find new ones. It is of great importance that this searching is driven by the “*identity of vocation*”, i.e. acquired, chosen, to a great extent individualized identity; and not by the “*identity of determination*”, i.e. assigned and inherited, to a great extent collectivized identity (Domenak, 1991: 20).

The crucial issue here is the following one: which of all these particularities and differences belong to the *public* and which exclusively to the *private* sphere of life. This issue is even more important because multiculturalism, as well as regionality, has the potential for both integration, on one hand, and disintegration and segregation, on the other; both for fostering the state unity and its weakening; both for cultural interaction and connecting on broad territories, on one hand, and ghettoization of certain cultures or sub-cultures, on the other; for cultural assimilation and affirmation of cultural particularities.

Furthermore, requests for regionalization can actually be instigated by at least two completely opposing motives: the first would be the one that means going backwards – towards some kind of “re-feudalization” of the state or society, that is, towards the romantically perceived ideal of “community”; the other motive, however, would be inspired by the tendency for faster modernization and development of the state or society, i.e. by the tendency towards their further pluralization and their greater rationality and efficiency.

The first motive is almost inevitably traditionalistic, if not even conservatively based and directed and has no prospects for success in the long run, but rather serves as a basis for certain ideologies which actually disguise partial interests and the struggle for power. The latter, as a rule, is innovative and modernization-oriented and it has good prospects to accelerate the social development, provided that it is possible to escape the traps of modernism, i.e. the dangers of simplifying the principles of rationality, efficiency and functionality to their instrumental form.

However, even apart the above mentioned, the difficulties and risks of regionalization are immense, especially for late and unsuccessful transitions, as it is the case with Serbia. *Transition*, in short, could be understood as *an exhausting process of significant transformations of the entire tradition-oriented and monopoly-based society – the process that should reach rational market economy, pluralistic parliamentary democracy, creative culture and tolerant multiculturalism*. On the basis of this definition, the research shows that for proper understanding of the process of transition it is essential to have precise answers to the following crucial and very complex questions: (1) who institutes transition, in which initial conditions is it performed and what kind of transition is it in each particular case; (2) who has the control over the major transition processes in certain phases and what kind of control is it, i.e. who, and in which way, chooses the model of transition and who, and in which way, controls the courses of transition in their certain periods and in different segments of the society in question; (3) who benefits from transition and in which way are these benefits realized and acquired; (4) who carries the heaviest burden of transition and what are generally the prospects that the initial losing positions of an individual or a group might be at some later point compensated by general benefits of a successfully performed transition and consolidation of democracy (Tripković, 2004: 190).

Regarding Serbia, a short answer to the posed questions would be: that the transition was instituted by Milošević's elite during breaking up of the second Yugoslavia, that the elite opted for silent, invisible, to a great extent criminalized (black) transition (instigated and controlled wars and conflicts can be perceived as a good camouflage for such “transition”); that the control over such camouflaged transition was held by a relatively limited number of people round Milošević; that the profit from transition was acquired by the criminalized elite connected to the regime (Tripković, 1997); that the bur-

den of transition has been inflicted on impoverished, and still increasingly poor mass of people, with no prospects to compensate for their deteriorated position in near future; and that all the negative features and directions of transition of Serbian society have not, unfortunately, substantially changed to the present day, as post-Milošević elite showed extreme incapability, and maybe even reluctance, to break up with Milošević's concept of transition and ruling over the society (Tripković, 2001).

Bearing all this in mind, it can be concluded that for a country like Serbia (small, undeveloped, indebted, unorganized, criminalized, socially and ideologically bitterly divided, with no established institutions and no clearly defined borders, etc.) there is actually only one model of transition – the same as dictated by Milošević's and post-Milošević's political and economical elite – thus the prospects of fundamental transformation of Serbian society are still completely uncertain.

These assessments, if correct, introduce at least three important questions: (1) what are the real objectives of transition, i.e. which type of state and society, regarding the particular circumstances in Serbia, it should turn into – a state and society of “pure competition”, a state and society of “new solidarity” or a state and society of well-balanced competition and solidarity; (2) is there a possibility that the concept of transition – which is undoubtedly a sort of new ideology – to a certain extent blurs and shifts focus from the division into developed and undeveloped societies, which is, it seems, essential and permanent; (3) are regionalization and multiculturalization in our circumstances possible, provided they are desired at all – in other words, are they stimulation or a hindrance for transition in Serbia.

Referring to the first question, it seems that in Serbia – theoretically and practically – there is a complete chaos caused by almost irreconcilable division into the supporters and followers of different neo-liberal variation of “a state of pure competition”, on one hand; and of different variations of “a state of abundance” or “social state”, on the other hand. There is an outstanding question whether it is generally possible – especially in Serbia – to have an optimal balance between these two contradictory principles – one of which favours instrumental rationality and efficiency, while the other favours solidarity and stability. Or are these two models, in slightly modified forms, going only to continue cyclically replacing one another, as it has been so far? The thing that seems undisputable is that the regional politics must not become merely social politics, but it should also be *functioning as developmental politics*, in the same way as “developmental” politics should not be absolutely deprived of “social”. The very concept of regionalization is, however, still closer to “state of abundance” than “(neo-) liberal state”.

When it comes to the second issue stated above, the answer would be that transition – no matter how necessary and desirable – most probably will not and cannot erase – probably not even lessen – the differences between unde-

veloped and developed societies; all it can do is boost the hope with a great number of social participants that it is possible.

Regarding the third issue, our response or a thesis for consideration would be that regionalization and multiculturalization in Serbia are possible to be realized gradually, although with difficulties, under the condition that the main social participants recognize these processes as desirable; in other words, *they are not necessarily an obstacle for transition but, under certain circumstances, they can even be a stimulus for a successful transition.*

In any case, regardless of what we opt for in the above stated or other controversies of transition, the problem is additionally complicated when all these issues are accompanied by as a disputable issue of multiculturalism. It introduces a great number of interesting topics, such as: the problem of articulating, protecting and further developing of the established fundamental rights of all citizens, while respecting their differences; the issue of recognizing and respecting the existing and emerging differences – which refer also to protection from any kind of imposing or manipulation with the purpose of accepting the cultural values represented either by publicly significant institutions, or by individuals and groups with their partial needs, values, standards and interests; the problem of adequate protection of rights of all the minorities and affirmation of their role in the majorities' environments, etc. (Tripković, 2002: 10-15)

As stressed above, the essence of the issue of multiculturalism is perceived within the complex and dynamic system of relations, one aspect of which is protection of the fundamental rights of an individual as a human being, while the other aspect would be recognizing the individual needs of particular social-cultural groups; these groups are founded on different bases, which express some of their socially relevant features, while the individuality of the group members should by no means be suppressed or jeopardized (Taylor, 2001: 19-23). It is evidently a very complex and not easily resolved problem.

Nevertheless, the research conducted so far indicates that the problem of multiculturalism should be dealt with really seriously. This is due to the fact that this problem comprises certain crucial, socially very relevant coordinates, consisting of the very dichotomies: individual/society, global/local, centre/periphery, public/private, integration/disintegration, homogeneity/heterogeneity, majority/minority, similar/different, assigned/acquired, etc. (Tripković, 2005: 81)

In other words, examining the problem of multiculturalism and regionalization requires re-examining of the whole liberal-democratic concept of the state and social structure so far, which is based on guaranteeing and continual development of civil right and freedom, and which was believed to provide the best, if not the final, answers for all those controversies and problems. This is because it comprises not only the civil and political rights, but also economical, social and cultural, and even so-called the “third gen-

eration human rights”, which refer to the rights to the healthy environment and so on. It is no wonder that such model was considered to be able to completely satisfy, among others, also the increased requests for expressing and respecting specific needs resulting from cultural heterogeneities, which continuously multiply in contemporary societies.

Today, this idea is seriously challenged. This is also because of the numerous ethno-cultural conflicts, appearing after termination of the cold war – often accompanied even by mass physical destructions or mass banishing of all that are *different*, i.e. all that represented national, ethnic or cultural *minority* in a certain environment. However, it is apparent that – even before these conflicts – violence, hatred, other conflicts, segregation or inflicted assimilation existed and became almost a “normal” part of the ethnic, racial and cultural heterogeneity, not only of undeveloped or transitional societies, but also of developed societies.

The feature shared by all multicultural societies is the potential danger that, for one reason or the other, the issue of the minority-majority relation arises. It is not exaggerated to say then that *in the background of the problem of multiculturalism there is a complex issue of minorities*, and that minorities, as a rule, are unprivileged in respect to the others.

Historically speaking, the problem of minorities’ is open primarily regarding the status of national minorities – which was generally speaking extremely unfavourable, and it was mainly the consequence of the fact that state borders never overlap with ethnic borders. This problem was neglected in the international law for a long time. Only after the World War I and drawing of new borders have there been attempts to provide protection for national minorities’ rights in a systematic and universal way – by founding the League of Nations. Special minorities’ right were supposed to be some kind of correlation and corrective of the people’s right to self-determination, which was incorporated into new borders, but certainly not in the same way for the winning and the defeated parties. However, bad experience with (mis)use of the rights of national minorities, especially of the German national minority by the Nazi (Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc), contributed to the situation that the reserved attitude towards the national minorities after the World War II prevailed, and they were referred to as specific collective rights. Thus, the United Nations opted against group protection, and opted for securing their individual rights. The convention for protecting national minorities of the Council of Europe of 1995 also avoided the use of the term “collective rights of minorities”, using instead the formulation “persons belonging to the minorities” (Dimitrijević, Paunović, 1997: 402).

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the term “minority” does not have to apply only to the national, ethnic or racial minorities, but refers also to other minority groups, which in the modern society are not only becoming more numerous but also more aware of their own individu-

ality and differences, demanding more firmly for those differences to be accepted. Thus, it is difficult to reach some universal and generally acceptable definition of the term “minority”. In order to make the term as precise as possible – apart from the very number (minority in comparison to majority) and permanent living on a certain territory – there are also certain special ethnic, religious and lingual features of minorities groups that should be taken into consideration, as well as their specific feeling of group solidarity, and their aiming at preserving their special group identity. Sometimes, there is an additional factor of citizenship, which can be regarded as disputable, as the minorities whose citizenship at a given moment is unclear or disputable are deprived of these rights at the very start.

In the broadest sociological sense, the term “minority” refers to *the specific unity of objective features and subjective tendencies regarding any socially and culturally relevant differences*. These “objective features” refer to specific and fundamental differences which objectively exist and can be so identified (for instance, numerousness, size of territory, cultural, ethnic, religious, lingual, and other particularities, shared status, etc.). On the other hand, the “subjective features” refer to the tendency to express and preserve differences in relation to others – above all, to the majority population. Typically, this means that there is also some kind of minority cultural-spiritual, political and economic elite, who has the willingness and the means to articulate, defend and implement these particularities. Certainly, all this should be accompanied by appropriate readiness of the majority environment to meet these requests, as well as by the loyalty of the minorities to the state on the territory of which they reside.

It is evident that as broad use of the term “majority” means that not all the minorities are ethnic or national. Here, however, it is important to bear in mind that all the national minorities are ethnic, but all ethnic groups are not national minorities. Thus, for example, some ethnic minorities (Roma, Kurds, etc.) are not national, as they have no mother country, which means that “ethnic” is a broader term than “national”, and that the term “minority” has the broadest scope. Accordingly, the interest for the issues of the minorities is changing – there is an evident tendency of changing the focus of interest: *from national minorities, via ethnic, towards the minorities as such*.

It is not surprising then that, in practice, it is common to find different approaches and insufficiently matching or applicable solutions for defining the term “minority”, for recognizing their status and respecting their rights. Without considering all other minorities, there is no doubt that protection of ethnic and national minorities rights is realized to the greatest extent in Europe, where it is particularly insisted that they preserve their language, religion, culture, origin, education, the media and that they are active in politics. In this respect, it is possible to outline five basic rights of ethnic groups: (1) right to survival; (2) right to equality; (3) right to appropriate representation

in political decision making; (4) right to free use one's language both in private and in public; (5) right to have own institutions (Tripković, 2006a: 19).

This is even more significant because such broadly established set of rights provides a good basis for recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities, not only ethnic or national. Nevertheless, even when protection of rights of ethnic and national minorities is legally well regulated, in practice, it is not always conducted adequately. Besides, as has already been mentioned, the issue of minorities' rights cannot be concluded just by recognizing and protecting ethnic and national minorities.

This introduces the problem of reconsidering and maybe redefining the existing liberal-democratic model of organization of society and state, which is based both on protecting and reinforcing the universal rights and freedoms *of all the people as citizens*, regardless of their individual or collective particularities, and on the clear *division between private and public spheres*. According to this model, all national, ethnic, cultural and other particularities are protected by the very application of and adhering to the agreed corpus of human rights. Besides, cultural heterogeneities are mainly related to private lives of citizens and cannot be a basis for acquiring some special minorities' rights in the public sphere, especially not in the very structure of a country, as it would nullify the principle of citizens' equality and jeopardize the social unity.

However, the abstract liberal attitude on the proclaimed "equality of individuals" in practice is actually understood and realized as "equality of citizens", and the equality understood in this way refers not only to the individual but also to the collective rights (e.g. the rights due to citizenship) and collective benefits (e.g. rights due to belonging to the majority nation or dominant culture). In other words, the liberal idea of "equality" or "fairness" – proclaimed and undifferentiated – can be interpreted in different ways and in different ways can be adapted into legal standards and practical solution, including also some unspoken inequalities.

The problem, thus, lies in the fact that the liberal concept of human rights resides both in the unquestionable conviction that the proclaimed equality among people as citizens is realized, and the wrong assumption that human rights are actually *equality of individuals*. However, an individual almost never comes out as sole, abstract individuality, but – with different collective, ascribed and acquired features – as an *individuum* with a *mediator*. This means that having numerous guaranteed human rights very often refers to existence of some collectivity. This collectivity appears as an unavoidable mediator, in the sense that some guaranteed right can actually be realized *only within a unity with other individuals* who own certain features that distinguish them from other individuals, and who form a group which has a collective right to something (right of people to self-determination, special

rights of national minorities, etc; see - Tripković, 2005: 85-86).²

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a need for careful consideration and precise separation of certain aspects of the multilayered and complex process of multiculturalization, placed between the extremes of cultural assimilation and cultural isolation. Based on the principles of *multilateral acculturation or interculturalization*, multiculturalization is, in that sense, in numerous ways a regionally, economically, social-politically and ideologically *mediated* process.

Regarding the multiculturalism and multiculturalization in Vojvodina – especially in the circumstances of transition – the starting point of this discussion is the assumption that here, as anywhere else, it is required to respect and somehow make reconciliation of the two opposed experience: the experience of cooperation and the experience of conflict. Multiculturalization in this respect can be perceived at (and composed of) two levels: *firstly*, at the level of *spontaneous multiculturalization*, i.e. at the level of spontaneous contact, of encountering and intersecting of cultural differences, mainly within everyday life – and that situation undoubtedly exists; and *secondly*, at the level of *institutional multiculturalization*, i.e. at the level of its organized, systematic and continuous stimulation, conducting and supervision – and this level is only partially realized, mainly through institutional protection of basic rights of national minorities and ethnic groups (education, languages, etc).

Our empirical research has confirmed certain theoretical assumptions, which could concisely be stated as follows: (1) multicultural and generally exceptionally heterogeneous societies in transition have an additional problem compared to the societies that are not multicultural, or at least not so to such an extent; (2) the problem is more significant if the ethnic heterogeneities have been the basis of repeated (and repeatable) conflicts, in near or more distant past; (3) regardless of this, the issue of strongest recognition of multicultural diversities and their expression through new forms of social organization does not exist only in the most developed and very stable societies – the societies sometimes with strong monocultural ideology, and also with multicultural reality – but also in transition societies, including the societies with late transition, where the already serious problems of transi-

2 Will Kymlicka, attempting to respond to the challenges of multiculturalism and minorities' rights, claims that there should be a difference between: multinational countries – where cultural diversity is the result of incorporation of formerly self-governed, territorially concentrated cultures into a single country; and, on the other hand, poly-ethnic countries – where cultural diversity emerges as a result of individual and family immigrations. Accordingly, he differentiates national minorities in multinational countries from ethnic groups in poly-ethnic countries. Moreover, Kymlicka provides an appropriate typology of different types of minorities' rights, naming the following: the rights to self-governing – which refer to transferring power to national minorities, often through some form of federalism; poly-ethnic rights, which include financial support and legal protection of certain practices related to special ethnic or religious groups; and special representation rights, which refer to a number of representatives of ethnic or national groups secured within central institutions of the country (Kimlika, 2004: 16).

tional period are additionally complicated and intensified; (4) in Serbia, and especially in Vojvodina, this problem occurs in a specific form, as there is certain respectable experience of multicultural (co)living, both at the levels of spontaneous and institutionalized multiculturalization; (5) provided that such positive experience is well-timed and appropriately assessed, renewed and advanced, multicultural heterogeneity could possibly – instead of being a potential burden – turn into even some kind of advantage, as it could simultaneously resolve the “post-modern” problem of transition, which could also be conducted more easily and more successfully (Tripković, 2004: 201-202).

Therefore, special attention should be paid to estimating the integrative and disintegrative potentials of multiculturalization and regionalization. In the case of Vojvodina, integration should be interpreted, at least partially, as a renewed integration, i.e. *reintegration*, for at least two reasons: *firstly*, because the new centralization of Serbia and restricting the autonomy of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, conducted under an authoritarian regime, not only left numerous negative consequences for the economic, political and cultural development of the Province, but also had negative influence on the already commenced processes of multiculturalization and implementation of the minorities’ rights; this has been further reinforced by the fact that, unfortunately, even the new democratic regimes are reluctant to give up the former rigid centralism and excessive metropolization; and *secondly*, because the civil wars and ethnic cleansings – which took place in the vicinity – had, as one of the consequences, significant migrations of population. The main tendencies with these migrations were, on one hand – economically but not ethnically based, and not as massive but still continuous – emigrations of old-timers, mainly educated and urban population, and, on the other hand, massive and sudden immigration of refugees and exiles, mainly having no means for living (Tripković, 2006a: 10-11).

This situation occurred in a *specific region*, which in the previous period (while within the second Yugoslavia) used to have greater autonomy than today – the trend that is certainly entirely opposed to the usual world’s tendencies that the scope of autonomy is, almost exclusively, expanded. This region also used to be the most developed part of the Republic of Serbia, while nowadays it is becoming less so (Belgrade is certainly by far the most developed). Furthermore, Vojvodina belongs to Serbia, which – as a country – has no defined status at all, primarily because of Kosovo and Metohija, which belongs to Serbia only formally, and whose independence is, it seems – in the best case – “supervised”, “conditional”, “delayed” or “gradual”. Finally, Vojvodina at the moment is the only part of Serbia bordering the European Union, which objectively places Vojvodina in a favoured position compared to other parts of Serbia (Tripković, 2006a: 11).

It is important also to refer here to the assumption that for the issues of multiculturalism, regionalization and integration on the territory of Vojvodina – and the whole Serbia as well as other countries – it is necessary to distinguish two ideally typical models or situations: the one called *country-nation* in literature and the other called *nation-country*. The former is constituted by specific circumstance in the societies and countries, which basically means that we are talking about immigrant societies of so-called “*new colonization*”, in which the autochthon population is not in majority. On the other hand, nation-country model is also formed as a result of certain historical circumstances, primarily long-term and fairly continual residing of a dominant ethnic group on a certain territory. Unlike country-nation models, which represent the union of dispersed and mixed entities, races and religions and have no own foundation, nation-country models can be integrated only as unions of countries or nations each of which has its own foundation. However, the important thing is that – regardless of this contrast between territorially founded (“tribal”) and unfounded (“multicultural”) differences, which require also different processes of synchronizing through compromising – both of these types represent *only different ways of the same trend of synchronizing the differences and adjusting to them* (Valzer, 2001:15).

In this sense, multiculturalism represents a potential framework and grounds both for cultural influences and fruitful interactions between different cultures (interculturalism) on one hand, and for cultural separation and cultural assimilation, on the other. A good prerequisite for the former is *the existence of a fundamental cultural pattern in common* – with shared values, needs, standards, symbols, interests, etc – which is as universal as possible, and which is not imposed and is generally accepted by all the members of the given society and which can therefore be regarded as undisputable. This especially applies to the societies and countries that are nationally extremely heterogeneous, in which it is, however, most unlikely to be achieved.

It is clear here that social differentiation (e.g. separating religion from country or family from economy) harms integration. However, this particularly applies to *extremely disproportionate vertical social differentiation*, for example, to dividing the society in elite and mass, especially in multicultural societies.

The tragic events from ex-Yugoslav territory have confirmed this idea. Namely, it is evident that only those newly constituted countries from ex-Yugoslavia that were nationally relatively homogeneous and economically relatively developed (Slovenia) or the societies that became such after termination of the civil war and exiling the minority population (Croatia) managed to stabilize. These countries also managed to integrate into the European Union fastest (Slovenia) or will do so soon (Croatia). All other newly established countries are formally, officially and outwardly “multicultural”, but inside and essentially they are actually bi-ethnic (Macedonia), tri-ethnic

(Bosnia and Herzegovina) or with completely undefined state, and even ethnic status (the former common state of Serbia and Montenegro). The paradox is that the countries that attempt to keep multi-ethnicity, even when it is imposed from the outside, and which need integration most – the countries where integration represents practically the only rational solution for the very unfavourable current situation – have the worst prospects to realize either internal or external integration. This is where we enter some kind of circle and it is impossible to leave it: namely, in order to really stabilize and join the European Union relatively soon, these countries need to consolidate and develop and, for achieving that, they have to be members of the European Union! (Tripković, 2006a: 23-24)

External integration hence has to be necessarily accompanied by *fundamental internal transformation and permanent consolidation of a society and country on completely new bases*, for which, it seems, there has been neither enough determination and persistency nor enough skilfulness in Serbia. This confirms a thesis well known to be true in sociology – that behind the story of “European integrations” there is actually a disguised need for deep and certainly painful internal social changes, which can easily turn into superficial declarations and self-satisfactory quasi-reformism.

Therefore, sociological research should also deal with the complex issues of (un)readiness of social participants to perform important and essential changes, as well as (im)possibility that those changes are instituted and successfully conducted in given conditions. The situation here is even more complex due to the fact that the very EU is in the phase of serious self-questioning, the outcome of which is uncertain. This primarily refers to the already arisen debates about deceleration – and maybe even delaying – of the entire process of “European integrations”. Special attention here should be paid to the increasingly demanding requests to reconsider the so-called “privileged partnership” – which is a kind of the third status for the countries of Western Balkans – which would be something between the present “process of joining” and the future “full membership”.

Accordingly, it could be of crucial importance for the discussion to consider three preliminary and very general issues, which have no entirely clear and reliable answers: (1) how will the processes of integration further develop within the very European Union, especially with regard to the increase of Euro-scepticism, arisen mainly due to inter-European differences and contradictions between the “old” and the “new” Europe, i.e. between the old members and the ones accepted in May 2004 and January 2007; (2) what will be happening in Serbia considering drastic disintegrative tendencies – especially evident in the tendencies that Kosovo and Metohija are unconditionally constituted as an independent state, and also evident in other spheres and fields of social life; if it ever happens, it will certainly adversely affect the arrangement of political forces in Serbia – unfavourably for pro-Europe-

an orientations – although even at this moment the tendencies of political changes anyway give no basis for great pro-European optimism; (3) how will the relations between Serbia and the European Union, influenced by the two above stated factors, develop despite the considerable improvement compared to Milošević's period, as good communication still has not been established; instead, it resides on the tactic of "carrot and stick", in which the carrot continuously slips away, and the stick is used for continuous and ruthless beating.

The preliminary answer to the *first* question cannot be sought out of the context of now evident pauses, delays, questionings and searching for new forms of integration – both for the "first" and "second", and for the "third" Europe, the typical representative of which, it seem, will be Serbia. The *second* issue cannot be considered out of the context of strikingly evident absence of positive potentials for internal and external integration of Serbia, and out of the context of the already experienced and still expected conditioning from the outside and internal wandering, then regressions, slowed recoveries and further falling behind. Finally, regarding the *third* issue, more pressures and conditioning can be expected almost undoubtedly, and that is also going to adversely affect the processes of integration; it is also very arguable how Serbia is going to react to that in future, especially because the capacities for its withstanding the pressure have been severely exhausted (Tripković, 2006b: 16-17).

There are, certainly, some other significant general points and dimensions of the issues relevant to this discussion. Actually, those are the frameworks in which the issues of integration are situated in, two of which we would like to outline; one of them could be marked as external, and the other as internal.

The first additional general point of analysis refers to the present dominance of neo-liberal model of economic and social development, which was, it seems, imposed on Europe during the last decade of the past century. Namely, it is rather opposed both to Europe's autochthonous humanistic heritage and to present achievements in development of particular systems of European capitalism and emergence of special European types of civil society. This is clearly demonstrated through the evident reactions indicating the increasing scepticism towards further integrations – especially apparent in France and Holland's rejection to draw up the European constitution. These tendencies are also apparent in the increasing fear of losing social rights, and the fear of the consequences of free competition, especially in the spheres of free market of labour forces and the goods. Finally, these tendencies are evident through defiance – mainly of the young – against merciless competition, the only sense of which that can be perceived is enrichment of those that are already (excessively) rich.

The second point refers to the special features of the transition processes in Serbia – the features that could simply be determined as "delayed" or "late"

transition in an anomic society of post-socialism; moreover, the transition here has been conducted with no real support from the outside and under the heavy pressure of problems, which the other societies mostly did not have – or at least not to such a drastic extent. Being aware also of our hypothesis that even the declamatory supporters or opponents of “European integrations” in our country, in general actually have insufficiently clear and mainly wrong ideas of what exactly this means and what the exact prerequisites and aftermaths of one or the other choice are – we shall have all the important elements of a skein of wool in which the problems of transition and integration in Serbia are tangled into (Tripković, 2006b: 17-18).

However, regardless of the further developments of affairs in Serbia, Serbia should continue to determinedly meet the standards which are established as necessary conditions for integration – not for Europe but for the sake of the country itself. It is in the interests of Serbian society to determinedly accept as undisputable and continuously develop “universal European values” and appropriate standards – including all the fields from economy to ecology. These values and standards are the reasons we should strive for integration in Europe, even on the assumption that integration, as a final outcome and in the formal sense, might never be realized in entirety. The presumption here is, certainly, that there would be no extremely evident, negative conditioning by European politicians, which would continuously dispute, if not even nullify, the positive effects.

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