

ETHNICAL DISTANCE IN VOJVODINA

Research procedure

Research procedure of national/ethnic distance in Vojvodina was based on technique of surveying of representative number of adult citizens of Vojvodina. Although it is basically inspired by Bogardus' review of implementation of personal scale of social distance (Bogardus, 1947),¹ the measurement of ethnical distance is conducted in such manner to mitigate key deficiencies of his approach² as well as to be as accessible and clearer as possible to all qualification and age categories of respondents. Therefore, the focus was on:

- *relation of quantitative and qualitative data* – this was and still is the biggest challenge, bearing in mind that those are nominal data which statistical processing and interpretation has sense only in the domain of frequencies and distribution, and which, in return, should be declared in real numbers, in order to establish average values reflecting the mutually comparable measures of distances between different social groups/strata. Our instrument also does not bring solution to the problem, because numeric values of offered answers on readiness for certain characteristic forms of social contacts (5 – yes, gladly; 4 – yes, I do not mind; 3 – I do not care; 2 – rather not; 1 – no, no way), in the best case scenario may be treated just ordinal, but not interval. This deficiency is partly resolved through implementation of serial metric scale, which is according to its features “between an ordinal and an interval scale” (Siegel, Shepherd, 1959: 336), as well as through increase of quantitative validity of scaling by the method of uniform rating of readiness for several more important social contacts, hence the measure of distance is generated from multiple groups of quantified nominal data;³
- *logic harmonization and value neutrality of researched social relations* – ethnic distance in Vojvodina has been established by characteristic so-

1 “The social distance approach may be viewed as a form of sociometrics in which attention is centered on the measurement of personal-group relations, on the measurement of changes in these relations, on the use of stereotypes in such measurements, and on attempts to utilize feeling reactions as a means of understanding human behavior.” (Bogardus, 1947: 306)

2 On adequate approach in quantification of qualitative data see Guttman (1944), and on more advanced techniques of attitude scaling see Edwards (1957).

3 Field work showed that shortcoming of the instrument built in such manner may be the impatience and fatigue with respondents, since the survey last considerably longer, hence it should not be used within the scope of more comprehensive surveys.

cial relations and contacts, without interference with other (i.e. spatial) distances. The offered social relations are declared in value neutral form, whereas the respondents chose using the modified Murphy-Likert scale the level of desirability – undesirability of the given relation with the members of various national and ethnic communities in the Province; however in the process of establishment of desirability – undesirability level of various types of social relations and contacts, the value attitudes are inevitable, because the bottom line is that those are subjective preferences of respondents;⁴

- *distinctions of gradations of value attitudes* – readiness for offered types of social relations is expressed with a neutral attitude and with two affirmative and/or negative qualifications, which comprise very clearly and simply expressed positive and negative gradations; although in this case the most logical quantification of the stated answers would be the continuum: -2, -1, 0, 1, 2 however prevailed the choice of the type of scoring familiar to all citizens of Serbia who finished at least primary education (from 1 to 5), since it does not require additional explanation, and for common sense evaluation represents some kind of widely accepted pattern. Since the research instrument deals with qualitative variables, zero point and gradation intensity are the matter of convention and the only important criterion is consistent implementation (see Guttman, Suchman, 1947).

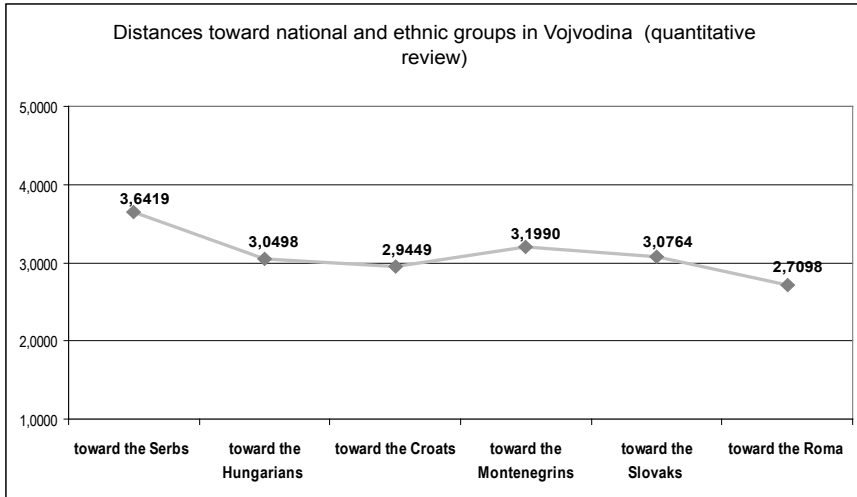
Therefore, the surveyed citizens of Vojvodina answered the multiple combined question on the level of desirability and undesirability of entering into certain types of social relations and contacts (from marriage to the presidential elections), with the members of the most numerous and most characteristic national and ethnic groups in Vojvodina (Serbs, Hungarians, Croats, Montenegrins, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenians and Roma).⁵ During data processing, the principle of exclusion of respondents of national/ethnic group in question was taken into account, avoiding the distortion of results by self evaluation.

4 “Attitudes are important to the sociologist, for the behavior of people is largely determined by what they think other people think and intend; in other words, social behavior is largely a process of the interaction of attitudes.” (House, 1934: 8) We say – the bottom line, because the subjective attitudes are, anyhow, formed under the deciding influence of the prevailing cultural patterns and stereotypes on others, which dominate in certain social group/strata, and/or wider social community (see Szalay, Maday, 1983).

5 According to the last census from 2002, in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina there are 1 321 807 Serbs (65.05%), 290 207 Hungarians (14.28%), 56 637 Slovaks (2.79%), 56 546 Croats, (2.78%), 49 881 Yugoslavians (2.45%), 35 513 Montenegrins (1.75%), 30 419 Romanians (1.5%), 29 057 Roma (1.43%), 19 766 Bunjevac (0.97%) and 15 626 Ruthenians (0.77%); see *Saopštenje*.

The results of research of national/ethnic distance in Vojvodina⁶

Distances toward the most numerous national and ethnic groups in Vojvodina are very similar and grouped around one numeric value 3, which in our research presents the attitude “I do not care” (Graph 1: total review of quantitative data is in the Table 8 at the end of the text):



Graph 1

Evidently, a slightly smaller distance towards the Serbs, and/or slightly emphasized distance toward the Roma are distinguished. However, this second data should be treated as relative since the difference of the smallest (towards the Serbs) and largest (towards the Roma) distance is smaller than one interval at the five-degree scale (0.93). Besides, the difference between the distance towards the Roma and towards the following national/ethnic group – in this case the Croats – does not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ interval (0.24).

Besides the fact that it is a bit smaller, the distance towards the Serbs, according to individual segments comprising the general distance, is also the most equal (Table 1):

⁶ Basic data presented and interpreted here was first publicly presented by the author at the working meetings with five-member committee of the European Parliament, presided by Ms. Doris Pack which visited Serbia and Vojvodina in the second half of January 2005. Admittedly, at the spring session, the European Parliament did not accept the proposal of Hungarian delegation for passing of the Resolution on Encroachment of Hungarian National Minority in Vojvodina.

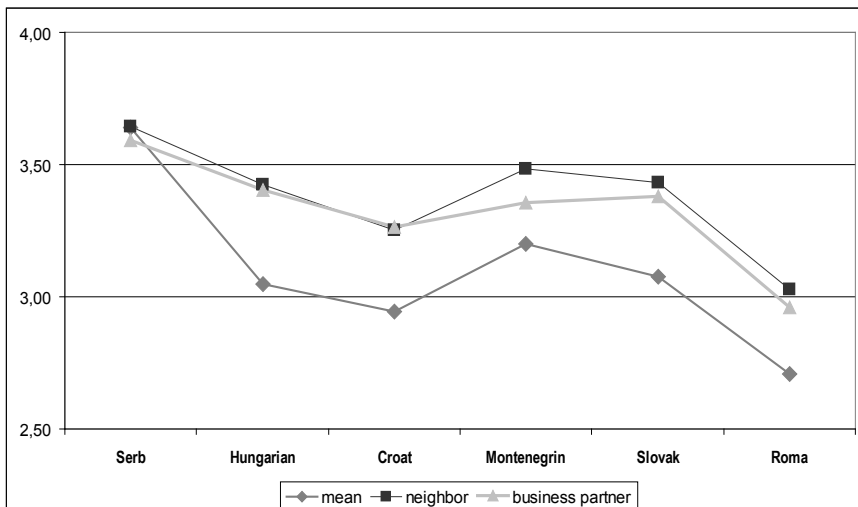
	Serb (male/ female)	Hungari- an (male/ female)	Croat (male/ female)	Monte- negrin (male/ female)	Slovak (male/ female)	Roma (male/ female)
spouse	3,65	2,87	2,73	3,07	2,85h	2,29
neighbor	3,64	3,43	3,25	3,48	3,43	3,03
teacher	3,59	3,21	3,13	3,38	3,26	2,98
President of the State	3,84	2,28	2,26	2,75	2,36	2,18
business partner	3,59	3,40	3,26	3,36	3,38	2,96
manager	3,54	3,10	3,03	3,15	3,19	2,82

Table 1

The biggest reservation toward national minorities is in the domain of marriage and presidency (especially the latter), but we must not forget that that is not just the scoring by the Serbs, but also by the members of certain minority nationalities between themselves. However, they do not have such reservation in the matter of Serbian spouse, whereas the result of attitudes toward the President of the State from the majority nation refers to the conclusion that that is something which is substantively implied.

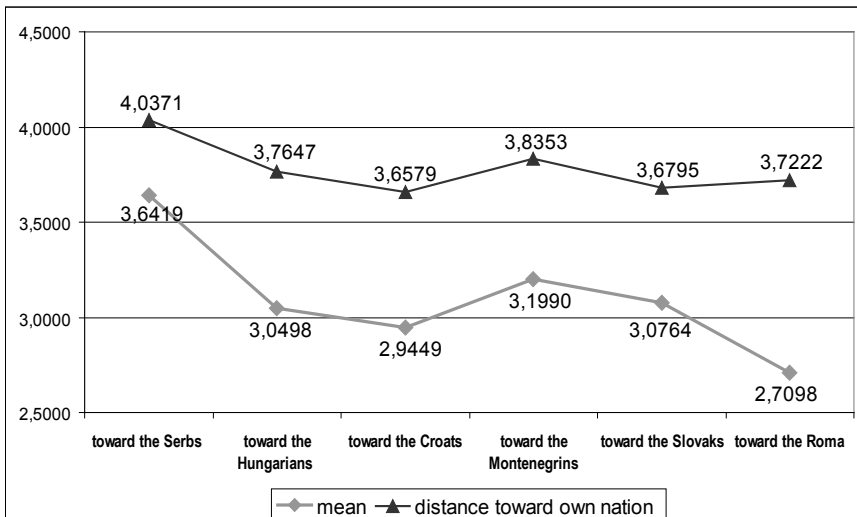
Looking in general (Graph 2), the members of the national minorities are desirable as neighbors and for work-business relations above the average and if there is a secret for Vojvodinian tolerance and coexistence, than it is certainly in one part in these data. Namely, these two types of relations are built rather on rational than emotional basis and they refer to the conclusion that the Vojvodinians are aware of the significance of territorial and work-business connection between themselves.

Graph 2



The second factor of the successful Vojvodinian coexistence of different national and ethnic communities, according to our opinion is in conscientious critical attitude toward their personal national/ethnic entity. Namely, if we compare the average scores of others with average scores which the respondents gave to the level of desirability of social contacts with the members of its own nation/ethnic group (Graph 3), we can see that the results (as expected and understandably) are better, but again quite similar: they range from 3.6579 (Croats) to 4.0371 (Serbs) which is less than two-fifths of one interval of our ethnical distance scale. It is especially interesting and significant that the largest minority communities in Vojvodina have noticeable similar difference between their personal perception and perception of others which can only be explained in the manner that *the criteria for own evaluation are very similar, if not the same in relevant segments* (Hungarians +0.7149; Croats +0.713; Montenegrins +0.6363; Slovaks +0.6031). The most similar attitudes are toward the Serbs and Serbs toward themselves (difference is +0.3952), whereas the biggest difference is between the distances toward the Roma and Roma toward their own ethnic community (+1.0124). In relation to the latter, we believe that this is not the case of higher degree of criticism of the Roma toward their own ethnic group, but it is the case of strong stereotypes, which evidently critically influenced and created relatively the largest distance toward them (focus on the result of attitudes toward the Roma respondents toward their own people: 3.7222, which completely matches the means which we have realized through the processing of the same attitudes of the respondents from the group of the most numerous national minorities in Vojvodina).

Graph 3



Distance toward the Serbs. We have already seen that the distance towards the Serbs is the smallest, i.e. the levels of choices towards them are quite equalized, with the exception of the higher desirability for the President of the State to be from the group of majority nation. However, the standard deviation of the last data (which is a bit larger than the average), also indicates more extreme answers by the part of respondents in relation to the desirability of a Serb for the President of the State. Through crossing of data (Table 2) we have established that the reason for that is the above average choice of the Montenegrin respondents for the most radical degree of approval (“Yes, gladly”: 66.7%) and disapproval (“No, no way”: 10%), whereas the ones who do not care are scarce, only 6.7% (average is 33.2%). We also find the more emphasized radical disapproval with the stated attitude has the part of the respondents of the Croatian national community (“No, no way”: 7%), but also most of them are the ones who do not care (over 40%).

	Would you like to have a Serb as the President of the State (in %)?					
	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	Total
Montenegrins	10.0	3.3	6.7	13.3	66.7	100%
Croats	7.0	0.0	40.4	29.8	22.8	100%
Hungarians	1.7	0.8	37.2	37.2	23.1	100%
averages	3.7	1.6	33.2	30.5	31.0	100%

Table 2

In case of the desirability of the spouse, proportionally the most respondents have chosen the attitude “Yes, I do not mind”: 41.2%, whereas in total 9.2% of respondents have chosen some form of rejection and among them, proportionally, most of them are the Hungarians (15.7%) but none of them is Montenegrin. Generally, however, the Hungarians have large distance toward the spouse from the group of the largest national community: it is 3.40 and slightly smaller is the distance toward the possible Croatian spouse: 3,50. At the same time, the Serbs are the most desirable spouses for the Montenegrins: distance is 4.00 (smaller than the distance toward the spouse from their own national community: 3.87), and 28% has chosen “Yes, gladly” (average is 18.5%). Out of the data showing the more significant deviations from the average, only the reservation of Yugoslavians towards the Serbs as business partners is singled out. That relation is in no way desired by even 8% (average is 2.9%) whereas, proportionally just few of them have chosen “Yes, gladly”: 10.5% (average is 16.2%).

Distance toward the Hungarians. Generally looking, the Serbs have the largest distance toward the members of national minorities in case of possible spouse; in case of Hungarians, in total 41% respondents of Serbian nationality have chosen the radical, and/or moderate negative attitude (total average of negative attitudes is 36.7%), whereas just around 6% gladly

wanted the Hungarian for a spouse. On the other hand, those are the most desirable for the respondents of Croatian nationality: the distance is 3.56, whereas “Yes, gladly”: 17.5% (average: 7.8%); “Yes, I do not mind”: 38.6% (average: 26.2%), Montenegrin (“Yes, gladly”: 18.5%) and Yugoslavian (“Yes, I do not mind”: 38.6%). Distribution of attitude scale according to gender of respondents clearly indicates that the Hungarian women are more desirable than the Hungarian men. To the possibility of election of Hungarian for the President of the State, the Serbs are the most opposed (almost 63%, distance: 2.13) and the Montenegrins (60%; distance: 2.17) whereas the latter are more radical (“No, no way”: 50% in comparison to 43.5% of Serbs). However, again the Montenegrins are also the most extreme in other direction: even 10% (mean is 3.7%) answered “Yes, gladly”. Very prominent equal distribution of attitudes in relation to desirability of business partnership with Hungarians, without extreme oscillation (again, apart the Montenegrins, who again have chosen the most positive gradation above average), and in some way verifies the stereotype in Vojvodina on the members of this national minority as hard workers and honest business partners (Table 3):

Would you like to have a Hungarian as business partner (in %)?							
	distance (1-5)	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	Total
Serbs	3,38	5.3	4.1	48.2	32.6	9.8	100%
Montenegrins	3,47	6.7	6.7	40.0	26.6	20.0	100%
Yugoslavians	3,37	4.7	4.7	48.8	32.6	9.2	100%
mean/average	3,40	4.9	3.9	48.7	31.8	10.7	100%

Table 3

Distance toward the Croats. The members of the Croat national community are the least desirable for marriage for the Serbs (in total 47.8% answered radically or moderately negative, and 23.9% positive, and out of that “Yes, gladly” only 4.3%). Also the Montenegrins are significantly against it (34.4%, in comparison to less than 20% of Yugoslavians and only 7.5% Hungarians who answered negatively), but proportionally most of them are the ones who would gladly enter into marriage with the Croat (15.6%, average is 5.9%; as an example, the Hungarians also have chosen this attitude above average, but their percentage does not exceed 10). Also, as in the case of the Hungarian national community, the Croat women are more desirable than their male compatriots (here the distribution of attitudes toward the gender is also not accidental). Also as in the case of Hungarians, the possibility that the Croat is the President of the State is very undesirable for the Serbs (66.4%) and the Montenegrins (60%), whereas a bit more than 14% of the Serbs (out of that “gladly” just 2.2%) and even 20% of the Montenegrins have the positive attitude toward that possibility. Again, proportionally, most of the answers are the most negative (“No, no way”: 50%, in comparison to 47.8% Serbs and just

5.8% Hungarians), but the most positive answers (Yes, gladly": 10%, average is 3.5%), came from the respondents of the Montenegrin national community in Vojvodina. However, the distance toward the members of the Croatian national community in Vojvodina is significantly changed in other types of the offered social relations: almost half (48.7%) of the respondents of the Serbian nationality do not care whether their neighbor is a Croat, whereas 35% in total have positive attitude toward that possibility (although just 7% "gladly"). Total percentage of negative answers is 16.4%, and out of that $\frac{2}{3}$ preclusive ones ("No, no way"). Similar percentage of rejection we also find with the Montenegrins (16.1%), but also they have the bigger percentage of acceptance, 42% in total. The Croats as neighbors are by far the most desirable for the Vojvodinian Hungarians: based on that possibility, none of them gave the negative opinion, whereas almost the half of them (48.4%) has chosen some form of positive attitude. Nevertheless, the Montenegrins are again the first in choosing the most positive gradation ("Yes, gladly": 19.4% in comparison to 12.3% of Hungarians). We also have very similar answers in relation to the Croats as possible business partners (Serbs: 16.4% in total of negative attitudes and 36.5% of positive attitudes; Hungarians: In this case, one respondent answered "rather not", whereas the positive attitudes have again been chosen by 48.4%), with the exception of a bit bigger percentage of negative attitudes by the Montenegrin (20% in total). Good indicators of international/interethnic tolerance is also the degree of (un)desirability of the manager of different nationality; although in case of the Croats, something like that is less desirable than the possibility to be neighbors and business partners, although in this case (Table 4) the prevailing attitudes are the neutral and the negative ones (Serbs: 28.7% in total, Montenegrins: 33.3% Hungarians: almost 46%).

Would you like to have a Croat as manager (in %)?						
	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	Total
Serbs	16.2	9.7	45.4	23.7	5.0	100%
Montenegrins	16.7	13.3	36.7	20.0	13.3	100%
Hungarians	0.8	0.8	52.5	34.4	11.5	100%
average	13.6	8.1	47.1	24.8	6.5	100%

Table 4

Distance toward the Montenegrins. More prominent rejection of the members of the Montenegrin national community for marriage is shown only by the Croats in Vojvodina (distance = 2.67): 21.1% explicitly rejects it (average is 14.9%), whereas almost 23% has answered "rather not" (average is 12.3%); at the same time, the percentage of neutral and positive answers with the same respondents in all cases is below mean: "I do not care" 29.8% (average is

32.7%), "Yes, I do not mind" 21.1% (average is 31.8%), "Yes, gladly" 5.3% (average is 8.4%). Also, the Croats show a more emphasized reservation towards the Montenegrins as possible neighbors, because they were the only ones who have chosen the attitude "Rather not" (even 10.5%, average is 3.6%), whereas based on the percentage of neutral and the most affirmative choice, they are below average ("I do not care": 45.6%, average: 48%; "Yes, gladly": 8.8%, average: 11.7%). However, the attitude of the Croats is significantly favorable in relation to the desirability of the Montenegrins as the President of the State: Here, the choice of neutral and both positive attitudes is just above average, whereas the negative attitude is significantly below ("No, no way": 15.8%, average: 25.7%). At the same time, the most positive attitude toward this possibility have the Vojvodinian Hungarians, and the most negative have the Serbs (Table 5):

Would you like to have a Montenegrin as the President of the State (in %)?						
	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	Total
Hungarians	7.4	10.7	44.6	28.1	9.1	100%
Serbs	31.0	14.2	24.6	21.9	8.2	100%
average	25.7	14.0	29.2	22.8	8.4	100%

Table 5

Also, only the respondents of Hungarian nationality show more significant openness for business relation with the Montenegrins: they have very little negative choices ("No, no way": 2.5%, average: 6%; "Rather not" 1.6%, average: 5.2%), and neutral and positive are the largest; it is interesting that in regards to this question towards the Montenegrins, the worst answers come from the Yugoslavian nationality (proportionally, they also have the largest percentage of the most negative attitudes, and the smallest of the most positive ones).

Distance toward the Slovaks. The respondents from the group of the majority nation show the largest distance toward the Slovaks as possible spouses, and in regards to that the Montenegrins and Yugoslavians are very ambivalent, and the most positive attitude have the surveyed Hungarians (Table 6). It is similar in the case of the possibility that the Slovak is the President of the State, with the difference that the Yugoslavians are not ambivalent in regards to that, hence, they are rather positive (percentage of negative answers is below the average, and the neutral and moderately positive are above).

	Would you like to have a Slovak as spouse (in %)?						Total
	distance (1-5)	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	
Serbs	2,71	21.3	17.5	34.6	21.7	4.9	100%
Montenegrins	3,09	9.4	25.0	31.3	15.6	18.8	100%
Hungarians	3,27	8.3	6.6	41.3	37.2	6.6	100%
Yugoslavians	3,08	6.8	20.5	35.2	33.0	4.5	100%
mean/average	2,85	17.5	16.6	35.6	24.4	5.9	100%

Table 6

The Serbs are the most reserved toward the Slovaks as business partners, with the attitudes which are neutral or moderately negative, whereas in this case more ambivalent are, beside the Montenegrins, also the Croats. Generally speaking, the Montenegrins have the most negative attitude toward the possibility of having the Slovak for a manager, but then again there are proportionally the most of those who have also chosen the most positive answer: 16.7% (average is 7.7%); followed by the Serbs with moderately negative answers, whereas the Hungarians are the most positive in relation to this possibility. The most positive attitude toward the Slovaks, the Montenegrins have in the case of possible neighbors: none of them has been extremely negative, while just two have chosen “Rather not”, whereas proportionally the most of them have chosen “Yes, gladly”, even 19.4% (in comparison to 14.8% of Hungarians, 8.7% of Serbs and just 7% of Croats; average is 10.2%).

Distance toward the Roma. We have already stated that the relatively largest ethnic distance in Vojvodina is toward the Roma ethnic community. Bearing in mind the average choice of respondents, we can conclude in general that the Serbs in Vojvodina have moderately negative attitude toward the Roma, the Montenegrins have negative and ambivalent, the Yugoslavians ambivalent and positive, the Slovaks usually have positive, whereas only the respondents coming from the Hungarian nationality in all segments have chosen below average the negative, and above average the positive answers.⁷ As well as in the case of other national minorities, toward the Roma is the largest distance in the area of possibility of the state presidency and establishing marital relations (sum of averages of negative gradations are 60.3% and 59%) and the smallest is in the areas of neighboring relations and business partnerships (sum of averages of negative gradations are 23.8%

⁷ The largest distance (2.20) toward Roma has been shown by the respondents of Romanian nationality: none of them has chosen the most positive gradation in any of the researched segment, whereas at least the half has chosen the negative gradation, while the percentage of neutral and moderately positive (with only one exception) answers is always below the average. However, the attitudes of the surveyed Romanians in this research can not be considered as characteristic for this national minority in general, because their participation in the sample was projected in accordance with the needs of the other basic area of research – problem of regionalization, hence their representation is established at one of the sub-regional levels (Banat).

and 26.2%). Same as in several previous cases, again the most of the Montenegrins have chosen the most positive attitude in almost all the segments (except in the case of desirability of Rom as the President of the State), but with significantly high percentages of negative answers, as well. The largest distance toward the Roma in regards to the possibility of establishment of marital relation show the Croats (distance = 2.14): even 71.9% in total have chosen the negative gradations, and just 15.8% chosen the positive (followed by the Serbs with 62.4% of negative in total and 16.7% of positive attitudes in total, in comparison to the 41.4% negative and 31.4% positive attitudes of Hungarians). The largest disapproval with the possibility for the Rom to be the President of the State has been showed by the Montenegrins (70% of negative attitudes, out of which there is more than half who have chosen the most negative gradation “No, no way”) and by the Serbs (67.3%), but also by the half of the surveyed Croats (No, no way”: 26.3%; “Rather not” 24.6%). The smallest distance toward the Roma as neighbors have the Slovaks and the Hungarians, and the largest have the Montenegrins, in spite the fact that here also most of them have chosen the most positive attitude (Table 7):

Would you like to have a Rom as neighbor (in %)?							
	distance (1-5)	No, no way	Rather not	I do not care	Yes, I do not mind	Yes, gladly	Total
Serbs	2,98	12.8	11.5	46.2	23.5	6.0	100%
Montenegrins	2,87	19.4	22.6	29.0	9.7	19.4	100%
Hungarians	3,22	8.2	9.8	42.6	30.3	9.0	100%
Slovaks	3,62	-.-	-.-	53.8	30.8	15.4	100%
Yugoslavians	3,05	14.8	5.7	44.3	30.7	4.5	100%
mean/average	3,03	12.4	11.4	44.7	24.4	7.1	100%

Table 7

The similar relation is also toward the Roma as business partners, with the difference that the most negative attitude with the Montenegrins even more emphasized (“No, no way”: 36.7%, average-: 14.7%), and in this case this attitude is also present with the respondents of Slovak national community (15.4%).

Conclusion

Predominantly equalized distance between the national and ethnic communities in Vojvodina, which is concentrated around the neutral attitude and without extreme (positive and negative) collective attitudes, is quite significant. That distance, generally, means that the critical, war and disastrous nineties of the last century have not left more permanent mark on the relations between the members of the majority nations and national minorities,

at least not in the area of social relations built in every day life. Moreover, even though the responsibility for bad state (and any other general) politic is objectively on the majority nation, the Serbs in Vojvodina are the most desirable for all types of social relations and contacts. This data is insomuch that significant, if we take into account that the reflection of everyday experiences is inevitably the most frequent contacts with the representatives of this nation. However, ethnic distances also confirmed some prevailing stereotypes on certain nations, primarily on the Roma.

Distance toward:	Serbs	Hungarians	Croats	Montenegrins	Slovaks	Yugoslavians
Serbs	4,0371	3,5809	3,5439	3,9120	3,5449	3,5312
Hungarians	2,9718	3,7647	3,4064	3,1397	3,4156	3,1949
Croats	2,7975	3,5179	3,6579	2,9715	3,5609	3,1910
Montenegrins	3,1666	3,3460	3,0994	3,8353	3,2891	3,2103
Slovaks	2,9725	3,4201	3,1901	3,1735	3,6795	3,2028
Romanians	2,8995	3,3473	3,0907	2,9005	3,3974	3,0573
Ruthenians	2,9373	3,3682	3,1257	3,0045	3,4359	3,1148
Roma	2,6244	3,0674	2,7222	2,5070	3,0256	2,8110
Jews	2,9989	3,3804	3,2749	2,9389	3,3077	3,2468

Table 8: Quantitative review of distances

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