

PRESERVING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE BALKAN PEOPLES IN THE MEDIA AGE

ЗАПАЗВАНЕ НА КУЛТУРНАТА ИДЕНТИЧНОСТ НА БАЛКАНСКИТЕ НАРОДИ ВЪВ ВЕКА НА МЕДИИТЕ

Авторът изследва възможността да се запази културната идентичност (език, история и култура) на балканските народи въпреки редица явления, типични за съвременното общество: индивидуализъм, глобализация, влияние на медиите. Повечето от балканските държави споделят общи проблеми – евроинтеграция и глобализация.

Карл Поланий отбелязва, че глобализацията представлява икономическо пререгулиране, при което държавата е най-важният фактор както във вътрешен, така и във външен аспект. Според него свободният пазар е под влиянието на големите геополитически организации – АСЕАН, НАФТА и Европейския съюз, които изграждат културна идентичност на по-високо ниво в сравнение с националните държави.

Авторът също така задава въпроса дали е възможно съществуването на „положителна култура“ в съвременните условия и ако отговорът е „да“, дали тази култура е нещо добро или нещо лошо за балканските народи.

Ключови думи: културна идентичност, индивидуализъм, медийно влияние, евроинтеграция, глобализация, език, „положителна култура“, постмодернизъм.

The author's aim is to explore the possibilities of preserving a cultural identity of Balkan people in postmodernism. The term identity has multidimensional nature. Etymological meaning of the word *identity* is *idem*, which means sameness. There are different kinds of identity: ethnic, religious, generation and native cultural identity. N. Božilović says: “Culture presupposes common tradition, beliefs, habits, myths, values and symbols, so we can recognize cultural identity by values contents which are classified over common history, religion, language, folklore, myths, law, habits and arts” (Božilović 2006: 243). Often people have identified with the ethnic group they belong to, so the cultural identity is identified with ethnic identity, too. Because of that, the term *culture* changes, but in spite of the fact that identity presupposes preserving the unique, searching for ethnic and national roots, it doesn't exclude universal civilization values. In anthropological and sociological discourse, we can define cultural identity as the sameness by which any entity is identical with self. Identity is both a condition and a process. Also, there is a view that identity in postmodernism era is defined by belonging to a certain mode and style of

life. No matter how much we think that cultural identity in postmodernism is identified by our will, it is true that cultural identity is influenced by cultural environment and social structure. Many contemporary theorists talk about people like they are media's beings and accept their identities formed by media influence.

The author will explore problems which are current to all Balkans people in socio-political sphere: - Euro-integration
- and globalization.

- *Euro-integration* -

Euro-integration put in front of all of us the following question: "To what extent is it possible to preserve the cultural identity despite the claims of euro-integrations?" While wars influenced the cultural identity of the Balkans until recently, from the appearance of technology, constant development of technical civilization is making its influence. We will take like an example – Serbian society. Serbian society transformation is going on for too long. Members of this society have the impression that their identity hangs over an abyss (Purić 2006: 164). Entering the European Union does not presuppose just the fulfillment of external claims, but also an internal change and that means the coordination with Europe's and world's identity. That means receiving civilization elements of identity: humanity, loyalty, tolerance and so on. Transformation in Serbia was more political and economical so changes in the culture sphere were not noticeable. J. Djurić says: "The modern approach to the world made culture stop being a universal medium of social fabric, while the experience of world totality which rested on the relationship with the other side, started to disappear"(Djurić 2006: 165.). Modernism thus transformed culture in one wide domain: art, religion, science, sport, education, leisure time etc. Although culture has been and today still is connected with politics and economy, cultural studies separated from politics and economy started in Britain. However, Serbian society is reduced to a cultural dimension which depends on politics, economy and media. J. Djurić saw that relation of the society towards individual and personal creativity is the basis of any vital culture. Observing human beings in society shows that a man is the creator of a culture, and not some unnamed forces, which is difficult to justify. Life in Serbia after socialism is still difficult. Media focus on political and economical contents, black chronics is more present than the content that may truly spiritually enrich, enlighten, or entertain us, while not being too shallow. This is the result of politics performing.

- *Globalization* -

Theoreticians of globalizations often connect globalization with imperialism, Americanism, and modernization. While, imperialism discourse is negative and critical, modernism discourse is positive and legitimate and it means that globalization is something good for individuals, national states and the whole world. Some theoreticians think that globalization leads to disintegration of cultural identity, tradition and the subordination of the poor to the rich, while other theoreticians see the mingling of cultures as a consequence of globalization, as well as better cooperation between states and people. There are theoreticians who see both homogenization and heterogenization of culture as consequences

of globalizations. Globalization is included in the debate on modernism and postmodernism. On one hand, globalization is the continuation of modernism and on the other hand, it is something new. Postmodernists underline new, local, heterogeneous, different. D. Kellner saw that the culture like phenomenon is deeper and more important phenomenon than we expected. Culture is becoming the origin of other conflicts, which can be seen on the Serbo-Croatian language example. In Yugoslavia two republics talked with their own language, but four talked the Serbo-Croatian language. After the disintegration, nations gravitated to have their own language. R. Bugarski says that it is a romantic idea about trinity of state, nation and language (Bugarski 1994: 90). Unlike other European countries where the language was the basis of constituting modern nations, Balkan countries Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia were the countries where belonging to a different religion was the basis of national division. Those nations were constituted like an ethnic society. The disintegration of the political region of second Yugoslavia means the disintegration of the Yugoslavia peoples. Today, Serbo-Croatian is a dead language. B. Јакљиж wrote that the new language after Yugoslavia disintegration was made with force and that the Bosnian language kept some archaisms while the Croatian language took words which are not originally Croatian, like the word *obitelj* (Purić 2006: 169). In the Republic of Serbia people are talking in ekavian dialect although nobody used it before. People do not use this language in everyday life but it is used by the media. Bosnia wanted to separate from Serbia and Croatia and they have done this, among other things, by separating the language.

The Montenegrin writers are supporting the idea of bringing three new letters in the language. If we observe the linguistics, the Serbo-Croatian language consists of four languages: Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and the Montenegrin language. Forming nations on the linguistic basis on the Balkan Peninsula assumed a monstrous shape at the end of the 20th century. Globalization is omnipresent. Culture is shown to us as consumeristic. This culture is selling millions of products all over the world via media and in conformism and hedonism appear in society. We are warning that dangers from media manipulations are present, because we are constantly bombarded with information, and a lot of them are false. Three epithets: consumerism, conformism and hedonism follow postmodernist culture. Contemporary man is a consumer, conformist and hedonist. He buys from his armchair and enjoys his shopping. We will not share Macluan's positions that the world is hyper determined but we will say that man is *zoon politikon*. This view we can associate with Polanyi's state about free market and we will conclude that man is a rational being with conscious plans. It follows from here that the free market is the result of action and decision.

A. Scot said that the world cannot be crisis-stricken but only catastrophe- stricken. This catastrophe is primarily economical, but is reflected on society: growing inequality, poor people, disintegration of natural resources and so on. Polanyi saw in globalization a possibility for modern capitalistic society and he thought that his arguments for globalization do not suggest that contemporary society must praise consumerism, fragmentation of culture and unrestrained individualism.

Polanyi's view is that a market is a product of society, more precisely, it is a result of political organizations or markets, and it further spreads on the collapse of society or repeated introduction of market regulation (Skot 2003: 89). However, he thought that we must watch globalization as a result of the idea of free market, but free from political and social limitations. In other words, globalization presents economics deregulations where the state is a leading factor on internal and external level. Polanyi gave the following implicit model: catastrophe-learning-regulation and Scot added: oblivion-deregulation-repeat learning-repeat regulation (Skot 2003: 90). This model is leading us to a contrary understanding of globalization that a market and economy are not free but there exists a big influence of geopolitical organizations: ASEAN, NAPHTA, and the European Union. They try to build identity on a higher level than that of national states. We could agree with Scot that the identity presents integration into bigger society. In that way, new restrictions change the old ones. If we accept this, we will have an impression that the identity will not change and if it does, those changes will be small. Could we, if an identity on a higher level is possible, presuppose that an identity is a teleologic aim in collective dimension of consciousness? It seems that in the world today, evolution exceeds positions in which it has been dictated by technical civilization, then perspective of collective intelligence exceeds a new hope. Djurić thinks: "This is about a new kind of collectivity which does not remove individualism, differences and creativity because it pours from the consciousness of collective human world. That conscious construct of universal man could not be attained by mechanic universalism" (Djurić 2006: 69). Since identity presents elements of culture which are separate from politics and economy, then we must find them in the spiritual world. Therefore the strategies of sustainable development could be interpreted like development of consciousness, which presupposes responsibility like a necessary element of spiritual development.

- *Affirmative Culture* -

There is an explanation of culture, according to which it is a totality of social life, and spiritual and material reproduction are united in this culture. Another explanation is that culture is a spiritual world and its raises above social totality in collectivity and general being. This meaning of culture is opposite to material world. Markuze thought that generality and collective are fake (Markuze 1977: 46). Markuze said: "Affirmative culture presupposes the civil culture which in its development takes to that spiritual world like independent kingdom of values, separates from civilization and raises above it... Only in this culture, the cultural activities and objects acquire dignity, become sublime over quotidian matters, their acceptance becomes an act of festive moment and exaltation"(Markuze 1977: 46). He wrote about affirmative culture in the 1930s. He said that it has reached the end and thought that affirmative culture can exist only in the Land of Cockaigne. He found culture in the spiritual sphere. Affirmative culture is an idealistic creation and at the same time saviatory. It's the answer to the body poverty by beauty of the soul and the answer to external slavery by internal freedom. Culture should assume the care for happiness.

However, then antagonism reigned in society and it was hard to work and to be happy, because life was very poor.

As early as antic period, the beautiful world was the world of enjoyment. An individual growing in civilian era is also a carrier of the claim for happiness. Affirmative culture liberated the individual. Individuals select by themselves how much and in what they will enjoy. Markuze said: "Culture does not presuppose better, but more noble world: a world which should not be realized by revolution of material world, but by events in individual's soul. Humanity, freedom, beauty become internal conditions to knowing big thing in all times, assessment of everything difficult and elevated, respecting the history in which it all came into being" (Markuze 1977: 47). And this is the key, because only soul does not enter the work process, thought Markuze. The soul stays opposed to spirit. The Renaissance appreciated soul, internal life and motto: live your life to the full. Only soul gives the joy in life, and real joy is hard to find in the exterior world. On the other hand, the negative side of this interpretation of culture is that the reality can be full of poverty, cruelty and man cannot be happy in this exterior world. Bad society can exist for very long.

What is culture like today? Art is everywhere around us: on media, in galleries, on the streets ... People use popular literature and watch new show programs. Every man is happy today. For today's man interior richness is not useful. He finds happiness in the exterior world. In today's society the culture is entertaining. Deficit of interior values: truth, restraint, persistence and beauty are problems in postmodernism. If affirmative and postmodern culture exists in bad society and life conditions, is it better to have temporary or permanent values? Markuze thought that soul could not enter the work process but the picture is different today. Our souls are empty or lead astray, today. Can we call the European Union the Land of Cockaigne when it becomes complete? Can we, then, our identity call affirmative identity since work process presupposes one higher identity?

Today is postmodern era, too. Media era and postmodern era seems like synonymous. Those are era of rash, expansion of mass communications and capitalism development. Kellner said: "Postmodernist theoreticians state that local context includes adaptations of global products and meanings, products in this way more heterogeneous and different" (Kellner 2004: 64).

One of most famous postmodern theoreticians, Frederick Jameson, interprets postmodernism like the last phase in capitalism development which comes after markets and monopoly phase and is in direct connection with a culture that produces multinational capitalism. The phases of capitalism are: realism, modernism and postmodernism. The last one is without dept. The existence of postmodernism is based on radical break in 1950, finds Jameson, who is both a critic and a protector of postmodernism (the end of Leninism, the end of ideology and esthetic of modern era).

- *Conclusion* -

The characteristic of postmodernism is virtual society which builds a new kind of identity, just as, long time ago, it was built by newspapers. Mark Poster thinks that today a big break with tradition occurred and a new identity exists. New technical civilization influences the building of a new identity. We are thinking about one broken identity when we are talking about identity in media age on the Balkan Peninsula and further. This identity is duplicating. One "I" is real and other is virtual. Posters says: "Virtual reality leads imaginary words, film or video picture one step further away, placing an individual into alternatives worlds. Directly meddling with reality, the practice of simulation comes to the place the forever changes the conditions under which the identity I is formed" (Poster 2008: 546). If modernism constructs autonomous and rational identities, postmodernism is constructing unstable, complex and diffuse identities. Still there are theoreticians who think that this identity is useful, like Rein Gold.

If the newspaper spread the sign of nation and connected the individual with the nation, the identification with group always presupposed the lack of this group¹. It is hard to base a virtual identity because it is not in the real society. The question of culture is big one: people asking the questions which they would not in real communications; there are no inhibitions.

We can conclude that it will be possible preserving traditions in postmodern age, if we will make return on spiritual values. We don't need to call our identity "broken identity" but it need to call "affirmative identity", and that means affirmative in breakdown, spiritual world and connection modern and postmodern era (respecting traditional values and accepting a new values). This is a picture of the Balkan peoples' identity in the media age.

NOTES

¹ Žan Lik Nansi thinks that virtual society does not exist. He denies relation which I establish between constituting of postmodern subject and internet. See in *Studije culture* 2008: 549.

SOURCES

Božilović 2006: Božilović, N. Identitet i značenje stila u potkulturi. – *Filozofija i društvo*, N.2. Institute for philosophy and social theory. Belgrade.

Bugarski 1994: Bugarski, R. Jezik od mira do rata.

Džejmson 2008: Jameson, F. Postmodernizam ili kulturna logika kasnog kapitalizma. – In: *Studije kulture*, Službeni Glasnik. Belgrade.

Durić 2006: Djurić, J. Srbija u evropskim integracijama: preobražaj identiteta. – *Filozofija i društvo*, N.2. Institute for philosophy and social theory. Belgrade.

- Feri 1994:** Feri, L. *Hommo aestheticus*.
- Held 2003:** Held, D. Debate o globalizaciji. – In: *Globalizacija mit ili stvarnost*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade.
- Jakšić 1997:** Jaksic, B. Nacionalizam i jezik: jedno balkansko iskustvo. – *Filozofija i društvo*, N. XI, Institute for philosophy and social theory, Belgrade.
- Jakšić 2006:** Jaksic, B. Stavovi političke i kulturne elite Srbije o Evropi krajem XX i početkom XXI veka. – *Filozofija i društvo*, N.2, Institute for philosophy and social theory, Belgrade.
- Kelner 2003:** Kelner, D. Globalizacija i postmoderni zaokret. – In: *Globalizacija mit ili stvarnost*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade.
- Kelner 2004:** Kelner, D. *Medijska kultura*.
- Lipovecki 1987:** Lipovecki, Z. *Doba praznine*.
- Markuze 1977:** Markuze, H. *Kultura i društvo*.
- Poster 1995:** Poster, M. *Cyberspace&Cyberbodies&Cyberpunk*. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows. Thousand Oaks. Sage.
- Poster 2008:** Poster, M. *Postmoderne virtuelnosti*. – *Studije kulture*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade.
- Skot 1997:** Skot, A. *The Limits of globalization: Cases and Arguments*.
- Skot 2003:** Skot, A. Globalizacija: društveni proces ili politička retorika. – In: *Globalizacija mit ili stvarnost*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade.
- Skot 2003:** Skot, A. Globalizacija: društveni proces ili politička retorika. – In: *Globalizacija mit ili stvarnost*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade.
- Studije culture 2008:** Djordjevic, J., ed. *Studije kulture*, Sluzbeni Glasnik, Beograd.