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FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

SERIES **PHILOSOPHY, SOCIOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY**
Vol. 23, Nº 1, 2024

UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

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FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

Series

Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History

Vol. 23, Nº 1, 2024

Contents

WHY DOES THE NEW GENERATION NEED ENGAGEMENT IN SPREADING INTERCULTURALITY INSTEAD OF ANNOUNCING THE DEATH OF MULTICULTURALISM?

UDC 316.72+172.4

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Abstract. *In the world today, under the banner of "multiculturalism is dead", a new specter of ethnocentrism is being cycled. Its protagonists are the old and the new right and the autocratic elites who would like to divide and fight the world anew. Despite these processes, modern humanity needs a new opening, respect for cultural differences, a dialogue between and permeation of cultures, building of new bridges, connecting peoples. The new generation should be imbued with the culture of peace and planetary humanism, and as the citizens of humanity, emerging communities of equal peoples and citizens, they should represent an actor of the inevitability of interculturality in the modern world of globalization, i.e. of the future that has begun – but is now, due to class and other divisions, unfairly distributed. Shouting that multiculturalism is dead is like announcing the death of humanity, its regression to the times of tribalism, new divisions and barbarism.*

Key words: *globalization, mobility of social groups, interculturality, planetary humanism, culture of peace*

1. GLOBALIZATION, EXPANSION OF THE PROCESS OF INTERCULTURALITY AND RESISTANCE

Stepping on the cultural identity of the people is the biggest crime!
Isaiah Berlin

The one who announces the end of multiculturalism and follows the policy of anti-interculturalism, announces death to humanity!
The author

Globalization, as a process of networking and reciprocity between different entities, opened the era of emergence of the post-national constellations, the path of the future towards united humanity as a community of equal peoples and citizens.

New technologies of the third and fourth development and civilizational waves laid the ontological foundations of the emerging world of the global networked world society. It is a new ocean in whose waves they bathe and melt, creating new socio-cultural amalgams, processes, institutions... A new social reality of the post-postmodern society is emerging. Different models and strategies for the development of globalization, acculturation, disintegration of old institutions, cultural patterns, ideologies and values and the birth of the new ones are at work. Building and developing awareness of the new world in various areas of work and life from technology, organization of work and economic life, through education, morality: the emergence of a new professional and social structure of the social groups. Of course, we are talking about emerging global mega-processes, contradictions, the process of great transformation about which William Gibson writes and concludes: "Globalization is the future that has begun, but for now it is unequally/unfairly distributed." Namely, a still dominant system of murderous capitalism with its social mechanisms divides and crushes the socio-class and regional expanse of the world thus enabling the rise of the golden billion and the rest of the lumpen planet a social and ecological desolation. This is so because the neoliberal ideology of the market fundamentalism social Darwinizing social relations in the fight/race for profit generates the expansion of the new conflict zones in the world. New "Berlin Wall" movements are springing up all with the aim of establishing colonial democracy, realizing geopolitics, conquering new spaces and distributing resources, and world hegemony and leadership.

In this context, the bridges of global solidarity between peoples, cultures and civilizations are collapsing, and strategic ideologies of exclusivity and conflict are spreading. In the contemporaneity of the "new world order" crisis, only uncertainty is certain. Humanity is at a crossroads again. After the C-19 epidemic, that global "death fugue", we are faced with the threat of a new world war. The war in Ukraine seems to be a prelude to nuclear roulette and the future apocalypse of humanity. Humanity is once again at a crossroads and the Titanic is rushing towards a global catastrophe.

Eight years ago, in 2015, under the influence of the so-called large migrant crisis and the rush of migrants to the EU, *Angela Merkel* announced that "multiculturalism, as a value from the corpus of European rights and standards, is dead!" This sounded an alarm to the sovereignists and national leaders to close the borders. All this strengthened the chauvinists, ethnocentrists and racists in all four corners of the globe, especially in Europe. The European right raised its wings and, in the elections, won the most followers in many countries and in the European Parliament. Against this backdrop, the ideological, historical and political disintegration of multiculturalism also began the blocking of the process of inclusivity, integration and cooperation of the members of various minorities and migrants in the Western countries, their stigmatization and dehumanization. It is a dangerous road, which is known to us from the history of the Second World War: the road of yellow bands, used to mark Jews; the Auschwitz and Jasenovac concentration camp road. The road that leads to a new collective tragedy of humanity. That is why our individual and collective conscience is being tested today!!! *Non passarant!!!* It is not enough to just say this to that new invasion of the barbarians! It is of vital importance to act, to destroy new stereotypes that would lead the world into a new collective madness! *A new holocaust! Never again!* (Adorno)

It is the task of the science and universities and the call of sociology and sociologists, as a humanist "martial discipline" (P. Bourdieu), to expose, deconstruct and destroy stereotypes and disarm ethnocentrists, to spread the spirit of the inter-ethnic and international tolerance so that peace may defeat the followers of the god Mars (a god of war). And that should be done systematically, persistently, daily until it is too late, because "tomorrow is always too late" (F. Major).

In modern science, sociological and cultural theories, various paradigms, concepts, models and strategies on intercultural relations have been developed in the range: from intercultural cooperation (acculturation, reciprocity and tolerance and transcultural permeation and integration) to the exclusivity and conflict of identity cultures and civilizations (cultural hegemony, assimilation and conflicts).

2. TYPOLOGY AND METAMORPPHOSIS OF IDENTITY CULTURE

In modern times we witness the processes of metamorphosis of collective identities – against the background of the process of restoration and re-traditionalization, that is, modernization and globalization (Mitrović 2008). Researchers increasingly write about the change of collective identity matrices: from class to national (Kuljić 2006); Đ. Conrad writes of "identity hysteria" and "murderous identities". *Alain Turenne* writes about the postmodern cultural identity (at the center of which is man and freedom). *Manuel Castells* (in his work *The Power of Identity*) distinguishes between three forms and sources of identity construction: a) legitimizing identity; b) identity of resistance; and c) project identity). (Castells 2002, 169).

Starting from the fact that sociology as a science is interested in what is typical/common in the culture of the global societies, here we make a classification of identity culture types depending on the historical types of global societies.

In contemporary sociology there are numerous classifications of the types of global societies (Gurvič 1963; Ranković 1970, Mitrović 1996). In this contribution, we start from the division of the global societies into: a) traditional; b) modern; and c) postmodern. The basis for this classification is related to the peculiarities in the way of production, but also the culture of these societies. This classification is in fact a kind of variation of *Turen's* division of society into: a) traditional; b) industrial; and c) post-industrial; or *Toffler's* division of the society into the I, II and III waves of the civilizational development of mankind.

Table 1 Types of society and identity culture

	Type of society	Type of global group	Type of identity group
A	Traditional	Community	Monotype/Organic Ethnic identity
B	Modern	Society/Nation	Plural citizen identity
C	Postmodern	Post society/Humankind	Open, transcultural, project identity

Identity culture is a historical category which, under certain socio-cultural circumstances, is structured and destructured/restructured. In other words, it transforms.

Postmodern societies grow on the achievements of the scientific-technological and information revolution. Researchers write about them as a post-industrial civilization, and sociologists (A. Turen) write about the emerging programmed post-society which is radically different from the previous types of society (traditional and modern ones). *The*

post-modern society has developed an open, plural/deliberate culture. It rests on the liberation of the individuality and creativity of different social groups and strata. The processes of *explosion and expansion of the subcultural identities are at work.*

In modern societies in transition, we are faced with the phenomenon of the *identity crisis* and the search for a new cultural pattern of its structuring. Therefore, those researchers who *like Z. Vidojević* write about the phenomenon of the contradictory transitory identity are right (Vidojević 1997).

3. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC TOLERANCE IN SOCIOLOGY, CULTURAL STUDIES AND A BROADER SCOPE OF LITERATURE IN MODERN SCIENCE

We are living in the epic of the change of long waves of development-civilizational changes (Braudel), or as *Karl Polanyi* would say "Great Transformation", or *Wallerstein*'s global transition. In such periods, there is not only a radical crisis and systemic changes, but also a metamorphosis of the ontology and cosmology: the geoculture of identity of the global and partial social groups. In this regard, *George Konrad* writes in his study *Antipolitics*: "The problem of crisis and changes in identity culture comes to the fore in the periods of transition". If we exclude ideological stereotypes about globalization, we will face the fact that new technologies and globalization have led to great interdependence, convergence of systems and a dialogue of civilizations and cultures on a planetary scale.

Hence, modern researchers label these epochal systemic and cultural and civilizational changes the onset of the global age (M. Obrov, D. Held), the age of post-national constellations (J. Habermas), the "global planetary village" (McLuhan), the globally networked society (M. Castells). In this context of global changes – global paradigms and global megatrends are changing: from geopolitics and geoeconomics from the 20th century to the importance of the geoculture in the 21st century; from the role of the secondary sector (industrialization) to the role of information technology and the so-called service sector.

Large-scale labor migrations and planetary population mobility are at work – which leads to the contact and interaction of cultures and social groups. From these acculturation processes the metamorphosis of identity culture emerges. From the organic to plural civic culture and transnational identities. In this regard, *E. Moren* writes about the emergence of the European identity in the movement, *Z. Bauman* writes about a postulated identity and a new kind of differentiation between globally mobile and locally mobile social groups in the planetary social space. *Amin Malouf* writes about migrants as a group that exerts cultural influence on two coasts: in the country of the emigration and the country of the origin. *Antonio Negri* writes about the cognitariat as an actor of new productive forces that planetarily network the world and the role of the liberated energy of the multitude/plural forces of the world society. More and more people are talking about the emergence of the age of the intellectual diaspora and the Internet generation (Lj. Mitrović).

Also, in the works of our anthropologists and sociologists there are relevant studies in this field such as the studies of *Zagorka Golubović, Branimir Stojković, Todor Kuljić, Slobodan Antonić, Vladimir Vuletić, Goran Bašić, Jelena Dinić...*

We live in the parenthetical age of the global world system (John Nesbitt). Its transformations from a social Darwinist/imperialist and unipolar to a multipolar and social democratic order of the global solidarity of humanity. In the spirit of the revolution of the globalization of understanding and solidarity (Edgar Moren), which is still an unrealized

project. Rightly, we can recall here the thoughts of Ivo Andrić, from his work *Signs by the Roadside* about man and humanity, as a building block. It is man's natural essence and destiny to build bridges that connect nations and civilizations. Unfortunately, the world we live in is even more characterized by divisions and conflicts, new movable "Berlin walls" than dialogue between peoples and civilizations, the construction of bridges and breakwaters that connect not only the banks of the river, but peoples and humanity.

The thirty-year experience of the post-socialist transition without social responsibility in the Balkans, the former area of the SFRY and Serbia, illustrates most eloquently how the disintegration of the multinational community of the state opened the "evil spirit" of the ghostly past, the rebalkanization of this area and released the wasp of "murderous identities": to divide ourselves more by the measures and boundaries of the past rather than building bridges of the cooperation looking to the future.

Regardless of the pathetic and inflammatory rhetoric of the ruling elites in the Balkans and the slow processes of the cross-border cooperation, it is certain that new generations will look for new ways and formulas to get out of the current situation. The future of this space is not in divisions but in connecting and integration. Hence, against the spread of new stigmas and hatred, we point out that multiculturalism and interculturality are inevitable in the era of the globalization of humanity, which while preserving the individual cultural autonomy of different identities at the same time builds bridges of the planetary culture and intercultural dialogue, communication and permeation of different cultures. Hence, in the modern dictionary of sociology, cultural studies and social psychology, the integral concept of the sustainable development, as a key dimension of the concept of progress and emancipation assumes the expansion of the process of individualization and universalization of the personality, culture and society. Because, as *Thomas Eliot* said, civilizations and cultures of peoples and humanity only through dialogue and communication permeate each other, giving to each other what is most valuable and noble from their cultural heritage. This is how one grows not only in terms of material and technical progress, standards and quality of life, but also in humanity, the culture of peace, the beauty of understanding cultural differences, mutual giving and respect.

It is time for the Balkan people to grow up and not see their future in the key to the past and the rebalkanization of the region, but in the processes of the regional cooperation and integration, European integration and the planetary "networked society" (M. Castells) and social democratic globalization.

Our research on the processes of metamorphosis of the cultural identities in Serbia and the Balkans in the context of the transition process of modern society and the relationship between tradition and modernization (conducted in Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria among the student population) confirms the hypothesis about the impact of the globalization process on the mobility of social groups and the formation of an open plural transnational identity of the new generation. It is also confirmed that these processes lead to the strengthening of interculturalism, despite the strong conservative resistance and tendencies of the ruling political elites (sovereignists, ethnocentrists, and populist leaders).

The contemporary empirical research conducted by younger researchers (the sociologist Jelena Dinić (2017), a cultural expert Dragana Mitrović (2021), also shows that in the conditions of globalization "more and more people simultaneously belong to two or more cultures and societies, and these affiliations are not mutually exclusive"; which illustrates the process of the convergence, permeation, and metamorphosis of identity cultures and the formation of the transnational identities. The new generations do not see the future of

the Balkans in further divisions and enchantment by the "evil spirits" of the past, but in cross-border, planetary cooperation, development, integration, respect for different cultures, but also in the formation of a planetary ethics and the culture of peace. Exactly in the spirit of the *Gandhi's* message: "Peace is development, development is peace" and *Johann Galtung's* message: there is no victory for the forces of the actors of peace in the world without changing the Western cosmology, which is guided by the fact that the goal of the development is profit, and wars are means for the achievement of that goal. Also*, Silvio de Lula*, the Brazilian president, reminds us that without global justice there is no global peace in the world.

Observing the prevailing current split between education and upbringing, more precisely the dehumanization of the school system at all levels, and emphasizing the importance of the rehabilitation of the educational socialization function of the education system, we would point out: the responsibility and role of the social studies and humanities in the development of the national cultural identity of new generations, open to all positive values from the universal cultural heritage of humanity. Only in that humanist-emancipatory horizon − patriotism and philanthropy/humanity will not be mutually exclusive, but in synergy and unity will enrich the view of the world and the "active goodness" of every individual of all peoples, members of new generations whose time is approaching...

Finally, we can recall the warnings of the Hellenic sages: "All knowledge is worthless if it does not make a person more human/better" (Socrates); or "Rights belong to those who are awake, others will steal their dreams".

Education and democracy should help the development of critical self-awareness without which there is no free personality and actor of social militancy. Because "democracy is an act of courage", not opportunism, political correctness and cowardice. Bourdieu rightly said, in the spirit of axiological sociology: "Sociology is a fighting discipline, which should serve humanistic and emancipatory goals in the development of society!".

Johan Galtung, in the study *Peaceful means towards peace*, among other things, says: "The struggle for a different development, as well as the struggle for different peace must be led by challenging and even transforming the Western cosmology, all those deep-rooted beliefs that define peace with weapons, and development with money... Peace is a revolutionary idea, emphasized Mahatma Gandhi, that a non-violent revolution is achieved through peaceful means. That revolution is happening all the time. The only question is whether we can live up to it".[1]

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*   *</p>

Interculturalism as a model of permeation of cultures in which each of the ethnic groups and cultural communities contributes to the enrichment of the society and the emerging community of humanity. In interculturality, the civic and national overlap and interpenetrate. Unfortunately, although "interculturality is a desirable model of social relations that could contribute to stability, effective democratization and gradual change of political culture in the region", the Balkan peoples and their contemporary elites are burdened by the burden of their own ethno-cultural narcissisms. It will take a lot of energy, wisdom and skills to first "revive the Balkan multicultural project and pave the way for interculturality" (Bašić 2018, 130-131).

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[1] J. Galtung, Peace by Peaceful Means, "Official Gazette, Belgrade 2009, 319, 377.

Despite the modern turbulent times and war conflicts spreading across the planet, with the threat of nuclear roulette and the apocalypse of humanity, we believe that reason and peace will prevail. The oldest anthropologist and sociologist, *Edgar Moren*, warns us of this in his messages: that "we must connect the ethics of understanding between individuals with the ethics of the planetary era that seeks the globalization of understanding". The only true globalization that would be in the service of the species is that of understanding, i.e. intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity... In the spirit of anthropo-ethics, this author presents his plea for planetary culture and humanity as a planetary destiny, warning "while the human species continues its adventure under the threat of self-destruction, the urgent imperative has become: *save humanity by realizing it*!" (Bašić 2018, 126-127).

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ZAŠTO JE NOVOJ GENERACIJI UMESTO OBJAVE SMRTI MULTIKULTURALIZMA POTREBAN ANGAŽMAN NA ŠIRENJU INTERKULTURALNOSTI?

Svetom danas, pod zastavom „multikulturalizam je mrtav", kruži novi bauk etnocentrizma. Njegovi protagonisti su stara i nova desnica i autokratske elite koje bi da iznova dele i svađaju svet. Uprkos ovim procesima savremenom čovečanstvu potrebno je novo otvaranje, respekt kulurnih različitosti, dijalog i prožimanje kultura, građenje novih mostova, povezivanje među narodima. Nova generacija treba da bude zadojena kulturom mira i planetarnim humanizmom; te da kao građani čovečanstva, nastajuće zajednice ravnopravnih naroda i građana, bude akter neizbežnosti interkuluralnosti u savremenom svetu globalizacije, tj. budućnosti koja je počela – ali je sada, zbog klasnih i drugih podela, nepravedno raspoređena. Onaj koji viče da je multikulturalizam mrtav kao da objavljuje smrt čovečanstvu, njegovu regresiju na vremena tribalizma, novih podela i varvarizma.

Ključne reči: *globalizacija, mobilnost društvenih grupa, interkulturalnost, planetarni humanizam, kultura mira.*

Original scientific paper

JOB SECURITY IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES OF LABOR MARKET FLEXIBILIZATION IN SERBIA[1]

UDC 331.5(497.11)

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Abstract. *Serbia, while undergoing its post-socialist transformation, began its integration into global economic courses. This path included both changes to labor laws and the creation of new regulatory mechanisms with the aim of achieving greater labor market flexibility. The trends of decreasing labor regulation in the context of the post-socialist transformation promote more independent management of the labor force by the employers with the aim of a more effective response to the dynamic changes in the market, which ultimately leads to concern in terms of job security for the future. From the point of the view of the worker, security is an important job aspect, providing continued economic stability but also in a certain sense allowing workers to plan their life activities. The subject matter of this paper is job security in the labor market in Serbia in the context of the transformation of the labor market in accordance with the requirements of flexibility. The basic aim of the paper is the identification of trends based on the criterion of job security, but at the same time the paper analyzes jobs based on the type of employment contract and the rate of informal employment. The results indicate a noticeable trend of decrease in permanent employment with a subsequent increase in temporary employment. At the same time, the relatively stable rate of informal employment indicates that labor market flexibilization did not achieve the goal of "transferring" informal workers from the illegal into the legal sphere of employment.*

Key words: *Job security, labor market flexibility, neoliberalism, employment contracts, informal employment*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Following the 1970s, a set of changes occurred in numerous social spheres, the economy in particular. The reforms associated with Ronald Reagan (the USA) and Margaret Thatcher (Great Britain) promoted the process of commodification, that is, an increasingly greater market dependence. The aforementioned reforms were to a great extent also reflected in the labor market, where structural changes occurred in the legal regulation of labor relations, and consequently the very position of the employees themselves.

One of the most threatened aspects of the position of employees in the whirlwind caused by the aforementioned changes is job security. The issue of job security is a topic which receives particular focus among researchers in the field of sociology of labor since job security is not just an important characteristic of labor, but also has numerous consequences for non-labor related aspects of human life. At the time of the aforementioned changes, Serbia had a command-planned economy, which is why the aforementioned policies were only propagated following the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia. After the changes brought about by the 2000s, Serbia began a period of rapid transformation and implementation of policies, while promoting labor market solutions at the same time. More specifically, in the labor market, changes were being made and new legal regulations introduced which foregrounded flexibility, whereby labor market flexibility was associated mostly with the promotion of non-standard and unstable employment contracts which provided employers with a greater degree of freedom in handling their labor force.

The subject matter of this paper is job security at a time of the liberalization of the economic sphere is Serbia. Specifically, in the labor market, liberalization is viewed through the striving to encourage greater labor market flexibility. The legacy of socialism included the promotion of job security, stable employment contracts, and a relatively high level of social security. Labor market flexibility attempts to contribute to the greater dependence of the labor force on the requirements of the market, whereby promoting the creation of legal frameworks which enable employers to more easily hire and fire workers. In other words, it is simpler to hire a labor force in a manner which has been adapted to the requirements of the market. Mostly, the main mechanism for encouraging labor market flexibility is the decrease in the "rigidity" of the labor laws, as well as bringing new legal solutions (a broad array of employment contracts) which the employers have at their disposal. Labor market flexibility gets its legitimization from the assumptions that it will encourage greater competitiveness, but also that it will also help remove workers from the informal sector (and in that way even contribute to the greater job security of the workers currently in the labor market) since legal employment is "cheaper" for the employer due to decreased legal protection of labor. On the other hand, there is a fear that excessive dependence on the market and a broader scope of non-standard work engagements could jeopardize the status of the employees in the labor market, especially in terms of job security. The aim of this paper is to provide a description of the market trends which are associated with job security by viewing changes in the structure of the labor force based on the type of their employment contract and the oscillations in the share of informal employment. The results of the analysis provide data on the effects of legislative changes in the labor market, changes in the labor market itself, as well as its basic tendencies.

2. JOB SECURITY

Various studies (Green 2015; Warr 2007, 133–135) point out job insecurity as a significant cause of stress, especially in cases when the insecurity is a permanent (and not temporary) feature of someone's job. Altered economic circumstances in a globalized society (new markets, new technologies, new production models, the restructuring and reorganization of companies) make this feature a structural characteristic of the labor market in almost all national economies. Of course, the jobs that are offered in the labor market vary in their extent of job security. For some jobs, it is expected that they will be available for a number of years, while others are characterized by instability and the risk of being declared redundant or even being forced to change one's position in the job hierarchy. Be that as it may, job security as a significant characteristic of job quality in modern-day society can be assessed through employment status by means of the objective dimension of security (permanent employment contracts and various forms of temporary employment contracts) but also through a more subjective approach (the perception of the workers regarding the possibility of job loss, and the issue of the restructuring of the company they are employed in, which could lead to insecurity and fear of job loss) (Parent-Thirion, A. at al. 2017).

A significant number of studies inspired by this topic point out the negative impact of insecure and low-quality jobs on the quality of life of the individual and the lack of wellbeing. In the 1980s and 1990s, OECP[2] noted a trend of increase in the number of employees who consider their work to be of low quality and insecure (Paugam and Zhou 2007, 179; OECD: 2017), as a result of which this topic became the subject of theoretical debates and empirical research. Job security carries with it numerous benefits which are not solely of an economic character. Employees with secure jobs are able to plan the future with more certainty, are more likely to choose to have offspring, solve housing issues, invest in the future (Kalleberg 2011, 2). In modern-day studies, which focus on the quality of the job offer and job satisfaction (and health) of employees in the workplace, job security is undoubtedly a key point. A study carried out by Kalleberg (2011) on favorable and unfavorable employment opportunities is related to the context of the USA from the 1970s to the 2000s, when changes in the economic sphere were taking place, marked by a neoliberal turn (which later became dominant in Serbia). The author attempted to analyze the polarization of jobs, that is, the more intense increase in the differences between favorable and unfavorable employment opportunities and the precarious nature of labor in general. The author points out that there is a considerable polarization of jobs in terms of a sequence of dimensions of job quality, pointing out at the same time the increasing inequality in the sense of earnings and benefits arising from employment (primarily retirement funds and health insurance), control exerted over assignments and the possibility of participating in them, as well as the intensity of the work. The explanation of the polarization between favorable and unfavorable employment opportunities Kalleberg found in institutionalized, legal, and political interventions, as a result of which more vulnerable groups in the market are more exposed to poor working conditions, mostly due to the lack of institutional labor protection. The author pointed out that there is a noticeable trend of a general decrease in job security which additionally affects deprivileged groups since highly skilled workers can more easily find new job opportunities in the labor

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[2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

market. A study of particular importance is that of Maja Jandrić (2017), which views the position of Serbia in the labor market along the dimensions of flexibility[3] and security[4]. The study included 24 countries on the European continent, and a factor or main component analysis was used to view the positions of the states in relation to the dimensions of flexibility and security in the labor market. The analysis indicated that the *level of flexibility* in Serbia is somewhat higher than average, while its assessed *level of job security* is lowest within the group of studied countries. The extent of the compensation system for the unemployed is among the lowest in the studied group (less than 10%), while the expenses for labor market policies are at the same time at a very low level in relation to the studied group of countries. In addition, the study confirmed that countries of the Eastern bloc which have undergone an economic transformation generally exhibit lower levels of security in the labor market.

3. JOB SECURITY AND THE ONSET OF NEOLIBERAL POLICIES

Changes in labor and employment (structure) were significantly affected by the economic recession dating back from the 1970s and 1980s, the industrial restructuring of the economy in more developed countries, the input and primacy of new technologies, and the globalization of the labor market (Castells 2000; Milošević 2005). At the same time, the 1980s saw extensive economic and financial reforms on the global scene as a reaction to the economic crisis of the 1970s. The aforementioned reforms were a deviation from the generous programs of the so-called countries of wellbeing established in the post-war period. The broad scope of services and security being offered to citizens were the basic features of the policies of these countries (better known as Keynesian politics). The principles of social security, but also the policy of permanent employment and subventions lay at the core of this policy, which resulted in a good standard of living. A discontinuation of the Keynesian policy can be found in the political and economic measures undertaken by Ronald Reagan in the United States of America and Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain (Berč & Mihnjenko 2012, 268; Harvi 2012, 13–16). They attempted to promote market solutions which foregrounded offer and demand, and thus turn the labor force into a commodity to be procured from the market (Polanji 2003, 78–80; Harvi 2012, 90; Milanović 2016, 167). The influx of the neoliberal paradigm through national policies of government reduced the welfare state, whereby the solution for the newly emerging problems in the labor market was to an increasingly greater extent being handed over to individuals, encouraging them to more independently take on responsibility for life risks.

It is necessary to point out that non-standard work engagements are not a proclaimed aim of neoliberal policy, but are more of a consequence of its more general principles. The intellectual origin of neoliberalism is mostly associated with the initiative behind the Mont Pelerin Society, founded by Friedrich von Hayek in April 1947. Even though the word neoliberalism was not included in its acts, the society represented a kind of "neoliberal

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[3] The key elements of flexibility were operationalized via two indicators: 1. the indicator for individual and collective dismissals for workers with a regular contract (EPRC) and 2. the indicator for temporary contracts (EPT).
[4] The key elements of *security* are operationalized through 4 indicators: 1. coverage of the unemployment compensation system, 2. monetary expenditure for unemployment benefits per capita, 3. expenditures for unemployment benefits expressed in PPS per unemployed person, and 4. expenditures for active labor market policies expressed as a percentage of the GDP.

international". Some of its most famous members included Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and for a time even Karl Popper (Harvi 2012, 36; Biebricher 2019, 13).

The members of the Mont Pelerin Society were concerned by the growing "tide of collectivism" manifested in communism or some less radical forms of Keynesian state intervention. Hayek and his ideologically similarly-minded comrades were linked by the stance that every form of state intervention represents collectivist planning, which is undesirable and is harmful, as it, supposedly, leads to new forms of engineering despotism (Steger & Roy 2010, 15; Biebricher 2019, 20). Hayek pointed out that all forms of planning focused on the regulation of competition necessarily lead to economic ineffectiveness. Every attempt at state interventionism makes any adequate competition impossible and prevents the market from adequately coordinating individual actions (Hayek 2012, 43–44). Another promoter of neoliberalism, Friedman (1992, 22), pointed out that state interventionism speeds up the collectivist tendency for wellbeing (and not freedom) becoming the dominant value focus of democratic countries.

According to the neoliberal school of thought, the labor market is a more effective mechanism than any state plan since no human brain could process information better than the market itself (Mirowski 2009, 435). For Friedman (1992, 34), the broad application of market principles decreases social tension, from which stems the premise that the greater the fields encompassed by the market principle – the fewer the topics requiring political decisions.

In order for the labor market neoliberalization project to be fully realized, political elites would have to deal with all forms of solidarity which limit the accumulation of capital (Harvi 2012, 102), including powerful syndicates. The government of Ronald Regan clearly let the unions know that they were not a welcome participant in the government council dialogues by abolishing the contract which determined the balance of power between corporations and the unions in the 1960s. The government of Margaret Thatcher had a slightly more insidious policy regarding the unions which in Great Britain enjoyed a certain degree of institutional support and had a strong negotiating power following the post-war Labor Party rule. The power of the union was reduced by the "opening" of Great Britain to foreign companies and foreign investment in which decisions on which jobs needed to be preserved, and which ones not, were left up to the activities of the free market (and thus they were taken out the sphere of influence and protection of the unions) (Harvi 2012, 78, 84; Steger & Roy 2010, 42).

With the aim of being included in global trends and requirements, national economies, in addition to restructuring and privatization, also resort to labor market deregulation and flexibilization as their own strategies of development. In relation to the aforementioned, labor market deregulation and flexibilization represent processes compatible with the described neoliberal turn, shaping the labor market and altering the content and form of the work itself. In the existing literature, it is precisely the processes of deregulation and flexibilization that are frequently used to explain labor market trends, although there is no consensus regarding the effects which the aforementioned processes generate, and they are rarely used in a fruitful and uniform manner (Николајевић 2022).

The proponents of labor market deregulation and flexibilization support the view that approaching the complete liberalization of the labor market and labor relations leads to the optimization of the goals of social security, encourages employment, and leads to greater effectiveness. Inside this fraction claims are made about the negative effects of rigid European legislation, linking it to the high rate of informal employment (since formal employment is expensive), the rate of unemployment, and difficulties returning to the labor market. The increasingly greater labor market flexibility has a positive impact

on the effectiveness and efficiency of the economy, and ultimately decreases the level of informal employment, the rate of unemployment, and improves employment security (Esping-Andersen & Regini 2003, 2; Regini 2003, 11–14). Contrary to the aforementioned fraction, the critics of flexibilization primarily point out the risks associated with this process and foreground the advantages which regulation carries with it. A necessary consequence of the labor market flexibilization is the increased inequality in the sphere of wealth distribution and an ever-greater polarization between the wealthy and the poor. It is most frequently reflected in the growth of poorly paid jobs, lower employment security, and a reduction in the rights arising from employment which reduces individual (but also family) wellbeing. The aforementioned effects of the labor market deregulation can disrupt the social consensus and lead to an increase in conflict and tension. This fraction criticizes the claims that the high unemployment rate in Europe is a consequence of the rigidity of the labor laws or the profit structure, claiming that deregulation does not necessarily lead to a reduction in the unemployment rate (Esping-Andersen 2003, 77–90).

In addition to the aforementioned debate, the undeniable impact of neoliberalism on jobs is reflected, among other things, in the reduction of the government policy regulating labor relations to a minimum of acceptable standards in the labor market, whereby the interests of the employers for a greater flexibility of the labor force are favored. Flexibilization led to various types of company restructuring and the transformation of employment relationships (Kalleberg 2011, 13). During the previous decades there has been a tendency to adopt policies which were aimed at increasing the general employment rate by promoting nonstandard forms of employment, such as temporary employment, fixed-term employment, and employment through agencies (De Stefano 2014, 254).

Faced with the pressures of globalization, labor market liberalization, and periodic economic crises, many societies are forced into the fragile compromises which are incompatible with the aims of using institutional protection to provide a guaranteed level of job security (Grimshaw, Fagan, Hebson & Tavora 2017, 1). In sum, as Kalleberg (2011, 87) noted, the growth of job insecurity and lack of job stability represent a global challenge since all countries are faced with the problem of balancing between security (protective labor legislation to reduce precarious[5] work) and flexibility (for the purpose of achieving greater competitiveness).

4. SERBIA IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASED LABOR MARKET FLEXIBILITY

During the 1980s, the collective ownership class in socialism controlled all the social relations and held a monopoly over all the spheres of social life and production (overseen by collective party or state organs). In the context of the crisis of the socialist system, a need arose for the power of collective ownership nomenclature to be sustained and for the monopolistic social positions to grow stronger. The great economic crisis of the 1980s, and the political and legitimizing crises additionally strengthened this tendency. Before

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[5] Precarious work in the existing literature is predominantly defined based on the type of work engagement and working conditions. Precarious work mostly includes non-standard employment engagement (a temporary employment contract, occasional, seasonal, casual, day labor) and is quite often mediated by agencies, but which includes subcontracting with the possibility of workers being engaged by several employers. At the same time, in terms of working conditions, precarious conditions are characterized by low income and the inability to realize rights arising from employment (insurance in case of job loss, the right to health insurance and paid sick leave), as well as the right to organize a union (Bradaš, 2018, 1; MOR 2012)

the collapse of the socialist regime, the collective ownership class seized the opportunity to privatize social resources using its ruling position to accumulate the initial capital (Lazić 2011. 70).

Viewed more broadly, 1989 is a well-known benchmark year for the transformation of socialist regimes, which includes several aspects: 1. the political [the democratization of authoritarian (single-party) political regimes into multi-party ones], 2. economic [the gradual transition from a command-planned economy to a market economy (capitalist)], and 3. the cultural [the transition from cultural (ideological) monism to cultural pluralism]. The 1990s (1989–2000) are recognizable as a period of blocked post-socialist transformation. Blocked transformation referred to a period of a slowed economic liberalization which took place under intense state control. This period was marked by the state control of the flow of transformation, which is why it took place more slowly, but in favor of the ruling nomenclature. The aforementioned period was marked by the dissolution of political monism, albeit (despite the creation of a multi-party system) we find the addition of a certain degree of authoritarianism characteristic of the previous regime (so-called authoritarian quasi-democracy). The economy at that time can be characterized as a system of political capitalism in which profit is not achieved on the free market, but by exploiting politically created monopolies under conditions of economic sanctions, anomie, and criminalization (Antonić 1995, in Arandarenko 2010, 75).

The distributional deprivation of the middle class at this time is multifold and is a direct consequence of freezing foreign currency savings, the destruction of pyramid banks, hyperinflation, the compression of actual salaries and means of taxation, which as the final outcome reduces existing financial assets and current income (Arandarenko 2010, 76). The lower class suffered significantly smaller losses during the 1990s. At this time, the working class attempted to protect itself by prohibiting layoffs during sanctions. The political-economic elite, in principle, represents a social group which represents the "winners" of the blocked transformation. Those in possession of capital were mostly recruited from the former ruling nomenclature (politicians and CEOs) who during the privatization process used their existing positions to convert their political resources into economic ones. The experience of other countries which underwent transformation processes is that the new elite was recruited primarily from what were once the middle classes, while the previous ruling group predominantly originated from managing positions. In Serbia, new elites were established mostly by means of the privatization of collective ownership by the previous collective ownership managerial level, which led to a transformation from collective ownership possessors to individual owners of social wealth (Lazić 2011, 63–69).

The 1980s were marked by the socialist modernization and industrialization of the country. Despite the economic stagnation and the rise of unemployment, industrial employment increased. Analysts point to an artificial induction of employment at this time because employment was gained by means of asserting political pressure, and not based on the criteria of economic efficiency, which is illustrated by the fact that almost every fifth employee at this time was "redundant" (Arandarenko 2011, 217). The extent and quality of the labor market in Serbia in this period significantly collapsed in the 1990s. On the one hand, the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia, the wars, international sanctions, hyperinflation, and anomie, but also the trend of deindustrialization, retraditionalization, and informalization of the labor market on the other – are the most significant factors which led to the multiple degradation of the labor market. A decrease in industry employment was seen, as well as an increase in employment in the agricultural and informal sector, which played a significant role

in the material reproduction and sustainability of households. The firing ban established during the sanctions overflowed into pay cuts (inflation and hyperinflation). The 2000s were accompanied by an even stronger deindustrialization and privatization process, which led to a general decline in employment, except in the agricultural sector and the informal labor market. The later microeconomic stabilization, income from privatization, and loans strengthened the public sector which virtually generated the entire increase in the employment rate at that time. The participation of vulnerable employment (the self-employed and their associated household members) was also at a high level in agriculture, which slowed down the increase in the employment rate (Arandarenko 2011, 217–219).

After 2000, two large groups of factors affected the labor market. Initially, the dominant process was that of transition[6] and the restructuring of companies, while later, just before 2008 and after, a great economic crisis set in with certain unfavorable effects on the labor market in Serbia. The data referring to the gross domestic product (GDP) and employment rate are of considerable importance. Starting from 2001 to 2008, the growth of the GDP was not accompanied by jobless growth in the context of transitional processes and restructuring, which is why GDP growth was reflected in personal income and productivity. During the time of the great economic crisis, from 2008 on, the situation became worse in the sense that the decline of the GDP was accompanied by the rapid decline in jobless growth as a reflection of the socio-economic circumstances (a period of deblocked transformation and the completion of the transitional restructuring process) in collaboration with the effects of the global economic crisis (Jandrić i Molnar 2017, 3).

After the regime change and 5 October revolution, no radical change in the system occurred; instead, the subservience of the market sphere in relation to the political one was retained. The new economic-political elite came to an "agreement" with the middle class, as a result of which a new distribution of economic resources and opportunities was carried out in its favor. Further economic reforms following the political changes in 2000 were the result, primarily, of the activities and interests of local distributional coalitions, whose fundamental aim was to achieve a maximum increase in their own profit (Arandarenko 2010, 78). The aforementioned author points out two main sources of income redistribution: 1. a change in taxation (instead of progressive – proportional tax), and 2. privatization (in which the primary beneficiary was the political-economic elite) as a significant source of the redistribution not only of income but also national wealth. Losers at the time of these changes were employed primarily in privatized companies, who lost out only due to the manner (controversial and interest-laden) of the privatization carried out on the part of the political nomenclature of the time[7]. The new form of labor income tax was a considerable obligation for the new owners who found a way out of the new circumstances by laying off workers. The relative deprivation of the labor force, in addition to privatization and fiscal reform, had an impact on the labor laws. The Labor Law of 2001 annulled the existing

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[6] The transitions, in the broadest sense, include the structural adaptation of the political (single-party into multiple-party), economic (command-planned into market), and value (cultural monism into pluralism) systems and the intense inclusion into the capitalist system trends following the implosion of socialism (Vukša I Simović 2015).

[7] For more on the models of privatization, waves of privatization and its effects on the economy of Serbia, please see: Балуновић 2015.

The same volume contains valuable information on the fragments of the reconstruction of the past and present, the restoration of capitalism and the position of women in socialism and today, the aspects of financing education during the consolidation of capitalism, the history of agrarian reforms and the consequences of privatization, as well as other important topics.

(almost absolute) job protection by dissolving the two-step process involved in laying off workers, while the increase in the insecurity of workers was additionally backed up by the revised Labor Law of 2005 (Arandarenko 2010, 80).

We have already outlined that countries resort to changes in their legal regulations to improve their comparative advantage in the global market and to provide the desired economic climate to attract foreign investments. The reduction of labor costs became the primary aim due to the increasingly greater economic mutual dependence and global networking (Castells, M. 2000), which resulted in a decline in the working conditions and an increase in the insecurity of the workers. Just like many other countries of the capitalist semi-periphery, Serbia achieves competitiveness by providing an inexpensive labor force, devising internal strategies for adapting companies to the market conditions (restructuring and adjusting the number of workers to the amount of work), the liberalization of the labor laws, generous subventions for foreign investors, etc. (Тмушић и Рапаић 2002; Popov 2013; Балуновић 2015). The change made to the legislature for greater labor market flexibility did not circumvent Serbia and represents a constituent part of the general tendencies for the liberalization of the economic sphere (Николајевић 2020, 78).

Temporary work agencies were able to achieve greater labor market flexibility by means of re-regulation, as an example of the normative adjustment of the obligations of employers with a reduction of labor costs. These are agencies, whose norming, after long debates on the positive and negative aspects of this type of employee engagement, was completed in 2019. The Agencies[8] are a response of companies to the need for greater labor relations flexibilization and the requirements for sudden changes in the number of employees. Workers "for rent" who are by these means provided for employers until recently did not have the same rights as employees with stable employment contracts with no intermediary (the Agency), which was why during the adoption of this law the unions mostly struggled to equate rights arising from employment and working conditions for these two categories of workers. *The Law on Agency Employment* regulates the rights and obligations of the employees signing employment contracts with a temporary work agency for the purpose of making them available to a third-party employer for part-time work. The initial motivation for passing such a law is the equation of the rights of those employed without an intermediary and those employed through an employment agency (primarily the possibility of realizing rights arising from employment: the right to paid sick leave, annual leave, a retirement fund, and unemployment compensation). Even though the Law on Agency Employment to a certain extent contributes to the equation of the rights arising from employment in the case of the workers employed through agencies and workers employed without an intermediary, we should not lose sight of the fact that this law represents an institutionalization of agency hiring of the labor force, which is a regulatory mechanism of encouraging labor force flexibility. The institutionalization of agency employment enables employers to more easily manipulate the volume of the labor force and avoid complicated and expensive redundancy procedures.

In addition to the analyzed changes to the Labor Law and the new re-regulatory practices (the Law on Agency Employment), the amendments to the draft of the Law on Simplified Work Engagement in Seasonal Jobs in Certain Activities are a clear indicator of the political motivation behind labor market organization in favor of the employers, promoting at the same time greater employment flexibility. At the end of 2020, a work

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[8] The operating of *Temporary work agencies* is regulated by the Law on Agency Employment: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-agencijskom-zaposljavanju.html

group was formed within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Veteran Affairs with the aim of extending the existing Law on Simplified Work Engagement in Seasonal Jobs in Certain Activities (passed in 2018). The basic intention behind the extension of the aforementioned law was the extension of the defined activities which facilitate employment. In addition to the agricultural, forestry and fishing sectors, in which this practice is already present, the intention behind this proposed law was to facilitate employment within the trade, hospitality, construction, and household and assistant services sectors. In addition to facilitating the redundancy process, made possible by the Law on Simplified Work Engagement in Seasonal Jobs in Certain Activities, seasonal workers were denied the opportunity to realize rights arising from employment (such as the right to paid sick leave, annual leave). What causes additional worry is the fact that a seasonal employment contract is defined as work outside of employment, which consequently also deprives the worker the right to union organization and collective negotiation. It would seem that the fear that the addition of such sectors in which it is possible to employ seasonal workers would contribute to the increase in the share of employees engaged by non-standard work arrangements is justified. Even though the aforementioned draft of the law, due to numerous public debates and critiques, has still not been presented to the national assembly, it implicitly indicates the tendency to organize employment so that it would provide a greater level of labor force flexibility.

5. THE METHOD

Job security in the context of the changes to the labor market in Serbia is accompanied by the striving to encourage greater labor market flexibility, and as such they are both the subject matter of this paper. The legacy of the socialist period included the promotion of job security, stable employment contracts, and a high level of social security. The post-socialist transformation and the liberalization process of the economy and labor market led to institutional changes whereby we could rightfully expect shifts in the labor market as well as new trends related to job security.

The general aim of the paper is to provide a description of labor market trends which are linked to job security. We will divide the general aim into two specific ones, whose results will provide us with an answer to the general aim. The first specific aim is a description of the trends of employee engagement based on their type of employment contract. The type of employment contract, in the existing literature, unambiguously represents a solid indicator of job security. The second specific aim is a description of the trends in the rate of informal employment. Informal employment is the least secure form of employee engagement, and analyzing it is important since the most significant positive externality of carrying out flexibilization is in fact curbing informal employment.

For the purpose of the study, the available newsletters of the Labour Force Survey (in Serbian: *Анкете о радној снази* or АРС in the text) from 2006 to 2022 were used, predominantly focusing on the indicators of general trends in the employment rate, the informal employment rate, and data on employed workers based on the type of their employment contract. Through a description of the secondary data, attempts were made to make note of the changes in the labor market during the aforementioned period, in order to respond to the set aims of the study.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

This section will convey the general trends of the workers in the labor market in Serbia from 2006 to 2022. During the design of the methodology of the APC, the Eurostat definitions and recommendations were adopted. In the newsletters, employees were defined as individuals who work for an employer in any sector, irrespective of whether they have a formal employment contract or work based on an oral contract. The members of their household who help them with the family business and who are not paid for their work are considered employed workers.

The trends of the labor market which indicate the status of job security were monitored through the share of employed workers based on the *type of employment contract* and the *rate of informal employment*.

By analyzing the APC from 2006 to 2022, the type of employment contract is a parameter which unambiguously indicates the reduction of the share of employed workers with permanent employment contracts and the increase in the share of employed workers with temporary employment contracts. Until 2010, we noted a relatively stable share of permanent employees, while following 2011 we noted a tendency of decrease in the share of employees belonging to that category. The share of employment before the great economic crisis (2008) and during the period of privatization and restructuring of companies in Serbia ranged from 87% to 89%, which is also visible in the relatively stable absolute number of employees. After the great economic crisis, the situation became unfavorable for employed workers in the sense of a decrease in the total number of permanent employees approximately until 2013 (from 1699.8 in 2006 (88,8%) to 1316.8 in 2013 (84,5%)), after which time the nominal number of employees increased. Despite the nominal decrease in the number of employees, it is interesting to note that the share of permanently employed workers remained relatively stable until 2012. These indicators can be explained by a decrease in the share of engagement in seasonal and casual employment, but also the overall decrease in the number of employed workers at this time. Following 2013, the trends in the category of permanent employees were more clearly constituted in the sense of a continued reduction in the share of employed workers in this type of work engagement, despite the nominal increase in the number of permanent employees. The aforementioned nominal growth in the category of permanent employees (following 2013) followed the trend of the general increase in employment, albeit it was less pronounced than the growth within the category of temporary employees. It could be said that, despite the nominal growth in the number of permanent employees, their share decreased "in favor" of temporary employees. In sum, the share of temporary employees in the overall labor force increased in a continued and stable manner over the studied period. The sharp increase in the number of employees within this category is best noted by the fact that in 2021 the share of temporary employees was three times as great as in 2006 (19,1% in 2021 as compared to 6,6% in 2006). The share of casual and seasonal employment in the labor force continued to decrease over the studied period, with mild oscillations dating from 2012 to 2015, after which their share in the total labor force was reduced and remains low. The data on seasonal and casual employees were not indicative of a specific trend, and the aforementioned forms of employment do not represent a frequent form of work engagement in relation to the overall labor force.

Table 1 Employed workers (15–64) based on type of employment contract from 2006 to 2022 (in percentages and absolute numbers)

Year	Type of employment contract								Total	
	Permanent		Temporary		Seasonal		Casual			
	%	AN	%	AN	%	AN	%	AN	%	AN
2006	88.8	1699.8	6.6	126.9	2.9	55.6	1.7	32.6	100	1915.0
2007	88	1711.5	5.3	137.4	3.9	54.4	2.8	37.5	100	1940.8
2008	87.4	1629.7	8	150.1	2.4	45.7	2.2	41.7	100	1867.2
2009	88.4	1568.7	8.3	145.9	1.8	33.2	1.5	27.8	100	1775.6
2010	88.5	1433.9	8.7	141.2	1.5	23.6	1.3	21.5	100	1620.3
2011	87.5	1378.7	9.9	155.3	1.3	20.1	1.3	20.8	100	1574.9
2012	85.9	1332.2	11.7	181.4	0.8	12.9	1.6	24.6	100	1551.1
2013	84.5	1316.8	12.4	194.3	1	16.7	2.1	33.4	100	1561.1
2014	81.8	1324.3	13.9	224.2	1.9	30.7	2.4	39	100	1618.2
2015	78.2	1394.2	16.9	300.3	2.1	36.7	2.9	51.5	100	1782.7
2016	76.4	1412.5	18.8	347.9	1.9	35.8	3	53.2	100	1849.4
2017	77.3	1491.7	18.9	364.6	1.6	31.3	2.2	41.4	100	1928.9
2018	78	1556.9	19.7	398.8	1.5	30.2	1.7	34	100	2019.9
2019	77.4	1609.6	19.4	404.2	1.6	31.3	1.6	34.2	100	2079.3
2020	79.6	1669.9	17.9	374.3	1.1	23.1	1.4	30	100	2113.8
2021	77.4	1681.9	19.1	414.3	1.5	32.7	2	42.9	100	2171.8
2022	78.3	1741.0	18.6	413.1	1.4	30.9	1.7	38.4	100	2223.4

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey, *Employed workers based on type of employment contract* (newsletters 2006–2022).

Based on the presented data, we can note clear trends in the labor market in terms of employed workers and their type of employment contract. Over the past fifteen years or so, the trend of an increasingly more visible division among employees emerged, which included two key categories: 1. temporary employees and 2. permanent employees (see Table 1). It is a tendency of temporary and permanent employees growing closer together (see Graph 1), with a justified assumption of the reduction in work engagements involving permanent employment contracts in the upcoming period. The assumption was founded on the noted stable trends over the studied period by analyzing the prevalence of this type employment contract among employed workers, as an important indicator of job security.
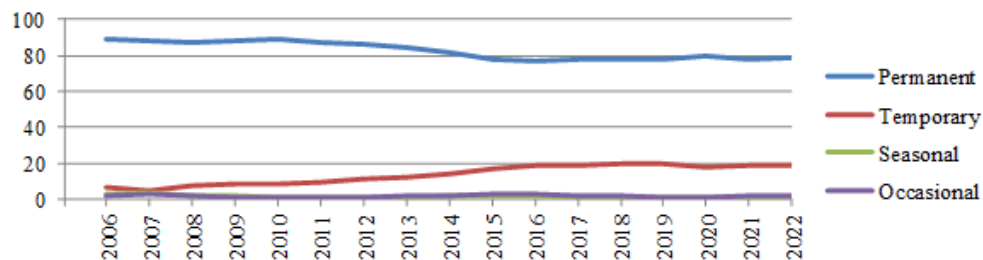
Graph 1 Employed workers (15–64) based on type of employment contract 2006–2022
Source: the graph is based on data of the APC, newsletters 2006–2022

According to the methodology applied in the APC, the rate of informal employment is defined as the percentage of individuals working without any formal employment contract in the entire labor population[9] (APC 2014, 2017, 2021).[10] By analyzing the data obtained by means of the APC from 2009 to 2022, we cannot note clear movements and a trend of decrease or growth in the rate of informal employment. Informal employment directly corresponds with job insecurity due to a lack of institutional job security, but also with the inability to realize rights arising from employment and the inability of the employees to realize their right to a retirement fund, health ensure, paid sick leave, and annual leave, which to a considerable extent impacts their wellbeing.

Table 2 The share of informal employment in the labor force from 2009 to 2022

Year	Informal employment		Total
	%	in thousands	employed workers
2009	21.4	559.9	2616.4
2010	19.6	464.9	2396.2
2011	18.8	423.6	2253.2
2012	17.5	390.0	2228.3
2013	19.3	446.0	2310.7
2014	21.2	542.5	2559.4
2015	20.3	523.9	2574.2
2016	22	599.2	2719.4
2017	20.7	579.2	2794.7
2018	19.5	553.8	2832.9
2019	18.2	529.2	2901.0
2020	16.4	437.7	2894.8
2021	13	361.5	2782.5
2022	13	369.5	2847.9

Source: The Labour Force Survey, Employed workers based on type of employment contract, rights arising from employment, gender, region, and type of settlement. Newsletters: 2009–2022
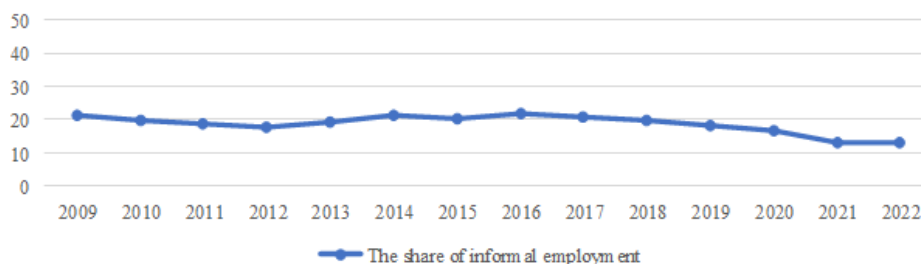
Graph 2 Informal employment in relation to the entire labor force per year
Source: the graph is based on the data provided by the APC, Newsletters 2009–2022

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[9] In the APC from 2014 to 2020, informal employment includes work in non-registered companies; work in registered companies but with no formal employment contract and with not social security or retirement fund; as well as work done by associate household members in the family business, while in the APC from 2021 (following the new methodology) it includes work in non-registered companies; work in registered companies but with no formal employment contract, as well as the work of associate household members in the family business.
[10] Prior to 2014, the APC does not provide data on employed workers based on the type of sector (formal/informal) nor does it recognize this category.

According to the presented data regarding the changes to the share of informal employment, it is noticeable that over a longer period of time (2009–2019) the rate of informal employment did not indicate clear tendencies of growth or decline in relation to the share of employment. However, over the past three years (2020–2022), a decrease in the share of informal employment is evident. Even though the data could lead us to the conclusion that the noted decline in the share of informal employment is an consequence of the adopted laws, we must be cautions when drawing such conclusions, especially if we bear in mind that the period of a sudden decrease in the share of informal employment[11] overlaps with the global COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with the continuity of the adopted changes to existing laws, a decrease in the nominal and percentage share of informal employment, which was not noted until 2019, could probably be explained more likely with measures passed to suppress the COVID-19 pandemic, and not the effects of flexible legal solutions. In order for us to know with certainty whether the data on the decrease in the share of informal employment is systemic or isolated in nature, it is necessary to analyze the data over a longer period of time, with a particular emphasis on the years to come.

CONCLUSION

By analyzing APC data from 2006 to 2022, it is possible to determine certain changes in the labor market which correspond to changes in the labor laws, that is, the striving for a more flexible labor market. One of the most significant indicators of the gradual labor market flexibilization is the continued reduction of the share of permanent employment, which is accompanied by the increase in the occurrence of temporary employment contracts. On the one hand, the aforementioned data are in favor of the general trend of increase in non-standard and uncertain types of employment. On the other hand, the data indicate the fact that the labor market flexibilization did not achieve its own theoretical validation: in addition to the nominal increase in the labor force, the stability of the share of informal employment was noted, which indicates that the informal sector increases alongside the formal one. The continued high share of informal employment decreased only during the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, that is, it is more likely a reaction to the measures passed to curb it. In other words, a decrease in the share of informal employment, which includes the most vulnerable group in the labor market, is more a result of the specific nature of the pandemic (measures of limited movement, a decrease in the aggregate demand, and consequently a reduction in production in which the informal sector was hit first) than the sudden effect of flexibilization. In accordance with the aforementioned, it is possible to identify a trend in the increase of temporary employment as one of the most obvious effects of the described legislation changes, which speaks in favor of increased labor market flexibility. At this time we should point out that the analyzed data do not indicate the fact that the labor market in Serbia is flexible, or even precarious, especially if we take into consideration that there is still a high share of permanent employment. The data indicate that in the context of transformation of institutional changes, congruent with the aims of labor market flexibilization, we can conclude that there are shifts towards higher insecurity in the labor market, as well as

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[11] Informally employed workers have the lowest amount of control over employment conditions and thus are themselves the first to experience repercussions (are rendered redundant) at a time of intense changes in the market and volatile social upheavals (such as the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic).

there not being room to draw a conclusion regarding a gradual curbing of employment in the informal sector.

We can humbly anticipate that due to increasingly greater flexibilization and decreased institutional protection, certain groups in the labor force in the labor market (without the ability to control working conditions) will be more exposed to less secure and stable work engagements. Insisting on having control over employment conditions, with the aim of providing job security, opens the way for greater divisions, an additional vulnerability of deprivileged groups, and consequently the perpetuation of inequality. Ultimately, it would be useful to, in further studies, analyze the quality of jobs with no stable or secure employment contracts. If it were to be determined that more flexible types of employment contracts correspond to poor working conditions (bearing in mind that flexibilization did not "extract" engaged employees from the informal sector), the conclusion that labor market flexibility did not provide legalization, but instead the precarization of labor, is inevitable.

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SIGURNOST POSLOVA PRED IZAZOVIMA FLEKSIBILIZACIJE TRŽIŠTA RADA U SRBIJI

Srbija je u periodu postsocijalističke transformacije počela da se integriše u globalne ekonomske tokove. Ovaj put podrazumevao je kako menjanje radnog zakonodavstva, tako i kreiranje novih regulativnih mehanizama sa ciljem postizanja veće fleksibilnosti tržišta rada. Trendovi smanjenja regulatorne zaštite rada u kontekstu postsocijalističke transformacije, promovišu samostalnije upravljanje radnom snagom od strane poslodavca u cilju efikasnijeg odgovora na dinamične promene na tržištu, što u krajnjoj liniji ostavlja zabrinutost po pitanju sigurnosti poslova u budućnosti. Iz ugla radnika, sigurnost predstavlja važan aspekt posla time što omogućava kontinuiranu ekonomsku sigurnost, ali i izvesnost u smislu planiranja životnih aktivnosti. Predmet ovog rada je sigurnost poslova na tržištu rada u Srbiji u kontekstu transformacije tržišta rada shodno zahtevima za fleksibilnošću. Identifikovanje trendova po kriterijumu sigurnosti poslova osnovni je cilj rada, analizirajući pritom poslove prema tipu ugovora o radu i udelu stope neformalnih poslova. Rezultati pokazuju da je primetan trend opadanja radno angažovanih sa ugovorom o radu na neodređeno vreme uz posledično povećanje radno angažovanih sa radnim ugovorima na određeno vreme. Uporedo, relativno stabilne stope neformalne zaposlenosti ukazuju nam da se fleksibilizacijom tržišta rada nisu postigli ciljevi „prevođenja" neformalno zaposlenih iz nelegalnih u legalne tokove.

Ključne reči: *sigurnost poslova, fleksibilizacija tržišta rada, neoliberalizam, tipugovora o radu, neformalna zaposlenost.*

CULTURAL PROVISION AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN THE CENTRALISED CULTURAL SYSTEM IN SERBIA

UDC 316.7(497.11)

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Abstract. *In this paper, we have analyzed cultural provision and cultural participation in Serbia, as well as measures taken by the Ministry of Culture to decentralize culture. Our research into cultural provision revealed significant differences in the number of cultural institutions, organizations, and associations between Belgrade, Novi Sad, and the rest of the country. Additionally, there are significant disparities in the financial resources allocated to them from the budget and through donations obtained via open calls. As a key contribution to the centralization of culture in the country, we identified the existence of 24 out of 27 national cultural institutions in Belgrade, i.e., 14 out of 17 provincial institutions of Vojvodina in Novi Sad. Although these institutions are funded by taxes paid by all the citizens of Serbia and Vojvodina, their programs are typically only available to those residing in the cities. On the other hand, analyses of cultural participation indicated the dominantly anti-elitist nature of cultural needs, a very low level of cultural habits, and small regional differences in the cultural practices of the citizens of Serbia. This seemingly paradoxical finding that pronounced inequalities in the cultural offering do not have a greater impact on cultural participation – because it is at a very low level in all parts of the country – represents a framework for future strategies of cultural decentralization in Serbia.*

Key words: *cultural provision, cultural participation, decentralization in culture, Serbia*

1. INTRODUCTION

Serbia is a pronouncedly centralized country. The structural factors influencing the centralization of culture in Serbia can be found in the political and economic spheres. One of the main factors is state capture, which refers to the control of the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches by the political elite, leading to centralized decision-making. Another factor are the oligarchic tendencies in political parties where career

advancement of political representatives is based on loyalty to the party central, rather than serving the interests of the citizens who elected them. The country's fiscal policy also contributes to centralization, as most of the income is funneled into central institutions that then distribute funds to cities and municipalities based on estimates by the central government. Finally, property rights in Serbia dictate that the most important properties located in cities and municipalities are considered national property.

In this paper, we analyze cultural provision and cultural participation, as well as the measures taken by state agencies to decentralize culture in Serbia. It is based on the findings of the research project 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia'. This project was part of the 'Culture for Democracy' program, which was financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and coordinated by the Hartefakt fund.[1]

The research activities were carried out from March to December 2022 and employed a comprehensive multi-method approach. In July and August 2022, a survey was conducted on a nationally proportional, multi-phase stratified probability sample extracted from the population of the citizens of Serbia aged between 18 and 80. A standardized survey questionnaire consisting of 45 items was used, and a total of 1026 respondents were surveyed face-to-face using Tablet-Assisted Personal Interviewing (TAPI).[2] In addition, from October to November 2022, 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from twenty-three cities and municipalities in Serbia. For this part of the study, we used purposeful sampling and snowball techniques to locate interviewees, ensuring a diverse sample.

In parallel, desk research was also carried out. It included an analysis of theoretical texts on the decentralization of culture and existing studies on the cultural resources in Serbia. Most of these studies had been done by The Institute for Cultural Development Research (https://zaprokul.org.rs/), such as 'The Cultural Resources of the Districts in Serbia' and 'The Cultural Resources of the Cities in Serbia' and 'Kultura: Culture 2022'. We also took into consideration the list of cultural institutions, concert halls, and exhibition spaces created as part of the project 'E-culture' (http://e-kultura.net/, as well as an electronic map of the cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia (https://a3.geosrbija.rs/share/111135adf09a).

In the first part of this paper, we discuss the various types of decentralization of culture. The second segment of the paper analyzes cultural provision in different regions and cities across Serbia and points out factors that lead to the centralization of culture. The third segment presents the results of a study of cultural participation in Serbia, including data broken down by regions and cities. Additionally, this paper analyzes three attempts made by the Ministry of Culture and Information between 2010 and 2023 to contribute to the decentralization of culture in Serbia. Finally, the conclusion provides recommendations on how to improve the decentralization policy in Serbia.

2. TYPES OF DECENTRALIZATION IN CULTURE

In the article 'Planning for Equality? Decentralization in Cultural Policy' Nobuko Kawashima (2004) distinguishes between three types of decentralization in the sphere of culture: cultural, fiscal, and political decentralization. These types of decentralization differ in

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[1] Please see: https://heartefact.org/fond/cfd/
[2] For the response rate and description of the sample, please see Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix https://figshare.com/s/ecdc630f7acb6dc9ac88

two aspects: their place in the process of defining and carrying out cultural policy and which actors are affected by inequality[3].

According to Kawashima, cultural decentralization is the aim of cultural policy. It strives to remove barriers that prevent participation and to provide equal opportunities for all citizens to enjoy the culture and the arts, irrespective of their place of residence, physical ability or disability, income, social class, race, or gender. Discussions on cultural decentralization are usually dominated by indications of geographical barriers and inequality in the availability of a high-quality cultural offer, depending on which part of the country people live in.

Contrary to that, fiscal decentralization has to do with cultural policy measures and refers to the inequality in the distribution of budget funds among the creators of the cultural offer. It could be aimed at overcoming three different types of inequality. Firstly, inequality in the regional budget allocations, whereby the main 'accusation' is that the capital city receives much more funds than the 'rest' of the country. The second aspect of fiscal decentralization refers to the level of participation of (or inequality among) central, regional, and local authorities in financing culture. The third aspect refers to the inequality in budget allocations among the various types of arts and the institutions/organizations that create them (film, theatre, the visual arts, music; the public, private, and civic sectors in culture or established and alternative cultures).

Political decentralization involves the administration of cultural policy and the balance of power among the decision-makers in this area. In most cases, it has to do with central, regional, and local authorities. However, it can also refer to the so-called horizontal decentralization, the division of responsibility among various governing bodies sharing the same power level (for example, the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education, or even the Ministry of Culture and Art Councils). According to Kawashima, one form of political decentralization also requires that non-government actors take on more activities in creating cultural policy. The resources that are necessary for political decentralization to be successful and to lead to cultural decentralization include legitimate decision-making power, sufficient funds, possession of knowledge, skills, and information, and the availability of suitable organizations/institutions (i.e., human, spatial, technical resources).

Political decentralization is a means of achieving an end (cultural decentralization). The dominant understanding is that political decentralization is a prerequisite for cultural decentralization, but Kawashima indicates that at least two strategies are possible: cultural decentralization with and without political decentralization.

According to Kawashima, there are three strategies used to achieve cultural decentralization *without* political decentralization:

1) First, the central government can form regional structures which promote regional development (decomposition). Even though the activities focus on regional development, the central government appoints officials, provides the means, and establishes standards. A case in point is France, where regional directorates have been founded since 1974.

2) The second strategy is for the central government to build cultural infrastructure, cultural institutions, and art organizations across the country, which will then be jointly funded by the center and from local funds (for example, the polyvalent cultural centers in France in the 1960s-70s).

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[3] For other important theoretical considerations of decentralization in culture see Kawashima (1997), D'Angelo and Vesperini (2000) and Heiskannen (2001).

3) The third strategy, which is prevalent in countries such as Sweden and Scotland, involves organizing constant touring of exhibitions and performances. National institutions have an obligation to be available throughout the country to the citizens who fund their work through taxes.

On the other hand, there are two strategies of cultural decentralization *with* political decentralization:

1) The first includes a shift of power from the central government to the local ones and represents a 'zero-sum game'. The transfer of power includes a transfer of control over an entire group of resources (legitimate decision-making power, funds, increased skill levels and levels of knowledge, control over organizations/institutions) so that the local authorities can successfully realize their aim (cultural decentralization).

2) The second is focused on strengthening the power of the local authorities without reducing the power of centralized government and represents a win-win situation. This second strategy includes increasing the capacities of the local authorities while retaining the central government as a guarantee of stability and an actor of strategic focus.

Our previous research (see Cvetičanin 2011; and the 'Strategy of Decentralization of Culture in Serbia', 2008 report) shows that one source of the centralization of culture in Serbia is the very low level of resources available to local governments. In light of this, we believe that the most effective approach to decentralizing culture in Serbia would be joint action of central and local authorities. This is especially relevant given the dual task that awaits them, which is identified by current research.

3. CULTURAL PROVISION IN SERBIA

The cultural policy in Serbia shares the characteristics of the centralized state system it belongs to. As can be seen from the list of institutions of culture created as part of the 'E-culture' project, the study 'Kultura: Culture 2022' and the electronic map of the cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia 'Geo-Serbia', there is inequality in the availability of cultural resources (cultural institutions/organizations/association) between the regions in Serbia. They are not limited solely to the differences between Belgrade on the one hand and the provinces on the other. Still, the differences in terms of the availability of cultural resources in Belgrade and all the other cities in Serbia are so big that they inevitably require special attention.

If in the Yugoslav federation, where there were other cities with similar potential, Belgrade was the first among more or less equals, today it is the capital of a country in relation to which it seems cumbersomely large. Almost one-quarter of the country's population lives in Belgrade, which is almost five times larger than Novi Sad and six times larger than Niš, the next two largest cities in the country.

As part of the desk research, data were compiled to indicate that regarding the availability of cultural institutions and organizations on the territory of Serbia, it is possible to identify four groups. The first group comprises libraries and cultural centers, which can be found in almost all the larger settlements in Serbia. The second group, which is also mostly territorially equally distributed across the regions in Serbia, is made up of organizations that deal with amateur cultural activities (mostly folklore). The third group comprises traditional cultural institutions: professional theatres, museums, orchestras, and galleries. Of the total number of these institutions in Serbia, more than one-half are to be found in the capital city. Finally, there

is a fourth group of organizations dealing with the distribution of cultural production (publishing houses, discography houses, magazines, electronic media with a national frequency, and cinematographic companies), which are almost completely located in Belgrade.

Besides 30 city cultural institutions, including 12 theatres, 8 institutes for cultural heritage protection, 4 libraries, and 6 cultural centers, 24 national cultural institutions are located in Belgrade. In addition, there are 565 active cultural agents, which include film producers and distributors, private galleries and museums, concert halls, orchestras, folklore amateur societies, and non-profit organizations. This means that almost one-third of all the cultural agents (cultural institutions/organizations/associations) in Serbia operate in Belgrade. Novi Sad comes second with 101 cultural agents, followed by Niš with 41, Kragujevac with 39, and Subotica with 28. In 26 settlements that have city status in Serbia, there are 484 cultural agents, 135 less than in Belgrade alone. The total number of active cultural agents in all the other settlements in Serbia is 1,037, less than half of the total number in the country (Table 1).

Table 1 The territorial distribution of cultural agents and the population in Serbia (per city)

City	No. cult. agents	%	Population	%	City	No. cult. agents	%	Population	%
Belgrade	619	28.9%	1,681,405	25.3%	Pančevo	22	1.0%	115,454	1.74%
Bor	9	0.4%	40,845	0.61%	Pirot	13	0.6%	49,601	0.75%
Čačak	12	0.6%	105,612	1.59%	Požarevac	12	0.6%	68,648	1.03%
Jagodina	13	0.6%	64,644	0.97%	Prokuplje	10	0.5%	38,054	0.57%
Kikinda	14	0.7%	49.326	0.74%	Smederevo	13	0.6%	97,930	1.47%
Kragujevac	39	1.8%	171,186	2.58%	Sombor	13	0.6%	70,818	1.07%
Kraljevo	20	0.9%	110,196	1.66%	S. Mitrovica	19	0.9%	72,580	1,09%
Kruševac	10	0.5%	113,582	1.71%	Subotica	28	1.3%	123,952	1.86%
Leskovac	21	1.0%	123,950	1.86%	Vranje	12	0.6%	74,381	1.12%
Loznica	10	0.5%	72,062	1.08%	Užice	15	0.7%	69,997	1.05%
Niš	41	1.9%	249,501	3.75%	Zaječar	10	0.5%	47,991	0.72%
Novi Pazar	14	0.7%	106,720	1.61%	Other settlements	1037	48.5%	2,461,671	37.03%
Novi Sad	101	4.7%	368,967	5.55%					
					Total	2140	100.0%		
					Total number of inhabitants			6,647,003	100.00%

Sources: For cultural agents: database E-kultura (http://e-kultura.net/), study 'Kultura : Culture 2022' and an electronic map of the cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia (https://a3.geosrbija.rs/share/111135adf09a); For data on population: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Census 2022, Total population by municipalities and cities (https://popis2022.stat.gov.rs/en-US/popisni-podaci-eksel-tabele/)

Upon analyzing the distribution of cultural agents across Serbia based on statistical regions, a more favorable image emerges. Table 2 shows that the number of cultural agents in Belgrade is almost the same as that in Vojvodina. However, the number is still significantly lower in Šumadija and West Serbia, and even lower in South and East Serbia.

Table 2 The territorial distribution of the cultural actors in Serbia (per region)

	No.	%
Belgrade Region	636	29.7
Vojvodina	658	30.7
Šumadija and West Serbia	449	21.0
South and East Serbia	375	17.5
Kosovo and Metohija	20	0.9
Total	2140	100.0

Sources: Database 'E-kultura' (http://e-kultura.net/), study 'Kultura: Culture 2022' and an electronic map of the cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia (https://a3.geosrbija.rs/share/111135adf09a)

The most significant contribution to the centralization of culture in Serbia is made by the fact that almost all the republic's cultural institutions are located in Belgrade; that is, almost all the provincial cultural institutions of Vojvodina are located in Novi Sad. Out of 27 national cultural institutions, 24 are located in Belgrade. Their status of being "national" is only based on the fact that their work is funded by the taxes paid by all citizens of Serbia. Their programs, theatrical performances, exhibitions, concerts, opera, and ballet performances, with rare exceptions, are attended only by people who reside in Belgrade. At the same time, a huge part of the total budget of the Ministry of Culture is allocated to these institutions – between 60% and 70% (see graph 1).
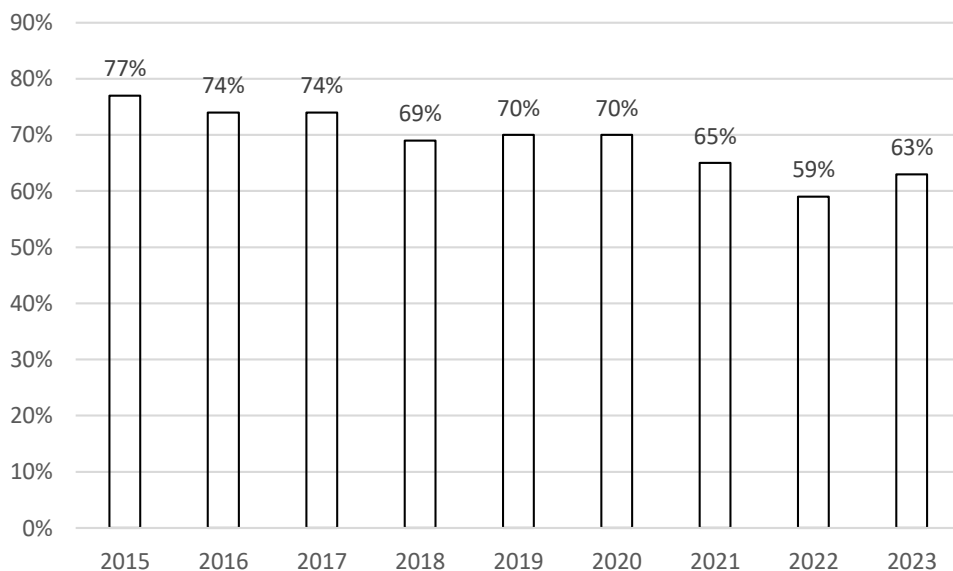
Fig. 1 The percentage of the budget of the Ministry of Culture allocated to the republic's cultural institutions
Source: Laws on the budget of the Republic of Serbia 2015 – 2023 (https://www.slglasnik.com/sluzbena-glasila/stampana-izdanja)

The situation is very similar in Novi Sad, where, in addition to the 13 cultural institutions and 8 cultural stations created in relation to its status as the European Capital of Culture, there are a further 14 to 17 provincial cultural institutions, which are also provided with significant funding from the provincial budget.

Novi Sad's successful participation in the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for 2021 has had a significant impact on improving its cultural infrastructure, cultural provision, and overall position in Serbia's cultural system. This remarkable achievement holds great significance for Serbia's culture as a whole. However, it is important to note that the Melina Mercouri Award, which is the participation prize from the European Union, is about one million and five hundred thousand euros. The approximately 30 million euros allocated for activities related to the ECoC and at least as much for infrastructural work came from the national and provincial budgets. These sixty million euros that were invested into the cultural infrastructure and programs in Novi Sad, will further widen the gap between it and other cities in Serbia.

Even though they could be one instrument contributing to leveling out the drastically unequal distribution in funding culture, open calls of the Ministry of Culture and the Provincial Secretariat for Culture for funding projects, further contribute to the increase in inequality.[4]

For example, the Ministry of Culture's open call for 2022 provided support for 448 projects submitted by organizations from the region of Belgrade (totaling 265,125,000 dinars, or more than half of the total budget for the open call), 294 projects from Vojvodina (totaling 116,300,000 dinars), and 167 projects from South and East Serbia (totaling 60,750,000 dinars).

Virtually identical distribution of funds can be seen in the open call in 2023 (Table 3).

Table 3 The territorial distribution of projects supported by the Ministry of Culture and Information for 2023 (based on region)

	Number of projects per region	Funds per region	On average per project	% of total funds
Belgrade region	449	223,105,000 RSD	496,893 RSD	48.91%
Vojvodina	293	114,097,000 RSD	389,409 RSD	25.01%
Šumadija and West Serbia	159	58,318,500 RSD	366,783 RSD	12.79%
South and East Serbia	153	48,356,000 RSD	316,052 RSD	10.60%
Kosovo	38	12,250,000 RSD	322,368 RSD	2.69%
Total	1092	456,126,500 RSD	417,698 RSD	100.00%

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia (https://kultura.gov.rs/konkursi/30)

The situation was similar in the open call of the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities. Almost half of the supported projects and more than half of the total funds were allocated to organizations from the South Bačka District (whose capital is Novi Sad).

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[4] Support for the projects, of course, depended on their quality, but the cultural policy that tends toward the decentralization of culture could, through programs of positive discrimination, render the open competition an important tool in the process of strengthening the capacities of institutions and organizations originating from smaller environments in Serbia.

Table 4 The territorial distribution of the projects supported at the open competition of
the Provincial Secretariat for Culture of Vojvodina for 2023 (per district)

District	Number of projects per region	Funds per region	% of the total number of projects	% of the total funds
South Bačka (N. Sad)	273	388,383,000 RSD	49.54%	56.32%
North Bačka (Subotica)	55	36,260,000 RSD	9.98%	5.26%
West Bačka (Sombor)	42	8,052,000 RSD	7.62%	1.17%
South Banat (Pančevo)	69	42,250,000 RSD	12.52%	6.13%
Central Banat (Zrenjanin)	41	10,970,000 RSD	7.44%	1.59%
North Banat (Kikinda)	34	8,315,000 RSD	6.18%	1.21%
The Srem District (S. Mitrovica)	37	195,400,000 RSD	6.72%	28.32%
Total	551	689.630.000 RSD	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities
(https://www.kultura.vojvodina.gov.rs/resenja-kultura/)

Altogether, these data indicate that the centralization of culture in Serbia is structurally
conditioned and that – since only one-third of the citizens of Serbia live in Belgrade and
Novi Sad – it is necessary to take measures to provide the remaining two-thirds of the
population with equal opportunities to participate in cultural activities[5].

4. CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN SERBIA

We have seen that cultural provision in Serbia is highly unequal. This led us to the
question of its effects on the cultural participation of Serbian citizens. Our study of
cultural participation in Serbia in 2022 indicated the dominant anti-elitist nature of
cultural needs, a very low level of cultural habits, and small regional differences and class
divisions in the cultural practices of the citizens of Serbia (see also Cvetičanin 2007;
Cvetičanin and Milankov 2011; Cvetičanin 2014).

We operationalized the question related to cultural needs, asking respondents what
they like to do in their leisure time, even if they cannot do so (for various reasons). In the
survey questionnaire, we offered 17 different activities that fall within the domain of the
elite, popular, and everyday culture and asked the respondents to, on a Likert-type scale,
express their attitudes towards them, ranging from whether this activity is something they
like to do most, to whether they expressly do not like to participate in it.

As can be seen in Table 5, the analysis of cultural needs indicated that the dominant
culture in Serbia is expressly anti-elitist. Some of the favorite leisure time activities
include practices that belong to popular culture (such as watching television and listening
to folk music) or belong to the domain of everyday culture (attending family festivities
related to patron saints, going to restaurants and cafes, or using social media). No more
than one-third of the respondents like to attend events and enjoy the content of highbrow
culture, which represents the traditional domain of cultural policy.

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[5] For the challenges of cultural centralization and possible ways of decentralization in the countries of South-
East Europe see also: Katunarić (2003); Dragojević (2011); Paunović (2020); Žuvela (2021), and the collection
of works published by the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (2018).

Table 5 What the respondents like to do in their leisure time (even if they are not currently able to do so)

		I like to do the most	I like to do	I neither like nor dislike	I dislike to do	I expressly do not like to do	Total
Watching television	n	223	644	107	37	15	1026
	%	21.7%	62.8%	10.4%	3.6%	1.5%	100%
Attending family festivities	n	181	610	141	73	21	1026
	%	17.6%	59.5%	13.7%	7.1%	2.0%	100%
Going to a restaurant or cafe	n	174	535	142	111	64	1026
	%	17.0%	52.1%	13.8%	10.8%	6.2%	100%
Listening to folk music	n	112	550	206	110	48	1026
	%	10.9%	53.6%	20.1%	10.7%	4.7%	100%
Taking up a hobby	n	90	539	200	143	54	1026
	%	8.8%	52.5%	19.5%	13.9%	5.3%	100%
Outings into nature (hiking)	n	113	475	213	156	69	1026
	%	11.0%	46.3%	20.8%	15.2%	6.7%	100%
Using social media	n	146	451	135	139	155	1026
	%	14.2%	44.0%	13.2%	13.5%	15.1%	100%
(Re)Decorating the apartment	n	87	435	246	187	71	1026
	%	8.5%	42.4%	24.0%	18.2%	6.9%	100%
Reading books	n	74	362	198	268	124	1026
	%	7.2%	35.3%	19.3%	26.1%	12.1%	100%
Attending sports events	n	108	311	160	275	172	1026
	%	10.5%	30.3%	15.6%	26.8%	16.8%	100%
Going to the theatre	n	28	338	249	266	145	1026
	%	2.7%	32.9%	24.3%	25.9%	14.1%	100%
Sports activities with friends	n	64	300	185	283	194	1026
	%	6.2%	29.2%	18.0%	27.6%	18.9%	100%
Singing. Playing an instrument. Dancing. Drawing	n	33	227	227	345	194	1026
	%	3.2%	22.1%	22.1%	33.6%	18.9%	100%
Attending an exhibition in an art gallery/museum	n	16	260	248	298	204	1026
	%	1.6%	25.3%	24.2%	29.0%	19.9%	100%
Playing video games (gaming)	n	51	218	142	263	352	1026
	%	5.0%	21.2%	13.8%	25.6%	34.3%	100%
Handicrafts (Knitting, Crocheting)	n	31	166	109	303	417	1026
	%	3.0%	16.2%	10.6%	29.5%	40.6%	100%
Listening to classical music	n	6	145	168	385	322	1026
	%	0.65	14.1%	16.4%	37.5%	31.4%	100%

Source of data: survey 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia' (2022)

In the following step, we compared the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics with certain types of cultural needs. The results shown in Tables A3a and A3b (please see the

Appendix[6]) indicate significant differences in cultural needs, depending on the respondents' education level. They do not differ considerably when it comes to activities in the field of everyday culture and popular culture, but there are significant differences in relation to the practices of traditional highbrow culture. Thus, for example, 66.5% of the respondents with a higher education prefer going to the theatre, while 70.7% of those with an elementary education do not like to do so. The situation is similar when it comes to listening to classical music, whereby 30.6% of the respondents with a higher education like to do it in their free time, and only 3.3% of those with an elementary school education.

In addition to the impact of education on the formation of cultural needs, we studied the impact of economic capital, that is, the average monthly income per household member (Tables A4a and A4b). Even though the impact of economic capital is lower than that of education (cultural capital), it is still present, especially regarding affinities towards highbrow cultural practices.

Differences reappear among highbrow cultural practices in the public sphere, or what was the main domain of cultural policy: going to the theatre and galleries and listening to classical music. One-half of the respondents from the group with the highest income like to go to the theatre (50.0%), forty percent like going to exhibitions in galleries and museums (40.8%); while one quarter like to listen to classical music in their free time (25.9%), which is greater than all the other groups identified based on income.

We were also interested in generational differences, especially considering that previous studies carried out in Serbia and abroad indicate that education and age strongly impact cultural practices. As can be seen from tables A5a, A5b, and A5c, even in the case of cultural needs, there are clear differences between respondents of various generations.

The most frequent responses of the respondents from the generation aged 18 to 29, are that they neither like nor dislike certain activities, except for using social media and playing games, stereotypically confirming the image of millennials and post-millennials.

For the generation aged 30 to 39, the favorite way of spending leisure time is also social media and video games. For the other activities, they remain within the framework of the ratio of their presence in the sample. Unlike them, the respondents from the generation aged 40 to 54 have the clearest attitudes regarding what they do and do not like to do in their free time. They like to read books above average, like to attend exhibitions in galleries and museums, like to watch theatrical performances, and do not like to watch television. Only when it comes to using social media and playing games are they divided; that is, the occurrence of the response that they neither like nor dislike these activities is greater than the actual ratio of their presence in the sample.

The generation aged 55 to 64 is the first in which most of the respondents do not like to use social media. In the case of the oldest generation (65+), most of their responses are related to things which they do not like to do (they do not like to go out to restaurants, to go the theatre, go to exhibitions, read books, use the internet), with the exception of listening to folk music.

Bearing in mind the basic topic of our study, we analyzed whether there are any differences in terms of the cultural needs of the respondents based on the region in which they live (the Belgrade region, Vojvodina, Šumadija and West Serbia, or South and East Serbia – see tables A6a and A6b in the Appendix). The fact that they live in various parts

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[6] Detailed documentation on the performed analyzes can be found in the Appendix
https://figshare.com/s/ecdc630f7acb6dc9ac88

of Serbia was proven not to have a great independent impact on shaping the cultural needs of the respondents.

The second aspect of cultural participation that we analyzed are the habits of the respondents, that is, the citizens of Serbia. Cultural habits are the actualization of cultural needs – what the respondents actually do in the sphere of culture. Bearing in mind that this is a study of the field of cultural policy, the survey focused on cultural habits in the public sphere. The respondents were asked how many times during the six-month period[7] prior to the survey they attended cultural events (including those that belong to the elite, popular, and everyday culture).

The results obtained indicate a very low level of cultural participation for all types of cultural practices – highbrow, popular and everyday. If we were to take the fact that the respondents attended any one of these cultural events at least four times in this period as a measure of active participation, then the most frequently mentioned events (restaurants with live music) were attended by one-quarter of the respondents (24.6%). Some 6.8% went to the library during this period, 5.4% to the movies, 4.8% to a pop/rock music concert, 4.5% to folk music concerts, 2.9% to the theatre, 2.8% to art galleries/museums, and 0.9% to classical music concerts.

Table 6 How many times did the respondents attend cultural programs over six months prior to the survey

		7+ times	4 – 6 times	1 – 3 times	Not once	Total
Went to a restaurant	n	82	170	362	412	1026
with live music	%	8.0%	16.6%	35.3%	40.2%	100%
Attended	n	49	92	223	662	1026
a sports event	%	4.8%	9.0%	21.7%	64.5%	100%
Went	n	11	44	261	710	1026
to the movies	%	1.1%	4.3%	25.4%	69.2%	100%
Went	n	3	23	258	742	1026
to a fair	%	0.3%	2.2%	25.1%	72.3%	100%
Went to a pop/rock	n	8	41	229	748	1026
music concert	%	0.8%	4.0%	22.3%	72.9%	100%
Went to a folk music	n	5	41	194	786	1026
concert	%	0.5%	4.0%	18.9%	76.6%	100%
Went to	n	26	44	110	846	1026
the library	%	2.5%	4.3%	10.7%	82.5%	100%
Went to	n	3	27	190	806	1026
the theatre	%	0.3%	2.6%	18.5%	78.6%	100%
Visited an art museum	n	3	26	137	860	1026
or gallery	%	0.3%	2.5%	13.4%	83.8%	100%
Went to a	n	1	8	60	957	1026
classical music concert	%	0.1%	0.8%	5.8%	93.3%	100%

Source of data: survey 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia' (2022)

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[7] A typical question of this type in survey questionnaires takes into consideration a timeframe of 12 months prior to the survey. However, bearing in mind the restrictions related to public gatherings during the fall and winter of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we limited our study to visits to cultural events in 2022.

Yet, if we were to analyze the number of those who took part in these activities at all (at least once), then the level of participation would revolve around approximately one-third of the respondents or citizens of Serbia. Sports events were attended – at least once – by 35.5% of the respondents, movie theatres by 30.8%, county fairs by 27.7%, pop/rock music concerts by 27.1%, folk music concerts by 25.4%, and the theatre by 21.4%. Our respondents mostly attended restaurants with live music (59.8%). while the least often exhibitions of the visual arts (16.2%) and classical music concerts (6.7%).

On the other hand, the percentage of those who did not take part in any of these activities over the past six months prior to the survey was quite large. Some 40.2% of the respondents had not gone to a restaurant with live music (as the most frequently attended form of cultural event), while somewhere between 70% and 90% of the respondents had not participated in cultural activities understood in a narrower sense (highbrow and popular culture). Thus, 69.2% of the male/female respondents had not been to the movies, 72.9% to a pop/rock music concert, 76.6% to any folk music concert, 78.6% to the theatre; 83.8% to art exhibitions, and 93.3% to classical music concerts.

The data obtained by analyzing the relationship between the level of education and the cultural habits of the respondents indicate that the cultural habits of respondents with elementary school education and those with higher education are inverse – as if they were mirror images of each other (see tables A7a and A7b). The data on the (in)activity of the respondents with only an elementary school education is quite disheartening. The fact that only 94.9% of them had never been to a library six months prior to the survey might not be surprising, but 87% of them had never been to a folk music concert, 93% had never been to the movies, 97.2% had never been to the theatre, 97.2% had never been to a gallery exhibition, while of a group of 215 people with only elementary school, only one or two had attended any of these cultural events more than four times.

On the other hand, even though the levels of cultural participation of those with a university education were not particularly high, still for each of these analyzed practices, one-third of these respondents had attended cultural programs at least once (with the exception of folk and classical music concerts). Furthermore, the percentage of those who attended cultural events four or more times significantly exceeded the ratio of their presence in the sample. The frequency with which respondents with a high school education attended all the activities was, however, at the level of their presence in the sample.

As expected, income per household member has a greater impact on cultural habits than on cultural needs. The respondents from households with an income of less than 20,000 dinars (about 170 €) and with an income between 20,000 and 30,000 dinars per household member (between 170 € and 250 €) did not participate in cultural activities at the level corresponding to the ratio of their presence in the sample. Exceptions are folk music concerts for the group with the lowest income, which attended them 1-3 times during the six-month period prior to the survey.

Respondents with a monthly income per household member of between 30,000 and 48,000 dinars (between 250 € and 400 €) had been to the library (1-3 times), the cinema (1-3 times), and folk music concerts (4 times and more) at a level above the ratio of their presence in the sample. The members of the active audience – those who attended cultural events four or more times during the six months prior to the survey – are mostly found among individuals from households with an income exceeding 48,000 dinars (400 €) per household member. They attended the theatre, the cinema, art galleries, the library,

pop and rock music concerts, and restaurants with live music with a frequency that was above the ratio of their presence in the sample (see tables A6a and A6b).

We also studied the impact of generational differences on cultural habits. The respondents belonging to the youngest generation (ages 18 to 29) and the generation aged 30 to 39 participate more than any other age group in popular and everyday culture activities (going to the movies, attending pop and rock music concerts, folk music concerts, going to restaurants with live music), at a rate that is above the ratio of their presence in the sample.

Respondents aged 40 to 54 attended events that fall under the domain of traditional elite culture more frequently than others, but they also relatively frequently went to restaurants with live music and folk music concerts. The respondents aged 55 to 64 mostly participate in cultural activities to a very small extent, except for a certain number of them who go to the theatre. For the respondents over the age of 65, however, participation in cultural activities has almost stopped (tables A8a and A8b).

What was particularly interesting to us was whether there were any differences in cultural habits between citizens living in different parts of the country, bearing in mind the differences in the cultural provision. To our surprise, the differences proved not to be extensive and also emerged where they were not expected.

In all the regions, participation in cultural activities mostly ranged approximately around the ratio of their presence in the sample. The highest levels of cultural participation were found in Šumadija and West Serbia (for example, going to the library, movies, theatre, pop and rock music concerts, and classical and folk music concerts). The region of Belgrade is the only one to stand out with a slightly higher percentage of the most active respondents, those who attend cultural events four times and more (for example, going to the library, movies, galleries, and museums), but even there the number of respondents is low. In Vojvodina and in South and East Serbia, above-average frequencies of attendance were mostly noted for respondents whose ratio of presence in the sample was low. For example, in Vojvodina, this refers to cultural practices such as going to the library, movies, and classical and folk music concerts, while in South and East Serbia, for attending galleries, the theatre, pop and rock music concerts, and classical music concerts (see tables A9a and A9b).

By combining data on the level of the respondents' cultural needs and habits, we constructed different types of audiences in Serbia. We determined that the active audience consists of respondents with a high level of cultural needs and a high or moderate level of cultural habits or those with a moderate level of needs but a high level of cultural habits. The respondents with a low level of cultural needs and cultural habits defined the non-audience. Those who exhibited signs of the remaining combinations of cultural needs and habits we defined as the potential audience. The distribution of these types of audiences can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7 Types of Audiences

Type of audience	Number	Valid %
Active audience	291	28.4
Potential audience	318	31.0
Non-audience	417	40.6
Total	1026	100.0

Source of data: survey 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia' (2022)

Even for the types of audiences, level of education was proven to be a key determinant. The respondents with an incomplete elementary school education, elementary education, and a three-year high school education belong to the non-audience at an above-average rate. Those with a completed high school education or a four-year vocational education at an above-average rate are members of the potential public, while those with a community college or university education or even higher levels of education mostly belong to the active public (see Table A9).

Citizens from households with a monthly income exceeding 48,000 dinars (400 €) per household member make up the majority of the active public, while those from the lowest income group mostly belong to the non-audience (see Table A12). In a generational sense, the core of the active public is made up of citizens aged 18 to 54. The potential audience is mostly evenly distributed among all generations, while respondents over the age of 65 represent the majority of the non-audience (Table A13). At an above-average rate, there are slightly more men among the non-audience members and women among the potential audience (Table A14).

Bearing in mind the focus of the study, it was again of particular importance for us to see the distribution of the types of audiences based on region. However, no significant differences emerged. In all the regions, most of the respondents belong to the non-public (44.5% in Vojvodina, 41.6% in South and East Serbia, 41.7% in Belgrade, and 35.5% in Šumadija and West Serbia).

Table 8 Types of audiences and their distribution based on region in Serbia

		Active audience	Potential audience	Non-audience	Total
Belgrade region	n	56	84	100	240
	% region	23.3%	35.0%	41.7%	100.0%
	% audience	19.2%	26.4%	24.0%	23.4%
Vojvodina region	n	73	74	118	265
	% region	27.5%	27.9%	44.5%	100.0%
	% audience	25.1%	23.3%	28.3%	25.8%
Šumadija and West Serbia	n	89	98	103	290
	% region	30.7%	33.8%	35.5%	100.0%
	% audience	30.6%	30.8%	24.7%	28.3%
South and East Serbia	n	73	62	96	231
	% region	31.6%	26.8%	41.6%	100.0%
	% audience	25.1%	19.5%	23.0%	22.5%
Total	n	291	318	417	1026
	% region	28.4%	31.0%	40.6%	100.0%
	% audience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source of data: survey 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia' (2022)

Despite the best cultural offer, members of the active public were least prevalent in Belgrade (19.2%). Most of them are to be found in Šumadija and West Serbia (30.6%), while their percentages are the same in Vojvodina and South and East Serbia (25.1%). The potential audience mostly follows the ratio of their presence in the sample, and most of them were again to be found in Šumadija and West Serbia (30.8%), and least of all in South and East Serbia (19.5%)

In the final segment of this report, we analyzed the relationship between class membership[8] on the one hand and belonging to various types of audiences that we identified on the other.

As can be seen in Table 9, the majority of the active audience is made up of members of the middle class (73.5%), while the majority of the non-audience are members of the working class (62.5%). The members of all class fractions, except the agricultural fraction of the working class, take part in the potential audience to an extent similar to that of the ratio of their presence in the sample. All this confirms the existence of class division of cultural practices among the citizens of Serbia.

Table 9 Types of audiences and class fractions

Class fraction/ Type of audience	Upper middle class	Lower middle class	Working class – precarious fraction	Working class – agricultural fraction	Total
Active audience	95 (32.6%) 47.0%	119 (40.9%) 33.0%	56 (19.2%) 23.5%	21 (7.2%) 9.3%	291 (100%) 28.4%
Potential audience	71 (22.3%) 35.1%	122 (38.4%) 33.8%	68 (21.4%) 28.6%	57 (17.9%) 25.3%	318 (100%) 31.0%
Non-audience	36 (8.6) 17.8%	120 (28.8%) 33.2%	114 (27.2%) 47.9%	147 (35.3%) 65.3%	417 (100%) 40.6%
Total	202 (19.7%) 100%	361 (35.2%) 100%	238 (23.2%) 100%	225 (21.9%) 100%	1026 (100%) 100%

Source of data: survey 'Experiences of Centralization of Culture in Serbia' (2022)

Overall, our findings suggest that a lack of cultural engagement is not primarily due to a lack of cultural offerings but rather due to the audience's traits. It appears that, due to a complex array of factors, a significant portion of the audience has become disengaged from cultural events in the public sphere, particularly those associated with highbrow culture. However, it should be noted that participation in popular and everyday cultural activities is also very low. This opens a question about the role of state programs aiming at cultural decentralization.

5. PROGRAMS OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE FOCUSED ON THE DECENTRALIZATION OF CULTURE

Since 2010, the Ministry of Culture has organized three programs aimed at contributing to the decentralization of culture in Serbia: 'Serbia in Serbia,' 'Cities in Focus,' and 'The Cultural Capital of Serbia.'

The 'Serbia in Serbia' program, realized during 2009 and 2010, was a kind of reaction to the report of the Commission for Decentralization of Culture in Serbia published in 2008. In that report, in addition to a series of suggestions for structural changes to the

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[8] The identification of classes and class fractions is based on a model outlined in texts by Cvetičanin et al. (2021). Using indicators of economic, political, social, and cultural capital, we applied a Multiple Correspondence Analysis to construct the social space in Serbia and identify four class fractions: the upper middle class, the lower middle class, the working class – temporary fraction and the working class – agricultural fraction (see Figure A1 in the Appendix).

cultural policy of Serbia, one of the less important measures[9] was that a legal obligation should be instituted on national cultural institutions to present their programs and content to all the citizens of Serbia, that is, all those who finance them with their taxes. This would require national theatres, ballet companies, operas, and philharmonics to go on obligatory tours nationwide. This would contribute not only to the satisfaction of the existing cultural needs of the citizens of Serbia but also to their enrichment, as well as the development of new cultural habits.

The 'Serbia in Serbia' program, funded by the Ministry of Culture, allowed national cultural institutions to visit smaller cities in Serbia based on requests from local cultural institutions. The program, consisting of a sequence of one-time activities, was short-lived and had limited impact. Despite this, some of the people we interviewed had very positive opinions about the quality of the programs that were circulated and the positive impact they had on the cultural life in their local communities.

Unlike the 'Serbia in Serbia' program, which aimed to enhance the cultural offer by organizing visits from national cultural institutions, 'Cities in Focus' has focused on improving the cultural infrastructure, including objects and equipment, in smaller towns in Serbia. The program was launched in 2016 and is still ongoing. One notable aspect of this program is that applications are only accepted from units of the local self-government, such as cities and municipalities. The general goals of this program were defined as improvements in the field of culture and art in local communities, enriching cultural life, encouraging creativity and cultural diversity and the recognizable specificities of the cultural identity, and sustainable development of the local community.

As part of the 'Cities in Focus' program, to date, a total of 169 local government programs have been financed in the Republic of Serbia in seven open calls. In sum, 1,657,130,823 dinars or approximately 14,163,000 EUR were allocated to the improvement of working conditions of theatres, museums, galleries, libraries, as well as the state of cultural monuments, with a significant increase in the number of supported projects and the extent of funding from 2021 to 2023.

Table 10 – Projects financed within the 'Cities in Focus' program

Year	No. of projects	Amount in RSD	Amount in EUR
2016	6	151.763.442 RSD	1.297.000 €
2017	10	140.200.000 RSD	1.198.000 €
2018	22	150.000.000 RSD	1.282.000 €
2019	11	133.000.000 RSD	1.137.000 €
2020	22	83.400.000 RSD	713.000 €
2021	41	339.200.000 RSD	2.899.000 €
2022	35	345.517.381 RSD	2.953.000 €
2023	33	314,050,000 RSD	2.684.000 €
Total 2016 - 2023	169	1.657.130.823 RSD	14.163.000 €

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia (https://kultura.gov.rs/konkursi/sr/30/2)

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[9] The model on which national institutions in Scotland and Sweden function inspired the proposal – these institutions are national in the sense that they are constantly touring across the country, thereby rendering their program accessible to all the citizens in these two states.

'The Cultural Capital of Serbia' program was initiated in 2021, but its realization only began in 2023, with the selection of the City of Čačak as the first cultural capital of Serbia. This program is inspired by the European Capital of Culture initiative and aims to provide comprehensive yearly support to one local government in Serbia. The goal is to improve the key factors of cultural development, address structural issues in the cultural field, and enhance the quality of cultural life in the selected city. The program also aims to kick-start cultural, artistic, and tourist development in the region, revitalize existing cultural institutions, and promote new local cultural development strategies. A crucial aspect of the program is to ensure citizen and professional involvement in the development and implementation of cultural policies at the local government level.

As part of this program, over several years of preparation and realization, the selected 'cultural capital of Serbia' will place culture at the center of the strategic development of the city, not just in a cultural but also in an economic and social aspect. The prediction is that after the realization of the program, the legacy of the completed process will be clearly visible and that the long-term plan of development of the local community in the field of culture will continue. This would be enabled by adopting a Strategy of Cultural Development, which is one of the preconditions for obtaining the title. The idea was that the city that became the capital would also become the center of Serbia's artistic creation that same year, thereby gaining the opportunity to present everything that renders the local community authentic and appealing.

In the case of Čačak, the total value of the project was 500 million dinars (4,273,000 €). The contribution of the Ministry of Culture was 298.5 million dinars (2,551,000 €), and of the City of Čačak 201.5 million dinars (1,722,000 €). For the project 'The Cultural Capital of Serbia' in Užice in 2024, the Ministry of Culture allocated 294 million dinars (2,513,000 €), and the City of Užice 196 million dinars (1,675,000 €).

Viewed as a whole, none of these programs attempted to deal with the essential problems of the centralization of culture in Serbia or to apply any of the strategies of decentralization that were presented by Kawashima (2004). However, it would be a considerable mistake to undermine their significance completely.

The contribution of the 'Cities in Focus' program, which has been underway since 2016, to the improvement of the cultural infrastructure in smaller settlements in Serbia is significant and visible. The program 'The Cultural Capital of Serbia' has been completed in Čačak, and a report is expected in the first half of 2024, so it is not yet possible to assess the program's effects. It is possible that the city may face negative consequences similar to those experienced by the European Capital of Culture. Specifically, once the additional funding and media attention end, the city's cultural scene may revert to its previous unremarkable state. However, for medium-sized cities in Serbia, this is an incentive to begin viewing culture as a developmental resource and not just a luxury or source of pressure on humble city budgets.

Finally, it would be a good idea to continue the practice of visits from national cultural institutions to smaller settlements financed by the Ministry of Culture – which was the basis of the 'Serbia in Serbia' program. National cultural institutions are obliged to present their programs, first and foremost, due to the fact that their work is funded with the taxes paid by all the citizens of Serbia. Since they have different priorities, the activities of all three programs could jointly contribute to mitigating the sense of isolation of the cultural life in small or medium-sized towns and can represent an introduction to more concrete activities directed toward decentralizing culture in Serbia.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our study indicated the structural conditioning of the centralization of culture in Serbia. Although key structural causes of the centralization of culture in Serbia are to be found in the political or economic sphere, the territorial distribution of cultural institutions and organizations and the low level of resources available to local self-governments contribute to the centralization of culture. Another factor that contributes to the issue is the way the Ministry of Culture and the Provincial Secretariat for Culture distribute their budgets, as well as the allocation of funds through open calls organized by these state authorities. It has been observed that more than half of the funds are directed towards Belgrade and Novi Sad.

On the other hand, our research into cultural participation in Serbia in 2022 indicated that, irrespective of the significant differences in cultural provision, regional differences in cultural participation are small. In other words, the cultural needs, habits, and tastes of Serbian citizens are not predominantly influenced by their geographical location in the country. This led us to the provocative thesis that the level of cultural participation in Serbia depends more on the characteristics of the audience and less so on the characteristics of the cultural offer.

However, the finding that the scarce cultural offer in regions of Serbia outside of Belgrade and Novi Sad is not the factor primarily shaping cultural participation only at first sight removes responsibility from the creators of cultural policy. It is important to note that cultural needs, habits, and tastes are learned and not innate. The lack of diverse cultural needs, low level of cultural habits, and homogeneity of taste among the people of Serbia can be attributed to insufficient effort or misguided policies by the creators of cultural, educational, and, in particular, media content. Therefore, their task for the future is both to improve the cultural offer and to create an audience for it.

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INTERNET SOURCES

Appendix 'Cultural Provision and Cultural Participation in the Centralized Cultural System in Serbia' https://figshare.com/s/ecdc630f7acb6dc9ac88

An electronic map of the cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia https://a3.geosrbija.rs/share/111135adf09a (accessed in the period 2022 – 2024)

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KULTURNA PONUDA I KULTURNA PARTICIPACIJA U CENTRALIZOVANOM KULTURNOM SISTEMU SRBIJE

U ovom tekstu analirali smo kulturnu ponudu i kulturnu participaciju u Srbiji, kao i mere koje preduzima Ministarstvo kulture usmerene na decentralizaciju kulture. Istraživanje kulturne ponude pokazalo je ogromne razlike u pogledu broja kulturnih institucija, organizacija i asocijacija u Beogradu, Novom Sadu i ostatku zemlje, kao i u pogledu finansijskih sredstava koja one dobijaju za redovne programe iz budžeta i kao donacije na konkursima. Kao ključan doprinos centralizaciji kulture u zemlji, identifikovano je postojanje 24 od 27 republičkih ustanova kulture u Beogradu, odnosno 14 od 17 vojvođanskih pokrajinskih institucija u Novom Sadu. Njihovi programi su uglavnom dostupni samo stanovnicima ovih gradova, iako se njihov rad finansira ogromnim sredstvima iz budžeta koje obezbeđuju iz poreza svi građani Srbije, odnosno Vojvodine. S druge strane, analize kulturne participacije pokazale su dominantno anti-elitistički karakter kulturnih potreba, veoma nizak nivo kulturnih navika i male regionalne razlike u kulturnim praksama. Ovaj prividno paradoksalni nalaz, da izrazita nejednakosti u kulturnoj ponudi nema veći uticaj na kulturnu participaciju – zato što se ona u svim delovima zemlje nalazi na veoma niskom nivou – predstavlja okvir za buduće strategije decentralizacije kulture u Srbiji.

Ključne reči: *kulturna ponuda, kulturna participacija, decentralizacija u kulturi, Srbija.*

Original scientific paper

MIGRANTS IN THE MEDIA –
ANALYSIS OF READERS' COMMENTS[1]

UDC 316.644:314.151.3:[070.11:004.738.5 (497.11)

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Abstract. *Encountering migration has deeply influenced how migrants are perceived, experienced, and the emotions they evoke. The purpose of this study is to investigate readers' attitudes and beliefs regarding migrants through an analysis of their comments to media texts about the migration issue on the Politika and Kurir websites. The choice of the analysis period, which spans two years, 2015 and 2017, was made with the aim of spotting any shifts in media users' beliefs and attitudes. Readers' comments were analyzed based on the following categories: topic, identification of migrants, attitude towards migrants, way of referring to migrants, aggregation, and collectivization. The research results indicate that readers perceive migrants as a threat (62.72% of the 2,850 comments), although a negative attitude towards them was identified in 32.28% of the content. The public agenda now primarily focuses on Serbia's reception and care for migrants and refugees as a reaction to the migration issue. The biggest threat is economic in nature, and the reaction to the impending danger was to instill a significant deal of racism, xenophobia, and rejection. Through the references they cite to define and characterize migrants, readers convey their antagonism toward them. This vast group's members are seen and felt as the "Others" (foreigners, newcomers, arrivals). They come from a different world and culture, and this perception is supported by readers' doubts about the reasons behind migration, which demonstrates their distrust and fear of newcomers.*

Key words: *migrations, migrants, the Others, reader comments.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 will be remembered as a year of profound political, social, cultural, and moral crises. The events that can be seen as crucial to escalating the migrant crisis are a topic of debate among theorists. While the so-called "Arab Spring" (2011), when people started to emigrate in large numbers from the Middle East, North and Central Africa, and Central and South Asia to Europe mostly to developed Western countries, is linked, on the one hand, to the intensification of the migrant crisis, other authors contend that the crisis peaked somewhat later. They believe that the term "European refugee crisis" began to be used in the media after the drowning of around 400 people off the Libyan coast in August 2015 (Volkan 2017, 9).[2]

Even though a variety of media outlets have the capacity to educate and expand knowledge about migrants, deeply ingrained stereotypes are hard to change and discard. Entrenched cultural patterns−which are mostly transmitted through media representations−as well as opposition to the idea of reevaluating one's own and other people's perceptions all play a part in this. The "Others" is a significant subject in the social sciences, primarily related to the formation of both individual and group identities. The contemplation about the "Other" (Đorđević 2009; Bauman 2018; Todorov 2010) causes one to reevaluate the boundaries of one's identity, while facing the differences−particularly cultural ones−can alter one's sense of self and community. The "Others" are from the outside of our culture, foreign, and belong somewhere else. There is internal conflict in our relationship with them. Despite the potential for expanding the current boundaries of experience, social enrichment with new cultural patterns, and new identities, they arouse dread, anxiety, and frequently even hostility (Đorđević 2009; Zimmel 2017). Contrary to modern societies, where foreigners are often assimilated, excluded, ghettoized, or expelled beyond borders (Bauman 2017), postmodern societies should establish a suitable framework for coexisting with foreigners, since they are coming and staying.

The discursive structure of the "Others" is often based on stereotypes and results in prejudice. An important point highlighted by Allport (1958) is the possibility that victims of prejudice and discrimination develop similar attitudes and behave similarly towards other minority groups. Unequal power is at the core of stereotypes. The "Others" are typically socially powerless and subordinate in public discourse. They cannot represent themselves and their group, but rather meanings about them are produced in higher centers of social power (Hall 1997, 258–259). The media has made a name for itself as a key source of information about the migrant crisis. They have significantly shaped the opinions, experiences, and behaviors of people in the countries receiving migrants or through which these groups of people pass. Technological advancements and the development of digital media have made the new media environment more inclusive than before. Alongside the intensification of intercultural encounters, media users have the opportunity to react to media content about migrants on many platforms. User-generated content falls within the corpus of terms

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[2] According to data provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of migrants and refugees who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 was 3,771. The information was retrieved from the website: https://www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015 (accessed on 12/07/2018).
According to the Annual Report of the UNHCR titled "Global Trends", there were 65.3 million displaced people worldwide by the end of 2015. The largest number of refugees came from Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia, while children comprised about 51% of refugees worldwide. The information was obtained from the website: http://www.unhcr.rs/dokumenti/saopstenja-za-medije/rekordan-broj   prisilno-raseljenih-osoba-u-svetu.html (accessed on23/01/2019)

appearing in the literature, referring to the active participation of individuals or groups in the "process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information" (Bowman, Willis 2003, cited in Hermida 2011, 15). On news media websites, readers' comments are a well-known and widely used way to engage regular people in discussions about specific news(Jenkins et al., 2009). While there are many purposes for which media professionals and media users communicate, comments are a reaction to the carefully thought-out informational agenda that professional communicators have set forth. This directs collective consciousness toward a chosen set of events that have made it past the media's threshold for visibility and that, in accordance with social norms and a desired worldview, deserve to be part of the media agenda and public discourse.

The problem with reader comments is related to their quality, as quantity does not guarantee their value (Hermida 2011). Weber has established that quality communication depends on the number of active readers, as well as the degree of interaction among them (Weber 2014, 942). Additionally, as comments may contain components of socially undesirable language, hate speech, and various forms of discrimination, the quality of communication between commentators and journalists also depends on the content of the comments. Below the radar of journalists-moderators and programs that automatically react to certain words, certain stereotypes and hate speech pass in a disguised form, in the form of coded language or in the form of seemingly rational beliefs rooted in racial stereotypes, close and common to a particular community. One of the problems highlighted by Hughes and Daniels, when analyzing racist rhetoric in user comments, relates to the strategy of certain media outlets, which by banning racist language lead to the so-called whitening of users' comments. This is related to the possibility of reinforcing racial identity and the comments of allegedly victimized white individuals, who are given the opportunity to speak up, burdened by the demands of politically correct communication (Hughey & Daniels 2013, 342). Although the digitized public space should promote democratic principles, practice shows that marginalized groups are further stigmatized and disintegrated in online communication, while the possibility of hate speech appearing in reader comments simultaneously increases (Erjavec 2014, 453). Exploring what motivates people to read comments containing hate speech, Erjavec concluded that people primarily need guidance and advice from trusted readers-commentators. While foreign media sites include hate speech in more subtle symbolic forms, the domestic and regional media platforms still show less concealed hate speech towards minority groups (Gruhonjić 2012), as well as towards neighbors in the region (Drašković 2013).

The media discourse on the migrant crisis and migrants in Europe has been shaped by homogenizing, stereotypical, and dehumanizing reporting patterns (Berry et al. 2015). Similar to leading European media, the media in Serbia have shown a dichotomous tendency, with serious press fostering a humane reporting model, while tabloid press based its discourse on migrants on sensationalistic patterns, creating xenophobia and Islamophobia (Jevtović and Bajić 2016; Jevtović and Bajić 2017; Jevtović and Bajić 2018a). Over time, the analysis of media reporting on migrants has shifted from a humanitarian to a security aspect (Jevtović and Bajić 2018b). In addition to textual analysis of media content, the visual representation of migrants was also in line with the dominant discourse on migrants, so that female migrants were represented as a threat to personal safety and health, and as an administrative burden (Krstić 2022, 218).

Research on reader comments in Serbia is still in its infancy, although the number of studies on reader comments about migrants is limited in other countries as well. The attitudes of Serbian citizens towards migrants have mostly been explored through surveys and questionnaires. In a study conducted by Vuletić and colleagues, it was found that 75% of Serbian citizens maintain a humane attitude towards migrants and refugees, but the majority of respondents express ambivalent feelings and conflicting attitudes towards these groups of people (Vuletić et al. 2016). Research conducted in other countries has shown that readers' attitudes towards migrants are often driven by the so-called "politics of fear", resulting in the dominance of anti-immigrant attitudes and sentiments in readers' comments, as well as a clear division between "Us" and "Them" categories (Popkova 2014). A number of studies have examined remarks made regarding migrants on social media, given that these channels are becoming more and more important for communication. For example, Ekman found that anti-immigrant groups formed in the digital space of social media represent an affective public. This public contributes to the normalization of racist attitudes and expressions (Ekman 2019).

Hatred in the online setting is usually directed towards people outside the group. As Bauman (2018) emphasized, hatred is expressed by individuals who are socially marginalized, discriminated against, and subjugated. They are emotionally crippled and socially demeaned, and such feelings are released by directing aggression towards groups in a worse social position. Migrants and refugees can be convenient "targets". They lack social power, depend on others, and cannot provide adequate resistance.

2. METHODOLOGY

The subject of the research is the perception and attitudes of readers towards the migrant crisis and migrants. Textual analysis of comments includes several categories[3]: the topic, the tone used when commenting on the texts (positive, negative, neutral), the prevalent framework for perceiving migrants (the framework of threat, victims, active social agency), the way migrants are referenced, and the tendency towards collectivization[4] and aggregation.[5]

Users' comments from the Politika and Kurir daily newspapers' websites, which were published between 2015 and 2017, make up the research sample. The primary unit of analysis is the text written by readers/commenters. Within these two years, each Monday was selected for analysis. This research corpus was chosen for two reasons. The first reason lies in the intensification of migration during 2015, which was reflected in the frequency of texts published in the media, leading to an increase in the number of readers' comments. The second reason is to observe the methods and changes in reporting styles in 2017 when many questions arose about the issues of caring for migrants and refugees across Europe. It is assumed that the media agenda significantly influences the changes in the public agenda.

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[3] Some of the categories in this codebook were derived from previous media and linguistic research (Wodak & Meyer 2018; Milioni et al. 2015).
[4] Collectivization represents a form of assimilation, or the tendency to refer to people as members of a group, without specifying personal details. Linguistically, collectivization is realized through the use of deictic words such as "we", "they", "us", and "them", as well as the use of words like "family", "group", "team", "class", "community", "majority", and similar terms (Reisigl & Wodak 2005, 48).
[5] Aggregation involves presenting groups discussed in the text through numbers and statistical indicators, often based on research results, surveys, and similar public opinion research techniques. Here, aggregation serves the purpose of legitimizing and regulating certain practices and consensus thinking (Van Leeuwen 2003, 49).

3. RESULTS

The total number of comments in the sample is 2,850, 1,982 of which were published in Kurir (1,590 comments in 2015 and 392 comments in 2017). The majority of texts on the topic of the migrant crisis and migrants and refugees in Politika were accompanied by user comments (75.45%). In Kurir, more than half of the texts prompted comments (53.78%). In Politika, 868 comments were published for both years (672 in 2015 and 196 in 2017). In Kurir, the highest number of comments was recorded in August 2015 (34.21% of the total number of comments for 2015), while in Politika, the highest number of comments was published in September (44.94%). These data indicate that users' interest in the topic of the migrant crisis corresponded proportionally to the frequency of media reporting on the topic. The topic of the migrant crisis received significant media attention, which intensified during August and September 2015 due to the death of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea.[6]

Important factors influencing content commenting include the relevance of the topic, proximity to the events being reported, cultural closeness, and the subjects shaping the media narrative on the migrant crisis[7].

Commentators mostly discuss the topic that is closest to them and that can most significantly influence their social environment. This is Serbia's response to the migrant crisis, acceptance, and accommodation of migrants. Readers of both Politika and Kurir equally engaged with this topic, and in the overall sample, it constitutes 36.59%.[8]

The second topic that appears in the comments relates to the European Union (12.41% of the total number of topics in all texts), and it is predominantly discussed from the perspective of the responsibility that member states have towards the large number of migrants and refugees. A significant percentage of reader comments open up a second topic (25.41%), while discussions about the crisis in the region and relations with neighboring countries are less common within the commenting section (9.91% of the total number of topics).

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[6]The attention of people around the world was focused on the news of the drowning of a Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, on September 2, 2015. His body was washed ashore on a beach in the Turkish Aegean region, and this event became a symbol of the suffering, trauma, and hardship experienced by migrants and refugees.

[7]The text with the subtitle "Chaos at the Bus Station" and the headline "(KURIR TV) THIS IS NOT A JOB FOR THE POLICE: Find a Place for Migrants Camping in the Center of Belgrade" was published on the Kurir website on July 20, 2015. The text, with its sensationalist headline comparing migrants to campers, prompted a large number of comments (a total of 164 comments).

The text that received the highest number of comments in Politika has the headline "EU Returning Refugees to Serbia – Possible Countermeasures by Belgrade" (September 21, 2015). In this text, representatives of the European Commission and domestic politicians appear as subjects, and the rhetoric used qualifies migrants and refugees as objects. They are assigned the role of victims, lacking control over what is happening, as decisions about their movement and fate belong to foreign institutions and politicians.

[8]This is in line with Weber's (2014) definition of factors that determine the interaction and participation of commentators. Factors of physical proximity and cultural closeness imply that events reported by the media influence the group to which readers belong and can trigger feelings of group belonging and action, both on a symbolic and physical level.

Table 1 Topics

Topics – comments	2015		2017		Total		Total %
	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	
Serbia's response to the migrant crisis, acceptance, and accommodation of migrants	39.76%	30.44%	32.90%	55.08%	38.15%	35.90%	36.59%
EU –management plans for the migrant crisis, success or failure in crisis management, acceptance, and accommodation of refugees	19.15%	7.22%	23.38%	15.24%	20.14%	9.00%	12.41%
Starting another topic	15.29%	33.80%	12.99%	17.28%	14.75%	30.14%	25.42%
Crisis in the region, regional cooperation	11.70%	10.98%	13.85%	1.63%	12.21%	8.91%	9.92%
Crisis on the international level and the reaction of non-EU countries	10.11%	1.62%	11.26%	3.46%	10.38%	2.02%	4.59%
Actions to rescue migrants, suffering of migrants and refugees	1.20%	0.12%	1.73%	0.00%	1.32%	0.09%	0.47%
Criminal actions of migrants, conflicts, fights, illegal border crossings	1.06%	7.74%	1.73%	4.67%	1.22%	7.06%	5.27%
Information about the accessibility of roads and border crossings, as well as service information like the scarcity of water and food	0.93%	0.29%	0.00%	0.20%	0.71%	0.27%	0.41%
Smuggling and trafficking of migrants and refugees	0.40%	0.75%	0.43%	0.20%	0.41%	0.63%	0.56%
Personal stories of migrants	0.27%	4.91%	1.30%	0.00%	0.51%	3.82%	2.81%
Attacks on migrants and refugees	0.13%	1.16%	0.43%	2.24%	0.20%	1.39%	1.03%
Humanitarian international organizations, UNHCR, Red Cross, civil initiatives, NGOs	0.00%	0.98%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.76%	0.53%
Total	752	1.731	231	492	983	2.223	3.206

Table 2 Identifying migrants in user comments on Politika and Kurir websites

Identifying migrants in user comments	2015		2017		Total		Total %
	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	
Threat	50.55%	69.06%	62.69%	56.65%	53.33%	67.06%	62.72%
Victims	46.78%	28.58%	32.84%	40.89%	43.59%	30.56%	34.69%
Threat/victims	1.77%	1.32%	2.24%	2.46%	1.88%	1.50%	1.62%
Active social agencies	0.89%	1.04%	1.49%	0.00%	1.03%	0.87%	0.92%
Victims/active social agencies	0.00%	0.00%	0.75%	0.00%	0.17%	0.00%	0.05%
Total	451	1.060	134	203	585	1.263	1.848

Analysis of reader comments from Politika and Kurir shows that migrants and refugees are predominantly interpreted as a threat. The percentage of such elements present in the overall sample of Politika comments is 53.33%[9], while in Kurir, 67.06% of the elements create the perception that migrants are a threat.[10]

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[9] The text titled "Hungary Allows Electricity Through Fence on Border with Serbia" (July 5, 2017) has 31 comments, including those that equate migrants with a threat and justify and support the decision of the

In the overall sample of texts and comments on both news websites, published during 2015 and 2017, the framework of threat predominates with 62.72% of the texts, while migrants and refugees are perceived as victims in 34.69% of the comments.

Table 3 The stance of commentators – readers towards migrants

The stance of commentators	2015		2017		Total		Total %
	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	
Neutral	63.54%	52.45%	50.00%	65.56%	60.48%	55.05%	56.70%
Negative	25.60%	40.25%	42.35%	22.19%	29.38%	36.68%	34.46%
Positive	10.71%	7.11%	7.14%	11.99%	9.91%	8.07%	8.63%
Positive/Neutral	0.15%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.12%	0.05%	0.07%
Negative/Neutral	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.26%	0.00%	0.05%	0.04%
Positive/Negative	0.00%	0.13%	0.51%	0.00%	0.12%	0.10%	0.11%
Total:	672	1590	196	392	868	1982	2.850

Despite the framework of a threat as the dominant way migrants are perceived, there is a neutral stance toward this group, as indicated by 53.12% of readers' comments in the overall sample for both years, while a negative stance was expressed by commentators in 32.28% of user-generated texts. On the other hand, a positive stance is present in only 8.09% of comments.

Readers of Politika and Kurir most commonly perceive migrants as Others (foreigners, newcomers, arrivals) (18.02% of the total number of all references in the overall sample of comment texts). Kurir readers more frequently use this description (23.4%), while in Politika, migrants are depicted in this way in 11.11% of references in the comment texts. Commentators often debate about the motives of migration and displacement (16.88%), making it the second dominant category in referencing migrants and refugees. Readers of Politika more frequently refer to this category when commenting on articles about migrants compared to readers of Kurir (20.16% versus 14.32% of the total references). In third place, migrants and refugees are characterized as aggressive, violent people with suspicious migration motives (14.71% of references), while in fourth place, they are described as people in poor psychophysical condition (tired, hungry, exhausted, at 13.51% of total references).

On the websites of Politika and Kurir, there is a small percentage of comments that employ an aggregative strategy when discussing migrants and refugees (4.46% of comments in the total sample compared to 95.54%). This data may indicate that readers do not have information about the numbers of migrants mentioned in the media because it does not fall within their sphere of interest. A smaller number of comments referring to numbers relate to the immediate social environment and the numbers of migrants coming, passing through, or staying in Serbia.

Hungarian government: "Goran Nešić: European tolerance, if this is what the Swedes do by 'protecting' ISIS fanatics by receiving them and changing their identities to 'reduce their trauma,' as reported by Western media, 'no thanks, Orbán is a man who protects his people from invasion'."

[10] The text titled "Infected Migrants Escape Quarantine: Does Tuberculosis Threaten Serbia?" (August 24, 2015) has 44 comments. Some of them are: "Vožd: How come they don't have the right to keep them?! So migrants can do whatever they want, without documents, with knives, infected, and we still have to give them food and medicine. Well, it's best to be a migrant, they have more rights than the royal family in England"; "Jova85: Citizens of Serbia, you are still not aware of all the dangers lurking from the tsunami of Arab migrants. If rigorous measures are not taken in the near future, both compulsory legal and protective health consequences will be immeasurable in the future".

Table 4 The way migrants are referred to in reader comments

References and predicates	2015		2017		Total		Total %
	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	Politika %	Kurir %	
Motives of migration and displacement (war, destruction, poverty, destitution)	21.36%	14.67%	15.11%	11.71%	20.16%	14.32%	16.88%
People in a poor psychophysical condition (tired, hungry, stressed, victims)	19.32%	10.67%	8.63%	9.91%	17.28%	10.58%	13.51%
Aggressive, undesirable, violent, with suspicious intentions	14.41%	14.67%	12.95%	18.92%	14.13%	15.17%	14.71%
People, citizens, residents	11.86%	9.94%	8.63%	7.21%	11.25%	9.62%	10.33%
Others: foreigners, newcomers, immigrants	9.15%	23.27%	19.42%	24.32%	11.11%	23.40%	18.02%
A burden and strain on the local population	4.41%	2.42%	5.76%	4.50%	4.66%	2.67%	3.54%
Women, children, families	2.88%	2.06%	4.32%	4.50%	3.16%	2.35%	2.70%
People from Africa and Asia	2.37%	0.36%	0.72%	0.00%	2.06%	0.32%	1.08%
Terrorists, extremists	2.03%	4.85%	7.91%	2.70%	3.16%	4.59%	3.96%
Represented as people with positive traits (good-natured, cheerful, welcome...)	2.03%	5.21%	6.47%	3.60%	2.88%	5.02%	4.08%
Quantification (thousands, hundreds)	1.69%	1.58%	0.00%	1.80%	1.37%	1.60%	1.50%
Illegal immigrants	1.19%	0.97%	0.00%	3.60%	0.96%	1.28%	1.14%
Syrians	1.19%	2.06%	0.72%	0.90%	1.10%	1.92%	1.56%
Males	1.19%	1.09%	0.00%	0.90%	0.96%	1.07%	1.02%
Muslims	1.02%	2.06%	0.72%	0.00%	0.96%	1.82%	1.44%
People from the Middle East	0.85%	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	0.69%	0.11%	0.36%
Occupational affiliation	0.85%	0.24%	0.72%	0.90%	0.82%	0.32%	0.54%
Young	0.68%	1.33%	2.16%	0.00%	0.96%	1.18%	1.08%
Economic migrants, immigrants, and refugees	0.51%	0.36%	2.88%	1.80%	0.96%	0.53%	0.72%
Group affiliation	0.34%	0.12%	0.00%	0.90%	0.27%	0.21%	0.24%
Iranians	0.34%	0.36%	1.44%	0.00%	0.55%	0.32%	0.42%
Afghans	0.17%	0.24%	0.72%	0.00%	0.27%	0.21%	0.24%
The elderly	0.17%	0.97%	0.00%	1.80%	0.14%	1.07%	0.66%
Illegal migrants	0.00%	0.24%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	0.12%
Iraqis	0.00%	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.11%	0.06%
Illegal refugees	0.00%	0.00%	0.72%	0.00%	0.14%	0.00%	0.06%
Total	590	825	139	111	729	936	1665

The strategy of portraying migrants and refugees as members of a group using the strategy of collectivization is present in 56.49% of the comments, while in 41.19% of the texts, this representative form is not observed. Discussions about migrants and refugees in a personalized style account for only 2.32% of the comments. They are viewed and perceived as a group rather than individuals because a common origin is assumed.

4. DISCUSSION

Considering that media representations are a powerful means of shaping public opinion about migrants, this study focuses on analyzing readers' comments published on the websites of two daily newspapers in Serbia, Politika and Kurir. In order to identify the attitudes and perceptions in readers' comments on articles about migrants, the comments were analyzed with several categories in mind: the topic, tone of the comments (positive, negative, neutral), dominant framing of migrants (threat framework, victims framework, active social agency framework), way of referring to migrants, as well as the tendency towards collectivization and aggregation. The comments published during 2015 and 2017 on the websites of Politika and Kurir were analyzed.

The number of comments followed the trend of media reporting on the migrant crisis, and increased reader engagement in the process of commenting and expressing opinions and feelings can be understood as a natural consequence of limited access to information and interaction with migrants. Uncertainty about the future, increased fear through the use of sensationalist texts, creates collective anxiety among the domestic public, which, in such circumstances, becomes susceptible to any information. Despite the questionable quality, available information serves to reduce discomfort and uncertainty, as well as to reduce symptoms of anxiety.

Media data analysis in Europe indicate that there is accumulated dissatisfaction among Europeans towards migrants. They, in Zygmunt Bauman's opinion, usually belong to lower social strata, to the layers of the discriminated, dispossessed, impoverished, and socially marginalized (Bauman, 2016). Migrants and refugees are perceived as objects of aggression, while at the same time migrants arouse fear. The lack of interaction with migrating people further complicates overcoming prejudices and negative beliefs. Where there is no willingness to exchange knowledge and imagination, the will to dominate destroys dialogue. Such circumstances lead to various forms of violence and aggression, such as verbal aggression, subjugation of others, manipulation, and physical violence (Jovanović 2015).

The topic that generated the most reader comments was Serbia's response to the migrant crisis, particularly the acceptance and care of migrants. Research on the attitudes of local communities about migration conducted in Serbia in 2020 yielded important results. They show that the local populace is not just afraid and feels that their security is in jeopardy, but they are also not happy with the way of life in Serbia. Additionally, there is a belief that migrants and refugees receive more assistance than the local population, which is socially and economically vulnerable (Bjekić et al. 2020, 25). Many of the obstacles hindering dialogue with others do not stem from cultural differences, but rather from economic and social conditions in which the local population lives. Although there are indications in reader comments that migrants are perceived as a cultural and religious threat to the local population, the fear among Serbian citizens can be linked to the economic conditions in Serbia, the poor economic status of the majority of citizens, and the uncertain conditions in the labor market. Social and economic instability caused by changes in the labor market is interpreted by Bauman as one of the causes of the identity crisis, while another possible cause is the growing cultural pluralism (Bauman 2017).

The majority of readers expressed a neutral stance towards migrants. This data can be explained by a sense of responsibility for the crisis situation, attributed by readers of Politika and Kurir to EU member states and countries that did not respond to the problems in conflict-affected areas in a timely manner. The neutral stance may conceal a conflict between

one's own and others' needs, as well as essential passivity and disinterest in actively engaging Serbian citizens in the debate on the migrant crisis.

In line with media representations, readers view migrants as the Others. They do not belong to the group, hence they are on the other side of what is civilized, acceptable, familiar, and normal. Any crossing of borders, which are established and normalized in society, provokes a whole spectrum of negative responses from the local population: fear, anger, resentment, rejection, resistance, and even physical attacks.[11]

Although there is no tendency to discuss migrants in terms of numbers in user comments, readers treat them as a group of people with uniform characteristics and qualities. This leveling of differences among migrants leads to a homogenization of readers' attitudes, denying them individuality and assigning them typical, sensationalist dimensions, especially those based on religion with a negative Islamic connotation. Zimmel laid the groundwork for contemplating the dimensions of the modern stranger. Instead of focusing on the positive aspects of contemporary migrations, the focus is on the negative consequences and the idea of incongruity of those who come into the existing social structure (Zimmel 2018). Therefore, the search for a successful model of social integration remains an important objective for the countries where migrants arrive and stay.

4. CONCLUSION

A significant social phenomenon that has transformed the population structure and triggered a major social, political, and economic crisis worldwide is contemporary migration, driven by conflicts in the Middle East as well as crises in Central Africa and Central and South Asia. The process of creating meaning and understanding migration processes is influenced by the media, which operate in a social environment shaped by complex political, economic, cultural, religious, and other factors.

Managing the fears and concerns of the domestic public falls on the media, which relieve their political partners and allies of the burden of responsibility for neglecting the public interest, but instead, through calculated actions, redirect citizen dissatisfaction toward migrants, marking them as the main culprits for the social crisis. Therefore, commentators see migrants as a threat, and the neutral stance of the domestic public towards them indicates an indifferent attitude of citizens towards people migrating through Serbia. Migrants and refugees are seen as the Others (foreigners, newcomers, outsiders), not belonging there, people with suspicious motives and migration intentions, aggressive, regressive, violent. Such a model of referencing migrants suggests that underlying opinions about them involve various emotions from readers-commentators, such as fear, anxiety, apprehension, anger, rage, and similar emotional reactions. Commentators do not see migrants as numbers, except in isolated cases, while there is a tendency to view them as a group with uniform abilities, knowledge, skills, and interests. The individuality of migrants is denied, thereby implicitly denying them the right to different needs and recognition of authenticity and humanity.

Deeply ingrained in a cultural matrix, the media has taken on the responsibility of presenting others by putting them inside preexisting cultural schemas, speaking in accordance

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[11] In a study on stances toward migrants and refugees conducted by the Open Society Foundation in Serbia in 2020, it was found that migrants from the Middle East and Africa ranked third in terms of negative feelings expressed by citizens toward various ethnic groups (39.3%). Albanians ranked first, while Croats ranked second (Bjekić et al. 2020).

with preexisting thinking and emotion patterns, and preventing the reexamination of the adopted perspective from which others are perceived. In an atmosphere of submission to political and economic forces, the media are becoming increasingly active in constructing social reality in which cultural differences are not respected but identified as a source of civic dissatisfaction that should be directed towards groups with less social power. Although they have been granted the freedom to express their opinions in the comment sections, media users are not exempt from the decades-long influence on their opinions and feelings about other cultures. Adopting skills for critically interpreting media texts and the factors of media content production represents a fundamental path towards creating an informed and democratic society.

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MIGRANTI U MEDIJIMA: ANALIZA KOMENTARA ČITALACA

Suočavanje sa iskustvima migracija proizvelo je preplavljujuć efekat u pogledu načina na koji se migranti percipiraju, doživljavaju, kao i u odnosu na osećanja koja oni pobuđuju. Cilj rada je ispitati kakve su percepcije i stavovi čitalaca o migrantima, na osnovu analize njihovih komentara na medijske tekstove o migrantskoj krizi na sajtovima Politike i Kurira. Period analize obuhvata dve godine, 2015. i 2017. sa namerom da se uoče eventualne promene u stavovima i mišljenjima medijskih korisnika. Čitalački komentari analizirani su na osnovu sledećih kategorija: tema, identifikacija migranata, stav prema migrantima, način referisanja na migrante, agregacija i kolektivizacija. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da čitaoci migrante smatraju pretnjom (62,72% u odnosu na 2.850 komentara), iako je izraženo negativan stav o njima identifikovan u 32,28% sadržaja. Reakcija Srbije na migrantsku krizu, prihvatanje i zbrinjavanje migranata i izbeglica dobila je primarno mesto u agendi javnosti. Najveća pretnja je ekonomskog karaktera, a reakcija na nadolazeću opasnost sastojala se od uspostavljanja visokog stepena odbacivanja, ksenofobije, čak i rasizma. Otpor prema migrantima čitaoci ispoljavaju i referencama kojima ih opisuju i određuju. Pripadnici ove velike grupe opaženi su i doživljeni kao Drugi (stranci, došljaci, pridošlice). Oni pripadaju drugačijem svetu i kulturi, a, u skladu sa ovim tumačenjem, postoji i upitanost među čitaocima o motivima migriranja, što pokazuje njihovo nepoverenje i strah od ljudi koji dolaze.

Ključne reči: *migracije, migranti, Drugi, komentari čitalaca.*

JOURNALISTS ON MEDIA FREEDOM: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF METAJOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE IN ONLINE MEDIA IN SERBIA

UDC 004.738.5(497.11)

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Abstract. *Journalists in Serbia have been in a continuously challenging position in recent decades (Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2022; Kulić, 2020; Milutinović, 2019; Milivojević et al., 2011). The expectations that the change in the country's political system at the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century would bring significant improvements in media freedom have been disappointed. Over the last decade, the media freedom index has been steadily declining, placing Serbia among the countries with a "problematic situation" regarding media freedom (Statista, Press Freedom Index). This study aims to analyze the metajournalistic discourse (Carlson 2016; Vos & Singer 2016; Ferrucci, Nelson and Davis 2020) in texts published in online media and address the research questions: RQ1: How do journalists in Serbia interpret "media freedom" through the discourse published in online media texts? and RQ2: What is the tone of that metadiscourse? The analyzed texts were published in ten online media outlets in 2021 and 2022. The texts were collected using the news-generating website naslovi.net, using the keyword "media freedom." A total of 230 texts were selected in which journalists served as sources of information, either through statements or in authored texts (columns, commentaries). Through further analysis, the texts were categorized into four categories, created based on the dominant discourse prevailing in the text. The majority of the texts fell into the category of "pressures and attacks" (142), followed by "state and media" (63), "ethics and the law" (22), while three texts were related to the "market." The results indicate a predominantly negative discourse, which is in line with the axiom that gaining media freedom in challenging political systems is a daily effort.*

Key words: *media freedom, journalism profession, discourse analysis, textual analysis, metajournalistic discourse.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, journalism is approached as a product of cultural practices, an interpretative and discursive field, conditioned by the context in which it is produced, circulated, and received (van Dijk 2009; Carlson 2016). Journalists, as the main participants in this discursive field, constantly (re)define and legitimize their profession, but not without the influence of non-journalistic actors. Therefore, when analyzing the field of journalism or any of its segments, it is necessary to consider the entirety of the relationships between different participants, intertwining in the given context, shaping journalism as a profession, and determining the boundaries of that definition (Carlson 2016).

The research subject selected is a segment of the journalistic profession that is essentially normative, and is analyzed within the discursive field of journalistic and social practices that shape it. The key concept in this study is "media freedom," which is a normative issue, an ideal to strive for, and an integral part of the national regulatory framework in any non-authoritarian country, as well as a part of the journalistic profession's code of ethics. Journalists themselves, in their endeavor to socially legitimize their profession, often resort to normative ideals that include working in the public interest and upholding professional ethics (Fidalgo 2013), with media freedom being a prerequisite for fulfilling these normative requirements.

However, as this paper will demonstrate, media freedom, as one of the key concepts through which journalism as a profession is legitimized, goes beyond strictly normative boundaries when it enters the field of theoretical consideration of journalism as a news production practice. Through this practice, the concept of media freedom is continuously constructed, challenged, reconstructed, and becomes an object of interpretation. Therefore, it is important to take the practitioners – the journalists – as the starting point in researching this predominantly normative concept. Specifically, the texts they produce about media freedom, through which they construct a sort of professional discourse on such a significant issue.

The analysis of metajournalistic discourse enables "a deeper understanding of how journalism, as an interpretive community, talks to itself" (Ferrucci, Nelson and Davis 2020, 1592). Journalists, through their metadiscursive practices, speak to themselves and about themselves, or rather, about their profession to others. According to Carlson (2016), the theme of metajournalistic discourse can be twofold: *reactive* and *generative*. The reactive theme relates to some incidental or individual case to which journalists assign meaning from the perspective of the profession, while the generative theme pertains to broader questions concerning journalism as a whole. In both cases, it is evident that these topics are mostly challenging for the profession and, therefore, of significant importance for journalism in the given context. Hence, there is a need for journalists themselves to interpret these themes.

In this regard, Carlson states: "Metajournalistic discourse conditions how news is to be understood by providing an interpretive structure that makes intelligible individual news items on a microlevel and the social place of journalism on a macrolevel" (Carlson 2016, 353).

Viewed as a social practice, journalism is inherently variable over time and space and inseparable from the context in which it is practiced. This is evident from numerous comparative studies of media systems, which have moved beyond normative frameworks of understanding journalism as the practice it should be (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm 1956; Christians et al. 2010). These studies have revealed numerous social, political, cultural, and historical influences that shape journalism within the confines of national or

regional boundaries, across space, time, and societal circumstances (Hallin & Mancini 2004; Hanitzsch 2009; Kleinsteuber & Thomass 2010).

In order to answer the research questions:

RQ1: *How do journalists in Serbia interpret "media freedom" through the discourse published in online media texts?* and

RQ2: *What is the tone of that meta-discourse?*

it is essential to understand the social, political, and even historical context in which journalistic practice in Serbia is conducted or has been conducted. In response to the question "How do we discover likely interpretations of texts?" in the Guide to Textual Analysis, McKee (2001) emphasizes the importance of "Context, context, context" (p. 149), highlighting the significance of context for analyzing texts as products of discursive practices. It is crucial to bear in mind that the production of discourse is not a one-way street. Journalists often shape public opinions on important topics, but at the same time, they produce news within an environment that is already discursively impregnated, as Carlson points out: "In certain moments, journalists pivot from their role as producers of media discourse to become its object as well" (2016, 352).

In this paper, the context in which the analysis was conducted was not explicitly outlined in a separate chapter but will serve to better understand the interpretation of the research findings presented later in the paper.

2. THE METHOD

This research used the method of analyzing metajournalistic discourse as described by Carlson (2016). Additionally, the analysis methodologically draws on the works of Vos and Singer (2016) and Ferrucci, Nelson and Davis (2020), who applied Carlson's methodology in their research on analyzing metajournalistic discourse. Carlson identifies three key discursive components of meta-journalistic discourse: *actors*, *sites/audiences*, and *topics* (2016, 7–10). Metajournalistic discourse is shaped by both journalistic and non-journalistic actors. In this analysis, journalistic actors were explicitly taken into account as sources of discourse on media freedom. However, implicitly, the interpretation of the findings also considers non-journalistic actors, such as government officials, regulatory bodies, etc., which were frequent subjects of journalistic statements.

The place where a discourse is produced is of great significance. Journalists may discuss challenges in their profession on public forums, their social media profiles, and through established media outlets. Depending on the place where discourse is produced, the target audience to whom it is directed also varies. In this paper, the discourse produced in online media, intended for a wide audience, was analyzed. The theme of discourse analysis in this paper is generative because media freedom as a normative concept pertains to the entire profession of journalism, not just specific incidents (reactive themes) (Carlson 2016).

Discourse analysis, as the overarching method, is often complemented by additional or auxiliary research methods (van Dijk 2009). In this paper, textual analysis was applied for obtaining the most likely interpretations of the texts (McKee 2001), while the methodology described by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) was used for the process of coding and moving towards the interpretation of the analyzed texts. Textual analysis, as a qualitative approach, does not entail answers that are "correct" or "incorrect" in interpreting texts: "When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely

interpretations that might be made of that text" (McKee 2001, 141). The texts were interpreted in relation to the context in which the research was conducted.

The unit of analysis in this paper is the texts characterized by metajournalistic discourse on media freedom. A total of 230 texts were collected, published in 2021 and 2022, from 10 online media outlets. The keyword "media freedom" was used for the search, and the texts were gathered using the news-generating website naslovi.net. Initially, a pilot study was conducted, covering January 2021, considering all media whose content is generated on the mentioned website. Subsequently, 10 media outlets were selected, which published the highest number of texts matching the keyword and were subjected to further investigation.

A database containing all the collected texts was created, and researchers accessed the data through three steps, following the approach described by Coffey and Atkinson (1996). The first step involved researchers familiarizing themselves with the data by going through it. Then, they revisited the data, this time attempting to identify themes that reflect the research question. Part of this second step is the coding process, which includes exploring the identified themes, connecting them with other segments of the data, and identifying categories to classify the data. Finally, researchers go back to the data once more, now with developed categories in mind, searching for additional meanings and approaching interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 38–45).

The data was now coded, categorized, and fragmented, and the next step involved its interpretation. "Interpretation involves the transcendence of 'factual' data" (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 46) and engaging in analytical thinking about what to do with the data next. Since coding is "a mixture of data reduction and data complication" (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, 31), organizing and categorizing the data is just the first step. Researchers then enter a broad field open to various interpretations.

3. FINDINGS

During the analysis of the collected articles, four themes/categories emerged, and their further interpretation contributes to answering the research questions:

- The first theme encompasses articles where the dominant topic is *pressures and attacks* on journalists.
- The second theme relates to the relationship between *the state and the media*.
- The third theme is concerned with issues of *ethics* and rights within the journalistic profession.
- The fourth theme is related to *the market*, specifically its freedom from influences, as a significant element that contributes to media freedom or, conversely, degrades it.

As the analysis in this paper focuses on the discourse of the journalistic field as a whole (Vos & Singer 2016; Ferrucci, Nelson and Davis 2020), the findings will not name the sources of the excerpts from the analyzed articles. These sources include journalists, whether they serve as interviewees providing information or authors of articles such as columns and commentaries. The specific media outlets in which the articles were published will also not be mentioned explicitly. A summary of the media and the number of texts per category can be seen in Table 1.

By not naming the sources, be it journalists or media outlets, the focus remains on the metajournalistic discourse taken as a whole, similar to the approach of Vos and Singer

(2016). The research focuses on the discourse built within the journalistic field, regardless of specific names of journalists or media outlets. Including additional information about the sources would divert attention from the main focus of the paper and potentially favor certain media outlets or journalists. On the other hand, for readers outside of Serbia, knowing the name of a specific journalist may not hold much significance, whereas understanding the discourse their article contributes to can offer valuable insights into the media landscape in Serbia.

Table 1 Media included in the Analysis

Media name	Pressures and attacks	The state and the media	Ethics and the law	The market	Grand Total
Cenzolovka	55	23	9	2	89
Danas	35	14	7	0	56
nova.rs	16	11	4	0	31
N1	19	7	1	1	28
RTS	5	2	0	0	7
Insajder	3	3	0	0	6
RTV	2	3	0	0	5
Alo	4	0	0	0	4
Politika	2	0	1	0	3
Vreme	1	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	142	63	22	3	230

3.1. Pressure and Attacks: "Reports of attacks on journalists are a sign of the times – those who trample democracy"

The discourse surrounding media freedom in the analyzed articles is predominantly negative, indicating that journalists in Serbia feel unsafe and are under constant pressure, mostly originating from the ruling structures. The theme that encompasses the largest number of analyzed articles (N=142) is precisely the one defined as "Pressure and Attacks." Within articles under this theme, it is often claimed that there is a "clear stigmatization and targeting of journalists" and that pressures come in various forms "from open threats, not only from the audience and their comments," to "open media campaigns by certain outlets against journalists who write critically about the government."

The impression that pressures on journalists in Serbia are instigated by the ruling party is dominant among journalists who critically report on the government's work. This impression arises because, as one source points out, "attacks on journalists are often preceded by calling out and labeling journalists by state officials or local politicians, which actually encourages violence and attacks against professional journalists.'

The "public media in Serbia is facing daily political and economic pressures," as evidenced by annual reports from various national and international organizations and associations. According to the database of the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia on attacks against journalists, the years 2021 and 2022 (the years analyzed in this paper) had the highest number of attacks since 2008. Specifically, in 2021, 156 attacks were recorded, while in 2022, 137 attacks on journalists were documented. The majority of attacks were classified as 'pressure," followed by attacks defined as "verbal threats," "physical assaults," and "attacks or threats to property." The Freedom House report for

2023 testifies to the continuation of this negative trend, stating: "Journalists have faced physical attacks, smear campaigns, online harassment, and punitive tax inspections" (Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023)[1].

In addition to open pressures and attacks on journalists, another way of influencing media freedom is recognized in "exhaustive tax inspections," as well as "SLAPP lawsuits." The first refers to exhaustive tax audits that can last for several months or even years and are conducted in media premises that have been critical in their reporting about the authorities[2]. The second refers to SLAPP suits, or strategic lawsuits against public participation, which are lawsuits seeking enormous monetary amounts. These lawsuits are often filed by influential individuals or large companies whose financial stakes are not in question.

The discourse often includes local media, as well as local journalists, who are recognized by the sources to be under the highest level of pressure on freedom of expression and reporting (Mitrović & Milojević 2022). Regarding them, one source states: "They struggle daily to report on what they consider important and investigate things that many others wouldn't, because how can you challenge the environment where everyone knows each other, where the subjects of your articles are neighbors or people you meet every day on your way to work? How can you write about local power figures, whether they are in power or close to it, if your only protection is the support of colleagues, which is often short-lived."

In the described social atmosphere covered by the analyzed discourse, one source believes that "the only protection for journalists and their interviewees is the public, as there is no protection from institutions. They are completely broken – the prosecution, the court, and the police are under the influence of politics."

3.2. The State and the Media: "The media are free only on paper."

The question of the relationship between the state and the media emerged as the second topic resulting from the analysis of the metajournalistic discourse. It could be expected that in the analysis of the discourse on media freedom in Serbia, the issue of the state and its role and influence would be quantitatively prominent (N=63). The consequences of inconsistently implemented socio-political changes from the beginning of the 21st century – changes in the political system and the transformation and democratization of society – are visible more than two decades later. Clientelistic practices in the media, characteristic of societies "resistant to reforms" (Milinkov 2018), combined with a high level of political parallelism and a low level of journalistic professionalism, contribute to the strengthening of the role of the state (Hallin & Mancini 2004), which dominates all segments of society, including the media system. Although the process of media privatization in Serbia was completed almost a decade ago, the state remains a significant factor of influence, both through visible mechanisms such as subsidizing media through projects, acting as an advertiser, and being a source of information, and through more sophisticated mechanisms, which were often discussed by sources in the analyzed

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[1] Report available through the link: https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2023 (Retrieved July 2, 2023).
[2] One example was an inspection of a regional media portal "Južne vesti":
https://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/Novinarska-udruzenja-Vlast-koristi-inspekcije-protiv-medijskih-sloboda.sr.html (Retrieved July 2, 2023).

articles. There were two ways in which sources connected the state and the media. First, through criticizing the work of state institutions in the media sector, and second, through criticizing attempts to associate journalists' work with anti-state activities.

"There is no independent regulatory body", one source states. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (RAEM) was the most frequently criticized entity in the analyzed articles. Considering the overall discourse about RAEM, it gives the impression that sources consider this body responsible for the unfavorable position of electronic media that are not pro-regime oriented, while at the same time providing positive incentives to electronic media that are sympathetic to the current government.

The discourse about regulatory bodies suggests that they are also responsible for the difficult position of journalists who perform their professional duties. In this context, one source mentions: "We hope that the members of the RAEM Council will realize the seriousness of the moment and work towards ensuring the unhindered exercise of freedom of expression. Through their previous decisions, they indirectly contributed to the disrespect of the Journalists' Code of Ethics and created an atmosphere that encourages threats and violence against journalists."

"To improve the media landscape in Serbia, politics should not influence the media," is one of the thoughts frequently found in the analyzed articles. The majority of articles convey the message that "politics is making a great effort to control journalism."

In post-transitional countries, those that have been striving to catch up with developed democratic countries for decades, while their nationalist legacy hinders their progress and serves as an incubator for hate speech and divisions, the labels of "state enemies" and "foreign mercenaries" are well-tested techniques of manipulation used by the government. Journalists are a frequent target of state officials who employ a technique that treats any critical opinion as an act against the state, and those journalists who report critically are often publicly labeled as traitors or mercenaries.

In a socio-political atmosphere based on divisions, it is expected that "there is no reasoned debate and discussion on key issues" on the public stage. State officials serve as a source of information to "favorable" media outlets, while they either ignore or label the others. Debates are absent because "the government refuses to participate in them."

3.3. Ethics and the law: "Slaves cannot sing about freedom"

The third most prominent theme identified in the analysis of the discourse on media freedom pertains to the journalists' attitude towards their profession and their role in shaping or maintaining the current social climate. This theme is labeled "ethics and the law' and includes articles (N=22) where journalists acknowledge some responsibility for the state of the profession, not solely attributing it to external influences such as the state and politics.

The journalism profession in Serbia has not been particularly esteemed in recent years; on the contrary, "Today, the journalism profession is disreputable, non-prospective, and undesirable. It is highly stressful, labor-intensive, lacking creativity, tabloidized, and 'financially humiliating'" (Matić 2015, 74). The position of journalists in Serbia, as well as the overall media landscape dominated by low-quality and politicized content, is influenced by various factors. These factors include the precarious job status of journalists, low salaries (below the national average wage in Serbia), the global commercialization of news,

domestic tabloidization of important socio-political issues, political pressures, and clientelistic practices (Milinkov 2018, 230).

In one study where journalists from Serbia were surveyed about their position in society and the journalism profession in general, it was noted that journalists perceived themselves both as victims of the system and as contributors to maintaining the existing status quo. The study also pointed out the persistent division between "pro-regime" and "independent" media, and consequently, "pro-regime" and "independent" journalists, which dates back to the 1990s and continues to shape the discourse today (Matić 2015, 76–77). This legacy is evident in the analysis of the discourse in this category of articles.

Journalists often feel the need to prove their professionalism by emphasizing that they are not like "those other journalists" who serve the regime. They make a clear distinction, stating: "We are not the same. All those others have one editor-in-chief note: the editor-in-chief referred to in the text is the president of the country). They are all his, but we are yours".

However, despite the challenging socio-political circumstances, the discourse in the articles of this category cannot be described as negative or pessimistic regarding the pursuit of media freedom. The sources demonstrate a desire to fight for "the job we chose" while acknowledging the negative circumstances and difficult position. They take some responsibility for "a better media image in the future" and eagerly emphasize their work as a heroic act: "We have shown that it is possible, even in such an environment, under constant regime pressure, and despite daily threats, to work in the interest of citizens, our readers." We can conclude that journalists in this category predominantly see themselves as fighters who are constantly at the forefront of defending the integrity of their profession and the public interest: "Freedom in this country is not something that is simply given to you; you have to fight for it".

3.4. The market: "The story about the freedom of the market is completely meaningless"

The least common theme (N=3) in the discourse about media freedom was the theme called "market." This category includes articles whose dominant topic was the freedom of the media and/or telecommunications market in Serbia. Although least represented, this theme is significant for understanding the overall discourse of journalists about media freedom.

In order to provide clarity on the discourse about the media market, it is necessary to provide the context in which the analyzed articles were published. The context is related to the period of the so-called "cable war" between the cable operators Telekom Srbija, a state-owned company, and Telenor, a company close to the government, on one side, and the United Media Group, a company recognized in Serbia as critical of the government, on the other. Specifically, Telekom and Telenor signed a cooperation agreement, which United Media claims is in violation of antimonopoly laws and aims to suppress the third player in the market, namely United Media.

In one of the analyzed articles, it was stated: "Prime Minister Ana Brnabić accused the United Group on public television of being responsible for slowing down Serbia's EU integration process because they complained about the plan of Telekom Srbija and Telenor to destroy and stifle independent media. The United Group had previously pointed out that the destruction and obstruction of funding for their media was not an insinuation or assumption, but it is stated in the strategy of Telekom Srbija, which is publicly available. Some opposition parties and movements are demanding the resignation of Telekom's General Director,

Vladimir Lučić, due to the open planning of the destruction of media not under the control of the government." In this example, we can observe a similar discourse as in the previous categories: high-ranking state officials publicly labeling specific media groups, blaming them for Serbia's failures on the path to EU membership; there is a noticeable emphasis on the division between "opposition" and "pro-government" media. One source states: "The story about freedom and the market in Serbia is ridiculous because a narrow circle of people decides on all deals, tenders, purchases of both media and state-owned companies."

The free market for cable operators in Serbia is of great importance for overall media freedom and citizens' access to information. Media outlets that are perceived as "non-pro-government" in Serbia do not have national frequencies and are only available through the cable operator SBB United Media Group). Taking away a portion of the market from United Media under illegal or unfair conditions would mean reducing the number of citizens who can access television channels through the SBB operator. Therefore, even though this theme was the least represented during the analyzed period, it was significant for understanding the discourse on media freedom in Serbia.

4. Discussion

Finally, let us return to the research questions and try to provide answers based on everything analyzed. *How do journalists in Serbia interpret "media freedom" through the discourse published in online media texts?* Based on the categories that stood out as significant in the process of coding the analyzed texts, it could be said that journalists in Serbia most often view "media freedom" through the perspective of the state and politics. They see them as the biggest "enemies" of media freedom. These external participants, mostly politicians, who were not explicitly taken into account in the analysis of the discourse, imposed themselves as important non-journalistic participants that influence the journalists' discourse on media freedom. Even in the category that apparently does not refer to politicians, the market, the interpretation of the texts showed that in these articles the most important objects of expression are politicians.

As for the question *What is the tone of the metadiscourse?,* it is not difficult to answer it, since it was predominantly negative, as observed in almost every text. The only category where a positive tone was noticeable is "ethics and the law." In this category, the discourse themes were related to journalists' self-encouragement not to give up the fight for media freedom: "Time passes, politics and regimes change, but our common goal remains the struggle against undemocratic tendencies that contradict freedom of expression, basic human rights, and internationally recognized criteria of civil liberties and openness, which should characterize democratic societies and responsible authorities." However, even in this category, there is an underlying critique of the current socio-political circumstances.

At the very end, it is important to highlight the limitations of the conducted research. Undoubtedly, a period longer than two years would be recommended for analysis. However, it should be kept in mind that according to all research conducted by international organizations, Serbia has maintained its position as a "problematic country" regarding media freedom over the past 10 years. Analyzing different periods, such as the time when the Democratic Party was in power and the period before the democratic changes, and comparing them with the current metanarrative discourse, would be a more comprehensive research endeavor. The chosen period in this study was convenient because the text database

was readily accessible, which may not have been the case for earlier periods. Hence, this research aims to be a modest exploratory endeavor. It provides an overview of the state at a specific moment in time and circumstances and does not claim to be an indisputable representation of current conditions or a prediction of the future.

Furthermore, not mentioning the sources, especially the names of the media in which the analyzed texts were published, also has its drawbacks. The advantage, as previously highlighted, is the focus on the field of journalism. However, the interpretation of the data would gain at least one additional perspective if the sources were taken into account. Almost all of the media analyzed in Serbia are recognized as "anti-regime." It would be interesting to consider this indicator and pose an additional research question –Why does the metadiscourse of journalists in pro-government media omit the topic of media freedom? If researchers were to revisit the data with these indicators in mind, the interpretation would undoubtedly be enriched. This could also serve as a recommendation for future studies in this field.

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NOVINARI O SLOBODI MEDIJA:
TEKSTUALNA ANALIZA METANOVINARSKOG DISKURSA
U ONLAJN MEDIJIMA U SRBIJI

Novinari u Srbiji poslednjih decenija su u stalnom izazovnom položaju (Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2022; Kulić 2020; Milutinović 2019; Milivojević i dr. 2011). Očekivanja da će promena političkog sistema zemlje na početku 21. veka doneti značajna poboljšanja u oblasti slobode medija su izneverena. Tokom poslednje decenije, indeks slobode medija je u stalnom opadanju, što Srbiju svrstava među zemlje sa „problematičnom situacijom" u pogledu slobode medija (Statista, Indeks slobode medija). Ova studija ima za cilj da analizira metanovinarski diskurs (Carlson 2016; Ferrucci, Nelson and Davis 2020; Vos & Singer 2016) u tekstovima objavljenim u onlajn medijima i odgovori na istraživačka pitanja: IP1: Kako novinari u Srbiji tumače „slobodu medija,, kroz diskurs u tekstovima onlajn medija? i IP2: Kakav je ton tog metadiskursa? Analizirani tekstovi objavljeni su u deset onlajn medija tokom 2021. i 2022. godine. Tekstovi su prikupljeni na sajtu naslovi.net za generisanje vesti, koristeći ključnu reč „sloboda medija". Odabrano je ukupno 230 tekstova u kojima su novinari služili kao izvor informacija, bilo kroz izjave ili u autorskim tekstovima (kolumne, komentari). Daljom analizom, tekstovi su razvrstani u četiri kategorije, kreirane na osnovu dominantnog diskursa koji preovladava u tekstu. Najviše tekstova spada u kategoriju „pritisci i napadi" (142), zatim „država i mediji" (63), „etika i pravo" (22), a tri teksta se odnose na „tržište". Rezultati ukazuju na pretežno negativan diskurs, koji je u skladu sa aksiomom da je ostvarivanje slobode medija u izazovnim političkim sistemima svakodnevni izazov.

Ključne reči: *sloboda medija, novinarska profesija, analiza diskursa, tekstualna analiza, metanovinarski diskurs.*