

## Dominant Value Patterns in the Montenegrin Society

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### Abstract

*Social value orientations and normative patterns within which individuals and groups are socialized are of vital importance for the sociological analysis of a society. Human behaviour is shaped, regulated and directed around these cultural imperatives, as well as are people's interpersonal relations, their actions and creativity. People's values influence their selection of desirable goals; they direct and design human actions and behaviours. Setting off from this definition of values, we have tried to identify the specificities of value patterns in the Montenegrin post-socialist period, during which numerous changes have taken place in all spheres of social life. This is considered as particularly important, having in mind that social values determine the level of acceptability of a certain social system. Numerous studies we have referred to indicate that the national culture of this area is characterized by a unique combination of high power distance, collectivism, dominant "feminine" values and high uncertainty avoidance. These characteristics must have profound effect on the structures and processes in various institutions and organizations, but also on the model of economic development, as well as the overall social relations.*

**Keywords:** value, value orientations, individualism, collectivism, high power distance

### 1. Dominantni Vrijednosni Obrasci Crnogorskog Društva

Za sociološku spoznaju jednog društva veoma su važni sklopovi vrijednosnih orijentacija i normativnih obrazaca u okviru kojih se socijalizuju pojedinci i grupe, na osnovu kojih se, kao kulturnih imperativa, uobličava, uređuje i usmjerava ljudsko ponašanje, međudnosi, djelovanje, stvaralaštvo. Vrijednosti nesumljivo utiču na izbor poželjnih ciljeva, one usmjeravaju i osmišljavaju djelanje i ponašanje. Polazeći od ovakvog određena vrijednosti nastojali smo utvrditi šta je to specifično za vrijednosne obrasce crnogorskog društva u postsocijalističkom periodu, periodu koji obiluje promjenama u svim aspektima društvenog života. To posebno smatramo značajnim s obzirom da vrijednosti definišu i poželjnost određenog tipa društvenog sistema.

Brojna istraživanja koja ovdje navodimo pokazuju da nacionalnu kulturu ovog prostora karakteriše jedinstvena kombinacija visoke distance moći, izraženog kolektivism, dominantnatnih "ženskih" vrijednsoti i visokog izbjegavanja rizika. Navedene osobenosti se moraju odraziti ne samo na strukture i procese u pojedinim institucijama i organizacijama, nego i na model privrednog razvoja, pa i na ukupne društvene odnose.

### 2. Ključne Riječi: Vrijednosti, Vrijednosne Orijentacije, Individualizam, Kolektivizam, Visoka Distanca Moći

It is well known that a society is a complex entity composed of many interrelated elements that need to be reconciled. This should especially be kept in mind when it comes to the transformation of post-socialist societies, where the focus is mainly placed on the economic and political aspects, while whatever takes place in terms of values and value orientations, more broadly, whatever takes place at the level of cultural patterns is neglected.

When it comes to the study of the nature and characteristics of a society, besides the economic and political framework, it is necessary, to include into the analysis a cultural context which is composed of a series of elements. Using the cultural context we can more fully explain the functioning of a society. Each individual society has its own features, and in order to understand the events taking place in it, we should set off from its cultural and historical particularities. The cultural patterns enable us to uncover the different relationships existing between social groups/individuals and systems of needs and values, as well as to explain their goals and motivations. Since the concept

of culture has a very broad meaning, it is necessary to first adapt its notion to the context in which it is used. Sociologists have used the term culture in many different ways<sup>1</sup>, including the everyday use of the term in the sense of high culture. From the analytical point of view, the most common approach to culture is as to a value system. From this perspective, the sociological analysis need always strive to outline those particular values which are deeply rooted within the given societies. "Values could be defined as the long-lasting markedly positive relationships with certain objects which we consider important and in the realisation of which we invest our best endeavours" (Rot, 1973: 9). In addition to the values, the term value orientation is frequently used in the literature. Value orientations can be differentiated from values in that they are understood as a set of related values which are complementary to the activities of individuals and groups, and represent " some of the most important dispositions which significantly determine a number of specific attitudes and influence the behaviours of individuals and groups" (Kuzmanović, 1995: 151).

A value orientation does not occur instantaneously and does not change from situation to situation, but has a historical character. It is constituted through a number of historical epochs. Once established, a value orientation does not change easily, i.e. a current change in social circumstances does not mean that the same change would be applied to a value system. The constitution of a value orientation is a long-lasting process and it takes as long for it to change. However, this does not mean that it is given once for all; it is a dynamic category whose contents are likely to change. Value orientations are deep-rooted in the structure of a society. They are a product and an integral part of the structure, at the same time contributing to its production and affecting its character. As already mentioned, a value system greatly influences the behaviour and attitudes of individuals, that is, people's behaviours and attitudes do not appear of their own accord, but have their roots in a certain system of values which prevails in a society.

Therefore, one of the main features of values is their stability that allows us to predict the future social behaviours and movements, even more successfully than we would be able to do based on the knowledge of some other dispositions and conditions. However, as we have already pointed out, stability is not an absolute value; the social and personal development would not be possible if the values were fixed, on the other hand, social stability would not be sustainable if the values were apt to change. This means that the values are only relatively stable and as such they enable us better predictability in comparison to other tools. This means that people's behaviours can best be predicted once we know their goals, what they consider important and desirable, what they appreciate, just like social trends that depend on people's will can probably be predicted to a great extent, especially for the short-term periods and once we are familiar with the system of population's common values (Pantić, 2003).

Analysing the cultural patterns of our society, we have primarily relied upon Hofstede's <sup>2</sup> framework. If in Hofstede's terms we determine culture as a "mental software" (Katuranić, 2004) which programmes the behaviours of members of a community at various stages of their development and makes them different from other people and if we take the value orientations as culture's central point, it is quite reasonable to expect that cultural constants will be a part of the values' domain and will affect the spirit of the time and place, i.e. the spirit of a society. Hofstede believes that values are the key content of culture and a source of fundamental differences between cultures. After several stages of research, he concluded that cultures differ with respect to four basic dimensions: power distance, individualism and collectivism, "masculine" versus "feminine" traits and uncertainty avoidance. He later added a fifth dimension which refers to the distinction between national cultures with regard to short-term or long-term life orientations of their members. These dimensions are, as emphasized by N. Janičijević (2014) two-sided matrixes by means of which each national culture can be positioned along a continuum between the two extremes of each of the dimensions. Thanks to this methodology, Hofstede was able to quantify each national culture for each of the dimensions. To every national culture he assigned an index which indicates its position on each of the cultural dimensions matrices.

Power distance indicates the extent to which a society accepts the fact that the power in institutions and organizations is distributed unevenly among individuals. It tells us about how hierarchy works, what is considered to be a normal process of decision making. The question is whether one should only follow the person at the top, or whether it is common for people in leadership positions to treat their subordinates as equals. Thus, in the societies and organizations with high power distance centralization is socially more acceptable, while decentralization is more common in the environments dominated by low power distance.

Hofstede's research indicates that the former Yugoslavia is characterised by a high power distance (76 index

<sup>1</sup> In the 1950s Kroeber and Kluckhohn collected 257 definitions which determined the notion of culture (Kale in Jeknić, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Geert Hofstede is a Dutch social psychologist, the author of one of the most influential studies on how the culture influences people's values at the work place. The study is based around research on cultural differences carried out in the 1960's and 1970's amongst the staff of IBM, a famous company employing more than 116.000 people in 40 different countries, including the countries of former Yugoslavia.

points), meaning that people in this area believe that power should not be equally distributed amongst people, i.e. that there are people in power and those who carry out their orders. Our national culture is one of those with a very large power distance. Such understanding is the basis of authoritarianism, a term which is directly associated with power relations in a society.

Authoritarianism is a term with several meanings: it can be understood as a psychological trait inherent to certain personality types, but can also denote a value orientation and in this sense the term has a sociological connotation. In any case, the sociological and psychological connotations of the term are mutually complementary and are highly and significantly associated with other social traits. Authoritarianism can be viewed in two ways: on the one hand, it is marked as a recognition and idealization of the principles of hierarchy and submission to those who are in positions of higher formal rank; on the other hand it denotes the dominance over those in lower positions and expectation of their obedience. It is a stabilized and permanent display of such behaviour with the conviction that it is natural, proper and socially desirable (Kuzmanović, 2010).

Over a period of time a number of studies on authoritarianism have been done in our region and all of them suggest that authoritarianism is a relatively tenacious feature of the modern cultural-historical context. They also indicate that authoritarianism is significantly associated with numerous value orientations that belong to the domain of patriarchal traditionalism and are very much present as a social reality in the contemporary domestic context. Moreover, it can be argued that the area of the Western Balkans, to which Montenegro as well as the growing number of states stemming from the former Yugoslavia belong, has recently been the zone with the highest measured authoritarianism in Europe (Miladinović, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that almost three quarters of respondents in Montenegro agree that the "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn" (74.5%), while there is slightly less agreement with the statement "without a leader, every nation is like a man without a head" (58.9%) (Krivokapić, 2014<sup>3</sup>). However, when it comes to the prominent authoritarianism of the people living in this area, it is necessary to emphasize that it should not be understood as a personality trait in terms of Adorno et al., but as the norms and patterns of behaviour that an individual adopts from the cultural community in which he/she lives (Rot and Havelka, 1973). So, it is above all an adoption of a pattern of behaviours, beliefs and values characteristic of the patriarchal culture in which the individual is socialized, which is apparently still a dominant cultural pattern in Montenegro.

Individualism/collectivism is the next dimension considered by Hofstede while analysing individual cultures. Individualism applies to those societies in which the ties between individuals are "loose". The individual is expected to take care of oneself and one's immediate family as well as to control one's destiny. Identity is, therefore, rooted in the individual, it is of prominent individualistic orientation, or orientation towards oneself, i.e. of the pronounced "I" consciousness. Collectivism, on the other hand, implies a stronger social structure in which each individual is entitled to being taken care of by the community, while he/she should in return show his/her full loyalty to the group. People are from their birth integrated by socialization into the solid cohesive groups, and their identity is rooted in the social system of a pronounced "we" consciousness which is a source of identity, but also favouritism, loyalty and other related phenomena. The question of the relationship between the individual and the collective is therefore dealt with by means of the two terms: individualism or collectivism. Individualism thus favours the individual and emphasizes autonomy of the individual, while collectivism favours the group and emphasizes conformity.

The dimension of individualism/collectivism is considered to be one of the most important in understanding the differences between cultures, especially between Western and Eastern cultures. Some authors (Triandis, 1999) point out that the majority of world's population (70%) actually lives in collectivist cultures, from which it follows that individualism is characteristic exclusively of the Western perspectives on life. This is where the fundamental differences in the social structures of the Eastern and Western cultures come from.

Analysing this dimension of culture in our society, we can conclude that there is a predominance of collective identification, which is why it can be estimated that there is more collective culture than individualism in such an environment. This is corroborated by the results obtained by Hofstede according to which the former Yugoslav region is characterized by low individualism measured by only 27 index points. In some other studies the authors have come to similar results (Gredelj, 1994, Đukanovic-Bešić, 2000). Latest research of value orientations in Montenegro (Krivokapić, 2014) shows that the collectivist value patterns in this region are still dominant. This is confirmed by the fact that 67.8% of people are convinced that "The state should be responsible for the welfare of its citizens, much less (37.6%) that "Citizens should be responsible for their own welfare." The following further shows the prevailing collectivist value-orientation of Montenegrin citizens: the statement "the number of state-owned enterprises must be increased" is

<sup>3</sup> Krivokapić, N. (2014). *Sociološko istraživanje uticaja štampanih medija na demokratizaciju crnogorskog društva*, (unpublished doctoral thesis).

supported by 62.4% of respondents, while a much smaller number believes that "we should increase the number of private companies" (44.5%). The representation of this value may best be demonstrated by the fact that 72.6% of the respondents agree with the attitude: "One of the main goals in my life is to make my parents proud."

Collectivism with large power distance is easily converted into a dependency relationship of the individual to the highest authority in the community. It makes a member of the group lose his/her initiative and he/she becomes a mere follower of the supreme authority, regardless of whether this is the father of the family, the head of the company, or the president of a political party or a state.

The social implications of male and female genders are reflected onto the dimension of national culture called "masculine" versus "feminine" values (masculinity-femininity) and are included by Hofstede into his analytical framework. Each national culture is positioned along a two-sided dimension as a culture with predominantly "masculine" or predominantly "feminine" values. "Masculine - feminine" value dimensions of a national culture treat the relationship of a society to doing and being. The cultures whose prevailing values are: activity, work, achievement, results, determination, aggressiveness and control of emotions, generally perceived as "masculine" characteristics, can be marked as predominantly "masculine" national cultures. These are the so called "doing" cultures, where one's value is determined by the results of his/her efforts. Most often, a person's value is determined on the basis of his/her ability to earn money and his/her material well-being. Caring for others is not the focus of the members of this culture. The "feminine" national cultures are those dominated by such values as human relations, quality of life, display of emotions, balance and harmony. As these values are mainly attributed to women, the national cultures dominated by such values are marked as "feminine". These are the "being" cultures in which people's value is proved by their very existence and their role within the social network. These cultures prefer establishment of good connections and relations with the social environment (Janićijević, 2014).

According to Hofstede's study, our society is one of those with prevailing "feminine" values (index of 21 on a scale of 1-fully "feminine" values to 100 fully "masculine" values). The members of the cultural heritage in this part of the world consider the social world as most important and give it precedence over the material. The main objective and the value indicators are the social position and status, relations between people, relationships and friendships, not the results of work or the wealth acquisition resulting from it.

Uncertainty avoidance, as the next dimension of Hofstede's framework, shows the extent to which a society feels uncertainty as a threat, whereby trying to avoid it, rules or other means are created in order to "ensure" security. Uncertainty avoidance is associated with the willingness of people to take risks, i.e. the extent to which people want their behaviours and the behaviours of others to follow certain predictable patterns in unfamiliar situations. The cultures which avoid uncertainty typically have more difficulty in introducing changes. The cultures whose members are more accepting of risk are more open to experiencing other cultures and more readily accept changes in all spheres. So, in some societies changes, uncertainty, and the unknown are treated as danger and are avoided whenever it is possible. Other societies embrace the change, uncertainty and the unknown and treat them as a new opportunity.

Hofstede has found a high degree of uncertainty avoidance in our society - the index of about 88 (on a scale of 1 to 100). According to this scale, our culture is one of the national cultures with the highest degree of uncertainty avoidance in the world. This implies that people display a great resistance to change, aversion to risk and uncertainty. Under the conditions of uncertainty or ambiguity, people of this region feel uncomfortable. They prefer everything to be uniform and standard.

People are not exclusively rational beings whose behaviour is determined solely on the basis of objective information, but social beings whose behaviour is derived from their own beliefs and values, and on the basis of which they construct a picture of reality and set the rules of behaviour within that reality. Through its assumptions and values a national culture determines the way in which its members interpret the reality that surrounds them, as well as the manner in which they act in such a reality.

Hofstede's research as well as numerous other studies we have here cited indicate that the national culture of this area is characterized by a unique combination of high power distance, collectivism, dominant "feminine" values and high uncertainty aversion. The above peculiarities must have profound effect not only on the structures and processes in certain institutions and organizations, but also on the model of economic development, as well as the overall social relations.

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