DRUŽBOSLOVNE RAZPRAVE

Social Science Forum

DRUŽBOSLOVNE RAZPRAVE

Social Science Forum

Uredniška politika: Družboslovne razprave so revija, ki objavlja kolegialno recenzirane znanstvene članke in recenzije knjig. V recenzijski postopke sprejema članke v slovenščini in angleščini s področja sociologije, komunikologije, politologije in kulturologije ter tem raziskovalnim področjem bližjih družboslovnih disciplin. Pri izboru člankov za objavo se upošteva njihova raziskovalna inovativnost ter aktualnost glede na trende v znanstveni skupnosti, v kateri je revija zasidrana. V teoretskem in metodološkem pogledu je revija pluralistično naravnana, posebno skrb pa posveča utrjevanju slovenske družboslovne terminologije.

Editorial policy: Družboslovne razprave is a peer reviewed journal which publishes papers and book reviews. Contributions are invited in fields of sociology, media studies, political science, cultural studies and other studies which are close to these fields. The published contributions should display high level of research originality and address the themes which seem relevant to the scientific communities in which the journal is grounded. Both in theoretical and methodological respects the journal stands for pluralism.

KAZALO
TABLE OF CONTENS

RECENZIJE KNJIG
BOOK REVIEWS

UVOD
INTRODUCTION

Drage bralke, dragi bralci!

Pred vami je 102. številka *Družboslovnih razprav* oziroma prva številka 39. letnika revije. V novo (uredniško) leto smo stopili z nekaj več izkušnjami, novimi načrti in nekaterimi spremembami. Med slednjimi velja omeniti menjavo v ožji uredniški ekipi: urednika recenzij znanstvenih monografij Klemna Ploštajnerja, ki se podaja novim kariernim izzivom naproti, bo s septembrsko številko na tej funkciji zamenjal Rok Smrdelj. Klemnu se ob tej priložnosti zahvaljujemo za zanesljivo sodelovanje, iniciativnost in iskrive ideje.

Napovedujemo tudi dolgo načrtovano posodobitev možnih formatov besedil, in sicer uvedbo kategorije »krajši znanstveni prispevek«. Kategorija »krajši znanstveni prispevek« zajema dvojno slepo recenzirane znanstvene prispevke s standardno strukturo znanstvenega članka, ki pa bo v obsegu polovico manjši, torej do 4000 besed. Z novo kategorijo želimo popestriti format revije, predvsem pa potencialnim avtorjem ponuditi možnost objave preliminarnih rezultatov raziskav, odzivov na aktualne polemike ali nadgradnje predhodnih konferenčnih prispevkov. Pobuda, ki je idejno prišla s strani članov in članic Sociološkega društva in je bila potrjena na uredniškem odboru revije, bo avtoricam in avtorjem na voljo predvidoma od septembra dalje. Predvidevamo, da bi krajši znanstveni prispevki lahko nadomestili do največ dva izvirna oz. pregledna znanstvena članka standardne dolžine na številko.

V načrtih za leto 2023 sta tudi dve tematski številki. Septembrska številka pod gostujočim uredništvom Marjana Hočevarja bo obravnavala vprašanje sonaravnosti življenjskega okolja na preseku fizičnih in digitalnih prostorov, decembrska številka pod uredništvom Maše Filipovič Hrast in Aleksandre Kanjuo Mrčele pa bo posvečena šestdesetletnici sociologije na Fakulteti za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani.

Novi letnik sicer otvarjamo z redno – netematsko številko, ki obsega raznolik nabor petih izvirnih znanstvenih člankov s področij sociologije, religiologije, antropologije, migracijskih študij in študij nacionalizma, ki se dotikajo družboslovne teorije, kulturnih študij in aktualnih metodoloških zagat. Po dveh številkah, izrazito osredotočenih na slovenski prostor in tekoče nacionalne raziskave, v tem zvezku posebno pozornost namenjamo mednarodni perspektivi; avtorice in avtorji, predstavljeni v tej številki, tako izpostavljajo študije primerov iz zelo različnih kulturnih kontekstov ter konceptualne in teoretske refleksije, ki odražajo aktualne razprave v družboslovju in humanistiki. Takšnim izhodiščem primerno so štirje od petih prispevkov v angleščini.

Številko začenjamo s člankom Leopoldine Fortunati, Manuele Farinosi in Laure Pagani z naslovom »Lokalna uprava in upravljanje pandemije covida-19 v

lokalnem okolju. Empirična raziskava o stališčih državljanov ter mestnih svetnikov in uradnikov v Toskani«, ki osvetljuje pomen delovanja in percepcije lokalnih oblasti v kriznih razmerah tako z vidika implementacije nacionalnih strategij kot z vidika prepoznavanja specifičnih lokalnih izzivov in aktiviranja obstoječih resursov. Avtorice skozi študijo primera »napredne«, inovacijam naklonjene toskanske vasi Peccioli analizirajo učinkovitost delovanja in komunikacijske strategije lokalne uprave z vidika vzdrževanja družbene kohezije v času pandemije covida-19. Pri tem evalvirajo dodano vrednost izbranega nabora kvalitativnih in kvantitativnih metod za vpogled v oceno stanja tako skozi oči odločevalcev kot državljanov. Ugotavljajo, da je lokalna oblast v kontekstu oddaljene in pogosto premalo dorečene nacionalne strategije upravljanja s pandemijo odigrala pomembno vlogo, pri čemer je bila ključnega pomena za učinkovito lokalno krizno strategijo že obstoječa visoka raven družbene kohezije v Peccioliju.

Sledi teoretsko besedilo s področja religiologije Igorja Jurekoviča z naslovom »Onkraj redukcije religije na verovanje: zakaj konceptualizirati telo v preučevanju religije«. Jurekovič v članku opozarja na problematičnost enačenja religije z verovanjem in hkratnega zapostavljanja pomena telesa v njej, značilno za teorijo racionalne izbire kot enega od prevladujočih programov na področju sociologije religije. Prek pregleda temeljnih del s področja sociologije religije in analize raziskav s področja utelešene religije ter primera karizmatičnega krščanstva avtor prepričljivo nakaže potrebo po epistemološkem obratu na področju sociologije religije.

Tretje besedilo pričujoče številke pomen telesa izpostavlja skozi antropološko-kulturološko perspektivo. Aljoša Pužar v članku »Narativne konvencije »BL« (*Boy Love*) in »GL« (*Girl Love*) ter ženske skupnosti prakse in afekta v Južni Koreji« analizira tako narativne značilnosti kot pogoje produkcije in potrošnje objav v literarnih žanrih BL in GL v Južni Koreji. Avtor pri tem predmeta raziskave ne zameji na zgolj naratološke značilnosti in pomene navedenih žanrov, temveč ju obravnava v kontekstu samoniklih skupnosti, ki jih družijo skupna razumevanja z žanroma povezanih praks in afekti. Pužar tako predstavi analitično vrednost koncepta »skupnosti praks« za področje kulturnih študij kot okolja, ki je za marginalna občinstva obenem emancipatorno in omejujoče. Pri tem skozi analizo stripov in njihove recepcije med ženskim občinstvom ponudi dragocen etnografski uvid v sodobno korejsko popularno kulturo.

Članek Noela Moratille »Ubežniška pričevanja: zgodbe indonezijskih migrantskih delavk« nadaljuje z obravnavo marginaliziranih skupnosti. Avtor vzame pod drobnogled antologijo kratkih zgodb izpod peres indonezijskih migrantk, ki opravljajo delo hišnih pomočnic v Singapurju, Hongkongu in Tajvanu. Moratilla s pomočjo koncepta ubežniškega pričevanja – pričevanja oseb, ki

so vpletene v nelegalne oziroma ne povsem legalne mreže in posle – razgrne pomen antologije za razumevanje položaja, izkušenj in samopercepcije migrantk kot posameznic ter kot članic skupnosti praks, afektov in občutij. Analiza nadalje napeljuje k premisleku o nujnih posodobitvah uveljavljenih razumevanj mobilnosti delavcev na podlagi izkušenj subalternih skupin.

S procesi konstrukcije skupnosti se ukvarja tudi zadnji članek pričujoče številke, »Med domom in svetom: (vsakdanji) nacionalizem in reprezentacije naroda v slovenski narodnozabavni glasbi« Ksenije Šabec. Avtorica prek koncepta vsakdanjega nacionalizma, tj. rutinskih in nezavednih procesov, ki omogočajo vsakdanjo reprodukcijo nacij, preizprašuje družbenokulturni učinek žanra slovenske narodno-zabavne glasbe. Skozi analizo besedil najbolj priljubljenih narodno-zabavnih glasbenih izvajalcev v Sloveniji med drugim ugotavlja, da se nacija v tem glasbenem žanru vzpostavlja okoli ideje naroda kot doma oziroma domovine, ki sloni na procesih avtostereotipiziranja in patriotizma.

Številko sklepa recenzija znanstvene monografije Ulricha Branda in Markusa Wissna *Imperialni način življenja: vsakdanje življenje in ekološka kriza kapitalizma*, ki jo je pripravil Tim Krhlanko.

V imenu uredniške ekipe vam želimo fino branje!

Natalija Majsova in Tanja Oblak Črnič,
sourednici *Družboslovnih razprav*

Dear readers!

Before you is the 102nd issue of *Social Science Forum*, which is also issue 1 of volume 39 of the journal. We have commenced the new (editorial) year with a little more experience and several new plans and changes. Among the latter, we note the editorial team is to be transformed: our book review editor Klemen Ploštajner has embarked on a new career challenge and starting with the September issue will be handing the baton over to Rok Smrdelj. We wish to take this opportunity to thank Klemen for his reliable cooperation, initiative and original ideas.

We would also like to announce the long-planned update of our range of publication options: we will soon be adding "short scientific papers". The new format, proposed by members of the Slovenian Sociological Association and confirmed by the editorial board of *Social Science Forum*, will be available for consideration by potential authors from September onwards. The intention is to provide an opportunity to publish research results, respond to current academic controversies, and perhaps publish a revised conference paper. The "shorter scientific paper" category refers to double-blind, peer-reviewed scientific papers with the standard structure of an academic article, but only up to 4,000 words in length. With this new category, we aim to slightly alter the journal's format; we envision that in each issue shorter scientific contributions could replace up to two standard-length articles.

Two special issues are also planned for 2023. The September issue, guest edited by Marjan Hočevar, is to foreground the sustainability of the living environment at the intersection of physical and digital spaces, whereas the December issue, guest edited by Maša Filipovič Hrast and Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela, will be dedicated to the 60th anniversary of sociology at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Social Sciences.

This year's opening issue is not topic-specific; it brings a diverse collection of five original scientific articles from the fields of sociology, religious studies, anthropology, migration studies and nationalism studies, which also touch upon social science theory, cultural studies and methodological conundrums we are facing today. After two issues with a strong focus on the Slovenian space and current national research projects, this one concentrates on the international perspective. The authors thus highlight case studies from very different cultural contexts and present conceptual and theoretical reflections that reflect current debates in the social sciences and humanities. Accordingly, four of the five contributions in this issue are in English.

The first article is by Leopoldina Fortunati, Manuela Farinosi and Laura Pagani, and entitled "Local Government and COVID-19 Management in a Local Context: Empirical Research on Citizens' and Town Councillors' and Officials' Points of View in Tuscany". The contribution sheds light on the relevance of the actions and perceptions of local authorities in times of crisis in terms of the implementation of national strategies, identification of specific local challenges, and mobilisation of existing resources. Through a case study of the 'vanguard', especially the innovation-friendly Tuscan village of Peccioli during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on interviews with stakeholders and a survey for the general public the authors analyse the effectiveness of the local authorities' performance, notably its communication strategy with respect to maintaining social cohesion. In doing so, they evaluate the added value of a selected qualitative and quantitative methods to help assess the situation through the eyes of both decision-makers and citizens. They conclude that the local authorities played an important role in the context of the distant and often underdeveloped national pandemic management strategy, with the pre-existing high level of social cohesion in Peccioli being the key to an effective local crisis strategy.

The following contribution is a theoretical text in the field of religious studies by Igor Jurekovič entitled "Beyond Reducing Religion to Belief: Why We Should Conceptualise the Body in the Study of Religion". Jurekovič points to the problematic equating of religion with belief and the simultaneous neglect of the significance of the body in religious experience that characterises rational choice theory as one of the dominant approaches in the field of sociology of religion. Through a review of seminal works in the sociology of religion and analysis of research in the field of embodied religion and the case of charismatic Christianity, the author convincingly demonstrates the need for an epistemological turn in the sociology of religion.

The third text in this issue reveals the importance of the body through an anthropological-cultural perspective. In the article "'BL' (Boy Love), 'GL' (Girl Love) and Female Communities of Practice and Affect in South Korea", Aljoša Pužar analyses both the narrative features and conditions of production and consumption of works in the literary genres of BL and GL in South Korea. The author does not limit the object of his research to the narratological features and meanings of works in these genres alone, but considers them in the context of grassroots communities that share understandings of genre-related practices and affects. Pužar thus presents the analytical value of the "communities of practice" concept for the field of cultural studies as an environment that is both emancipatory and limiting for marginal audiences. In doing so, he offers valuable ethnographic insights into contemporary Korean popular culture through an analysis of comic books and their reception among female audiences.

Noel Moratilla's article "Fugitive Witnessing: Stories of Indonesian Migrant Workers" continues the discussion on marginalised communities. The author takes a close look at an anthology of short stories written by Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Moratilla uses the concept of fugitive witnessing, i.e., the testimonies of those involved in illegal or not-quite-legal networks and businesses, to demonstrate the value held by the anthology for understanding the situation, experiences and self-perceptions of migrant workers as individuals and as members of a community of practices, affects and feelings. The findings also prompt reflection and call for necessary updates of established definitions of labour mobility to account for the experiences of subaltern groups.

The last article in this issue, "Between Home and the World: (Banal) National-ism and Representations of Nation in Slovenian Folk Music" by Ksenia Šabec, also examines the processes by which communities are constructed. Through the concept of banal nationalism, i.e., the routine and unconscious processes that enable the everyday reproduction of nations, the author examines the socio-cultural significance of the genre of Slovenian folk-pop music. After analysing the lyrics of the most popular folk-pop music performers in Slovenia, the author concludes that in this genre "nation" is established around the idea of the nation as a home or homeland, auto-stereotyping, and patriotism.

The issue concludes with Tim Krhlanko's expert review of the recent translation into Slovenian of Urlich Brand and Markus Wissen's monograph *The Imperial Mode of Living: Everyday Life and the Ecological Crisis of Capitalism.*

On behalf of the editorial team, we wish you a pleasant read!

Natalija Majsova and Tanja Oblak Črnič,
co-editors of *Social Science Forum*

ČLANKI

ARTICLES

Leopoldina Fortunati, Manuela Farinosi, Laura Pagani

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COVID-19 MANAGEMENT IN A LOCAL CONTEXT: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE VIEWS OF CITIZENS, TOWN COUNCILLORS, AND OFFICIALS IN TUSCANY

ABSTRACT

This study is focused on a small village in Tuscany and explores how citizens evaluate the actions and communication strategies applied by the local government during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods: semi-structured interviews with local administrators, and a survey with a representative sample of the local population. The findings show a limitedly articulated yet meaningful relationship between the central administration and the local one, a positive evaluation by citizens of the local government's management of the emergency and, generally, good social cohesion, albeit not fully supported by the engagement of civic cultures that were heavily restricted by the socially restrictive measures imposed during the pandemic.

KEY WORDS: local administration, municipality, citizenship, pandemic management, COVID-19

Lokalna uprava in upravljanje pandemije covida-19 v lokalnem okolju. Empirična raziskava o stališčih državljanov ter mestnih svetnikov in uradnikov v Toskani

IZVLEČEK

V študiji se osredotočamo na majhno vas v Toskani; raziskujemo, kako državljani ocenjujejo ukrepe in komunikacijske strategije, ki jih je med pandemijo covida-19 izvajala lokalna vlada. V raziskavi smo uporabili kombinacijo kvalitativnih in kvantitativnih metod: polstrukturirane intervjuje z lokalnimi upravitelji in anketo z reprezentativnim vzorcem lokalnega prebivalstva. Ugotovitve kažejo na omejeno artikuliran, a pomemben odnos med osrednjo in lokalno upravo, pozitivno oceno prebivalcev o upravljanju izrednih razmer s strani lokalne uprave in na splošno dobro družbeno kohezijo, čeprav ta ni bila v celoti podprta z aktivnostmi državljanskih kultur, ki so jih med pandemijo močno omejevali ukrepi družbenih omejitev.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: lokalna uprava, občina, državljanstvo, upravljanje pandemije, covid-19

1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore how the municipality of Peccioli, a small village in Tuscany (Italy), faced the COVID-19 emergency.[1] The current resident population of this town is about 4,000 people, distributed heterogeneously between the administrative centre and the hamlets. Peccioli is an avant-garde municipality, especially when compared to others of similar size in Italy. The village is known for the development of the first free TV channel in Italy, the first experiments with robots walking on public streets, and numerous contemporary art installations in the open air and freely accessible to all. The relationship between the local government and citizens is characterised by an open and proactive attitude and, over the last 30 years, has been marked by many citizen participation initiatives and experiences of public consultations promoted by the municipality to involve the broader citizenship in local planning decisions. These initiatives have made the village a sort of open-air laboratory (see Farinosi et

---

1. This research has been carried out within an agreement framework between the Municipality of Peccioli and the University of Udine.

al.2019) for testing various innovation practices, not only at the social level, but also at the environmental, administrative, and technological levels. For example, there is a large municipal solid waste treatment and disposal plant in Peccioli, known internationally for its effective management, largely inspired by the PIMPY ("Please in My Back Yard") approach.[2] In addition to the numerous initiatives with citizens' participation, it must also be emphasised that the municipality is located in Tuscany, which is the first Italian region to adopt a law promoting public debate and citizen participation within the urban planning process (Floridia 2008).

Coming back to the aim of this study, we were interested in exploring the role of the local government of a small village in coping with the pandemic at various levels. In particular, we were interested to investigate on the one hand the role played by this type of local government, juxtaposing it to the national government, and on the other, citizens' evaluation of the local government's management, as well as, civic associations' response to the pandemic and, finally, if the initiatives undertaken by the local government have contributed to maintain a sense of community (McMillan 1996) and social cohesion within the emergency context. Usually, while the national government has the task of promulgating laws and decrees by outlining the legal framework of reference and is the place where the core pandemic management decisions are made, the local government has the task of implementing them by, when necessary, adapting the content of these norms to the local context (Forgione 2020). As we have seen in this pandemic from 2020 to 2021, local governments have been at the forefront of the virus response, trying to respond to pressures related to COVID-19 and manage social care services. In some respects, we can assume that the pandemic has emphasised the enduring importance of the local government as the bearing structure of the state at local level. Thus, we aimed at investigating how the local government and citizens reacted to COVID-19 and how the local government reshaped its organisational structure and initiatives to cope with it. At the operational level, we investigated the attitudes towards the pandemic and opinions of town councillors

---

2. The plant is, in fact, managed by a joint stock company, called Belvedere, with mixed public–private capital, where approximately 64% of the shares are held by the municipality and the remaining 36% by approximately 900 small shareholders, most of whom reside in Peccioli (Belvedere 2021). It constitutes one of the few landfills in the world, which is characterised by the absence of conflict at the social level (Caspretti 2013) because, unlike other realities, in Peccioli the citizens decided to play a proactive role instead of passively accepting the choices made by the political class. In this way, city dwellers have become small shareholders, who, instead of clinging to the position of those who did not want the landfill near their home, have transformed a critical issue into a great opportunity to revamp their village.

and officials, and we explored how citizens assessed both the actions of the local government to deal with the emergency and the communication strategies implemented at a time when, due to the restrictions on public gatherings, large public events were forbidden. Citizens' reactions are usually considered crucial for understanding if local government's initiatives have been able to construct a shared consensus around them.

2 Local Government and Pandemic Management

We have many reasons to believe that an important perspective from which to observe the behaviours and initiatives of political and administrative policy is the local one, especially considering that, according to Eurostat (2020), almost a third of the European population in 2018 lived in rural areas (compared to 39.3 per cent who lived in cities and 31.6 per cent who lived in towns and suburbs). Over the last few years, the local dimension has been returning to the centre of numerous sociological reflections because it represents the physical environment where social relations are structured in-presence (De Certeau 1988; Giddens 1983) and characterised by the inhabitants' high physical participation in social life. These premises make the social relationships in small villages intense, particularly based on personal knowledge of individuals, families, and historical relationships. For example, Castells (1997) argued that to fully understand the recent change in Western societies it is necessary to start from the local context, since the profound sense of civic culture which is those beliefs and values that are shared by a group and that help it to pursuit socially valuable activities (Guiso et al. 2011) emerges precisely in the dynamics of small communities, as stated a few years later by Bauman (2000a) and Beck (2000). In more recent times, the local experience has also been taken up by a part of the literature on social platforms, which attributes to this dimension the ability to mediate the redefinition of identity, belonging, and social organisation (Gordon and De Souza e Silva 2011; van Dijck 2020). Today, proximity relationships are revealed to be potential producers not only of civic cultures but also of new forms of social and political engagement (Dahlgren 2006). Peccioli is a good example of this local dimension, where the presence of a high number of associations goes hand in hand with innovative and strong forms of political engagement. At the same time, the political relationship between the national and the local needs to be explored further, while many researchers (Balland et al. 2015; Lagendijk and Lorentzen 2007) document that proximity relationships constitute a potential space for innovation on the subject of institutional communication, as they are able to influence local decision-making processes and daily information practices.

However, some studies (Martínez and Short 2021; Rocklöv and Sjödin 2020) have also pointed out that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was most acutely felt in places where populations live in close proximity to each other and interact frequently in different social contexts (e.g. work, leisure activities, public transport). The COVID-19 pandemic, like any other emergency or crisis, was characterised by a certain tendency to centralise decision-making power, as often happens in this type of event (Konvitz 2016). Although centralisation is what normally occurs during an emergency, this tendency is not free from tensions, especially in multilevel governance systems, such as the Italian one (Malandrino and Demichelis 2020: 140), which showed the central government to play a strong role, especially in the initial phase of COVID-19 management (Mandato 2020). This tension was possibly even more marked in the US, where the national and federal levels required multilevel arrangements, complicating the response to the pandemic. Here, the conflicting messages provided by federal and state officials risked producing fragmentation and disjointed action, which, in turn, probably cost time and lives (Huberfeld et al. 2020).

Coming back to the Italian case, the tensions between the different levels of government have been exacerbated, among other things, by the ambiguous formulation of Decree-Law 6/2020, which attributed to unspecified "competent authorities" the power to take further measures to reduce the spread of the virus, and by Decree-Law 19/2020, through which the central government limited the Mayor's emergency management powers, establishing that they could not adopt measures conflicting with national prescriptions. These legislative measures contributed to increasing the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, both high-lighting issues in the allocation of power along the central–local continuum and pointing out differences in the practical outcomes of the initiatives carried out by public authorities (Malandrino and Demichelis 2020). Conversely, the legislative measures have brought to light the pivotal role that closer cooperation between the central government and local government could play in the management of the emergency: greater involvement of the local authorities might lower the level of uncertainty by virtue of their more direct knowledge of the specificities and needs of the areas under their jurisdiction (Deslatte et al. 2020). Even with limited resources, local governments can do a lot, not only taking special measures to warn their citizens about COVID-19, facilitating safety measures in the workplace, assisting the enforcement of physical distancing and confinement, and closing public venues, but also ensuring the continuation of vital municipal services (which often include health, education, and social care, especially for vulnerable groups) and working with local businesses to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on citizens' jobs and income.

Starting from this discourse, our first research question was as follows: Did Peccioli's local government simply replicate and implement what had been decided at the national level, or did it find a way to manage initiatives towards citizens? The second research question, connected to the previous one, was as follows: Was Peccioli's local government able to exploit the potential of civic engagement through associations and volunteering? We expected to find both the implementation of what was recommended by the central government adapted to the local context and great support from the world of volunteering and associations for the initiatives established by the municipality. The third research question concerned the other side of the coin, citizens: How was the pandemic management by the municipality perceived by citizens? We expected that citizens in this case were particularly in tune with the local government's management thanks to all the advantages of proximity.

3 Methodology

To answer our research questions, this study adopted two tools. Firstly, we collected ten semi-structured interviews with town councillors and officials (Table 1) to investigate the management and the institutional communication strategies of the local government during the pandemic; secondly, we administered a survey carried out with a representative sample of Peccioli's population (n= 268) to explore citizens' evaluation of both the management by the local government during the pandemic and the communication with the population by town councillors and officials.

Table 1: Positions of the interviewed town councillors and officials.

1. Mayor
2. Deputy Mayor
3. Councillor for Public Works
4. Councillor for Social Policies
5. Municipal Deputy Secretary and Head of the CUC (Single Central Purchasing Office)
6. Head of the Single Office for Public Works and Maintenance
7. Head of the Staff Services Office
8. Head of the Single Financial Service and Human Resources Office
9. Town Clerk
10. Belvedere Marketing Communication Manager

The interviews were conducted in person at the municipality headquarters in May 2021 and their transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Ryan and Bernard 2003). We opted to perform this manually. As is required in these cases, three independent judges (or coders) conducted the analysis separately. They then compared the results of their analyses and negotiated a shared decision on the elaboration of categories of meaning (Braun and Clarke 2019). The results that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews will be presented using a narrative approach that makes use of extracts from the transcripts.

From 7 July to 20 October 2020, we carried out a survey with probabilistic stratified sampling by randomly extracting participants from the municipal registry through a proportional allocation based on three sociodemographic variables: age, gender, and place of residence. Given the low response rate in a previous survey (Farinosi et al. 2020) and the low response rate that surveys generally receive (Rindfuss et al. 2015), we decided initially to almost double the sample. Among the 712 people invited, we succeeded in interviewing 268 people, obtaining a response rate of 72.5 per cent in relation to the original sample (N=356). Despite our efforts, the final sample, not unexpectedly, was affected by some representation bias regarding the limited presence of adolescents and youths in respect to the forecast and, as often happens in surveys, greater participation by women than men (e.g. Smith 2008). However, despite these limitations, we were satisfied with the response rate, knowing that increased response rates would "only slightly decrease the presence of the response bias" (Hendra and Hill 2018: 6).

In practice, the survey investigated citizens' evaluation of the initiatives and services carried out by the municipality in four areas: supply of protective devices, services to citizens, support for cultural and recreational activities, and allocation and management of funds to the neediest citizens. The sample is described in Table 2.

We add here some information about the employment characteristics of the sample in order to place it firmly within the regional and national context. If we compare the percentages of employed and unemployed in this sample with those of Tuscany and Italy as a whole, it emerges that the percentage of employed is lower than at the regional and national levels, while the percentage of unemployed is higher than at both the regional and national levels. Specifically, the percentage of employed people in 2020 in the present sample was 46.6 per cent, consistently lower than in Tuscany (66.1%) and Italy (58.0%), while the percentage of unemployed was 8.6 per cent, higher than in Tuscany (3.5%) and Italy (4.2%) (Regione Toscana 2020).

Table 2: The sociodemographic profile of the sample.

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	153	57.5%
Male	113	42.5%
Age category (years)		
Adolescent (14-18)	11	4.1%
Young people (19-24)	10	3.8%
Young adults (25-44)	54	20.3%
Adults (45-64)	106	39.8%
Older adults (>65)	85	32.0%
Education		
Primary or less	54	20.3%
Lower secondary	63	23.7%
Upper secondary	106	38.0%
University degree or higher	43	16.2%
Activity		
Employed	124	46.6%
Unemployed	23	8.6%
Housewife or househusband	18	6.8%
Pensioner	83	31.2%
Student	18	6.8%
Place of residence		
Administrative centre	164	61.7%
Hamlet	102	38.3%

Given that the lockdown was imposed to address the pandemic, at the beginning we opted for a mobile survey (Boase and Humphreys 2018); when the number of persons with COVID-19 was quite low, we gave citizens, following their request, the option to choose between a mobile or face-to-face interview. The integration of mobile and face-to-face surveys led us to implement a mixed mode of questionnaire administration. Even if purists continue to stress the need to maintain the integrity of the mode of survey administration (Bowyer and Rogowski 2017; Klausch and Schouten 2016; Schwarz et al. 1991), the constraints of the pandemic prompted us to adopt a mixed-mode survey design. We were aware that these survey designs could be effective in reaching certain sub-populations, such as older adults, adolescents, and youths, and, consequently, in improving the overall response rate. Not by chance, mixed-mode survey designs are gaining popularity in the field, although more work is needed to examine the effectiveness of the synergy of their results. The gathered data related to the survey were

analysed by means of descriptive statistics, χ^2 test and standardised residuals (Std. Residual), paired-sample *t*-test, *t*-test for independent samples, Kendall correlation coefficients, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and linear regression analysis. These analyses were performed with the software R, version 4.1.0. We present the results of both studies in the next section.

4 Results

4. 1 Town Councillors and Officials' Interviews

In these interviews, we explored if Peccioli's local government replicated and implemented what had been decided at the national level or if it was able to find its own strategies to cope with the pandemic. One relevant point is that, while the government at the national level decided to adopt the smart working mode[3], obliging public employees to work at home during the lockdowns where possible, Peccioli's municipality did not follow this indication, on the initiative of the Mayor, who asked the employees to continue working in person but safeguarded the health of employees (and citizens) by subjecting them to very frequent swabs. This choice was also followed by the staff of Belvedere, the joint stock company with mixed public–private capital, that manages the landfill in Peccioli's territory (see note 1). With this decision, these institutions aimed to respond to the logistical and organisational needs necessary to implement the various, urgent initiatives that the municipality was planning to carry out, and to provide a strong symbolic signal: "Here we are" (Mayor).

All the interviewees agreed that there was an increase in contact with citizens, even if, due to the measures for containing the spread of the virus, this translated rather into an increase in contact via telephone, e-mail, and the "Peccioli System" app (especially by young people). The key to understand this deviation from the national directive is that in a small local context, the public institution is immersed in, serves, and depends on a network of proximity relationships that exercise immediate control and require equally immediate feedback. Even

---

3. The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies defines smart working (or agile work) as a method of executing the subordinate employment relationship characterised by the absence of time or space constraints and an organisation by phases, cycles and objectives, established by agreement between the employee and the employer. Available from: https://www.forumpa.it/riforma-pa/smart-working/smart-working- -cose-come-funziona-la-normativa-e-i-vantaggi-per-le-pa/ (Accessed 21. 1. 2023). Following the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, in February 2020 a series of measures were issued to simplify access to smart working and spread its use to the maximum in the Public Administration (PA).

understanding which initiatives were more urgent and more needed by citizens was possible only by activating the resources typical of proximity, such as easy personal contact. This also implied an exercise in filling the gaps left by national government decrees which, being general, lack the implementation guidelines necessary to apply them in the specific local contexts. It must be added, however, that the decision not to adopt smart working was accompanied by a campaign of periodic swabs carried out by retired doctors and nurses. The regular swab testing of employees of the municipality and of Belvedere who were asked to work in person, and of the teachers in local schools, was guaranteed so as not to burden the staff currently working in hospitals and other health facilities. Town councillors' and officials' positive evaluation of the effectiveness of this initiative is attributed not only to the effects of the campaign in terms of reducing infection, but also to having favoured the creation of a climate of greater security and trust among the employees of the municipality and of Belvedere and pupils' families.

The situation was monitored a lot, which also gave parents security, because in any case you knew you were sending a child to an environment that was controlled (Belvedere Marketing Communication Manager).

The second local initiative represents a further deviation from the national ritualised framework that reported every day on the TV news at lunch and dinner the number of people infected, dead, and admitted to hospitals or intensive care at the national level, often in comparison with other countries. Peccioli's municipality decided not to provide a local, daily case report, although the mayors of other villages in the same district did. Peccioli's Mayor decided to avoid disclosing reports with small numbers that at a local level risked suggesting specific individuals, identifiable with names and surnames. This decision, made to "avoid a witch hunt" in the village (using the Mayor's words), did, however, generate some discontent among the citizens, who expected to have this kind of report by the municipality. However, it is one thing to give an account of large numbers which in themselves remain abstract and another thing to give small numbers which in a local situation can make citizens believe they personally know those who have become infected and therefore infringe the right to privacy of the infected.

Two initiatives instead sought to complement the action of the national government: at the local level they could be made operational immediately and their implementation concrete, while at the national level they were delayed due to the complexity of implementing a response to COVID-19 in the entire national territory. The initiatives were related to masks and economic aid. When the health authority identified masks as a fundamental tool of protection from the virus, it was difficult for the government to supply them. In this context, the municipality

of Peccioli made an agreement with two local textiles factories to produce masks and took on the task of packaging and distributing them to citizens. This initiative was identified as one of the most effective by the town councillors and officials, not only for its possible positive effect in what was believed capable of reducing the spread of the virus, but also because it represented a significant gesture of closeness and protection of the municipal administration towards citizens in a moment of profound fear and uncertainty in which surgical masks were very hard, if not impossible, to find.

> I think that at the beginning the distribution of the masks was one of the most effective things, [...] we must realise that [...] there was absolutely nothing. So, in short, that was an important signal, in my opinion (Head of the Single Office for Public Works and Maintenance).

Regarding the second topic — economic aid — it is worth reporting that the municipality of Peccioli has activated and managed a complex set of initiatives to support citizens' income affected by the pandemic: modification of the municipality budget (to free up € 500,000 to implement initiatives to support citizens), shopping vouchers to the most financially unstable citizens, contribution to youth education, dividend advance to the shareholders of Belvedere (the majority of whom are ordinary citizens), and a local business fund for small and medium-sized economic activities in the area.

Among the initiatives that half of the interviewed town councillors and officials considered most effective was the allocation of shopping vouchers to the most financially unstable citizens to be used in commercial establishments in the municipal area.

> Citizens who did not have economic resources, lost their jobs, or were doing jobs that were no longer accessible could receive relevant financial resources (Town Clerk).

This initiative not only provided direct assistance to those citizens who found themselves in economic difficulty because of the pandemic but also generated an indirect benefit thanks to the obligation to use it within the municipal territory. A virtuous wealth redistribution mechanism was put in motion, which helped local businesses in a difficult time by producing an "economic injection into the revenues of the local shops" (in the words of the Deputy Mayor).

An initiative that replicated the action of the national government and strengthened it was referral to the advice of a hygienist. The Superior Health Council gave instructions on personal hygiene (recommending washing hands often and, in any case, systematically when returning home, as well as sanitising public environments), but expert knowledge is often difficult for non-experts to

implement. The challenge was to implement all these recommendations in the best way. The municipality of Peccioli used the advice of a hygienist from the University of Pisa, who provided instructions for the sanitation and safety of the Town Hall, Belvedere, schools, and public areas. In addition, this expert participated in sessions organised with the population to provide clarification and information on the sanitation of private homes and businesses, contributing to the spread of an atmosphere of greater serenity among the population.

The pandemic almost put in crisis forms of social and political engagement by complicating the relationship between the municipality and citizens in terms of both citizens' participation in the management of the public good and volunteers' contributions, which traditionally have been very active. Regarding the first point, the increase in contacts between citizens and the municipal administration that were recorded in the initial and most acute phases of the emergency did not generate a dynamic of proactive participation among citizens. Citizens interfaced with the municipality above all to obtain information relating to socio-economic support initiatives for the sectors most affected (tourism, catering businesses, etc.) or relating to cultural initiatives, online and in person. For example, distancing measures made it impossible to organise periodic public assemblies, which were the main means of discussion and exchange between town councillors and officials and citizens before the pandemic.

Certainly, there has been a reduction in the number of meetings with citizens, since we could no longer hold assemblies (Councillor for Social Policies).

Regarding the second point, there were intense relationships during the lockdown with volunteer associations in the field of health and rescue (primarily Misericordie). Other types of association (e.g. related to sports) also assured their availability to be involved in assistance initiatives, and the municipality decided to accelerate and partially reconfigure the project called "Social Energies", which aimed at involving local associations in the co-planning and co-implementation of local welfare interventions. According to the Belvedere Marketing Communication Manager, the problem was to understand how these associations could revitalise themselves or make themselves useful at a time like this.

So we talked a lot with the associations. We also put them together to find how certain associations - for example, that of football rather than that of the Fratres group [an association of blood donors], which were used to doing certain activities, when they get together - maybe are able to give help to people who are in difficulty, or go shopping for the people who need it. That is, they can ... in some way create social energy.

The reduction in public debates has eroded citizens' ability to be proactive subjects in the civic and political life, and the difficult reshaping of volunteers' contribution has affected civic engagement.

4.2 Citizen Survey

The results we introduce in this section concern citizens and aim to depict broadly how COVID-19 impacted their situation. These findings better explain the framework in which the citizens, called to evaluate the emergency management by the municipality, found themselves. The first result involves their perception of the changes in their economic situation. Sixty-five percent of adult respondents (n=167) stated that their economic situation remained unchanged, and 6.2 per cent (n=16) said it even improved, while 28.8 per cent (n=74) said their economic situation worsened. This means that almost a third of the local population suddenly found themselves with a lower income level than before the pandemic. It is worth reporting that participants' initial economic condition was fragile, given that only 5.2 per cent of the respondents were employed indefinitely; 29.9 per cent were employed for a fixed term; 11.2 per cent were autonomous, craftspersons and self-employed professionals, such as architects, engineers, or doctors; 8.6 per cent were unemployed; 31.7 per cent were retired; 6.7 per cent were students; and another 6.7 per cent were housewives. These findings help explain the high appreciation that local citizens have of the financial support received from the municipality.

Who has suffered most from the worsening of their economic condition? The third of the population that suffered a worsening economic condition comes from all the different social groups, but especially from two groups. The first exception regards the age of participants. Young adults and adults, significantly more than the other age groups, found that their economic situation declined because of the pandemic (χ^2= 19.55, df=6, p<.01, Std. Residual 2.2 and 2.1, respectively), while older adults stated that their economic situation remained unchanged. Thanks to their pensions (χ^2= 19.55, df=6, p<.01, Std. Residual 2.9), they became an even more important economic entry for their families. The second exception involves the activity of participants. While the unemployed stated significantly more than others that their economic situation worsened (χ^2= 29.30, df=8, p<.001, Std. Residual 3.1), pensioners and students declared significantly more than others that their economic situation remained unchanged (χ^2= 29.50, df=8, p<.001, Std. Residual 3.5 and 2.0, respectively). Looking at the economic situation in conjunction with family composition, it emerged that participants who had self-sufficient older adults in their family declared that their economic situation remained unchanged (χ^2= 6.27, df=2, p<.05, Std. Residual 2.4).

A second finding is that the emotional mood of the population has worsened. Negative sentiments such as fear, anger, impotency, insecurity, and uncertainty emerged in 224 answers, while positive sentiments such as love, joy, surprise, and hope emerged in only 44. The emotional heart of the community, as proposed by Tarde (1895) to define the affective temperature of a community, has become unbalanced towards a pessimistic view of reality. Even this finding shows how relevant it was for the population to have public support to cope with the pandemic. The third finding highlights two aspects of the communication dimension. The first aspect regards the overall media consumption of Peccioli's citizens - what is generally called "the media diet" - according to which the main device used during the pandemic to get information was the television (50.0%), followed by mobile phones (27.6%), computers (17.5%), newspapers (3.0%), radio (1.5%), or no medium (0.4%). Traditional media prevail in this media diet. The second aspect regards the relevant increase in communicative activities, perhaps also due to the decrease in physical activity caused by lockdowns (Table 3).

Table 3: Communicative activities during the COVID-19 emergency.

Activity	Increased	Decreased	Unchanged	Never did this activity	Total
Inform	190 (70.9%)	8 (3.0%)	70 (26.1%)	0 (0.0%)	268
Use of social platforms	97 (55.2%)	8 (3.0%)	72 (26.9%)	91 (34.0%)	268
Watched TV	148 (55.2%)	24 (9.0%)	95 (35,4%)	1 (0.4%)	268
Watched content in streaming	87 (32.5%)	3 (1.1%)	46 (17.2%)	132 (49.3%)	268
Talked to friends, relatives	213 (79.5%)	4 (1.5%)	49 (18.3%)	2 (0.7%)	268
Online shopping	59 (22.0%)	20 (7.5%)	72 (26.9%)	117 (43.7%)	268

Table 3 shows us, first of all, the relevant increase in mediated communication in this local community and, secondly, the resistance of this community to digital media. Author (2021) already reported and discussed this, as well as why the means of communication mostly used by citizens was word of mouth (two participants did not have experience of mediated interpersonal communication during the lockdown).

We asked this sample of citizens to evaluate a series of services proposed by the local government, as well as its overall activity and communication. Overall, the local government's initiatives during COVID-19 were evaluated very positively by citizens, as Table 4 shows. In the first place, we find, not unexpectedly, the distribution of masks: the fact that the municipality provided masks to the population was the most appreciated, as reported in Table 4. Another initiative that was very appreciated by citizens was the home delivery of groceries and medicines, organised by the local government through volunteer associations (see Table 4).

Older adults and people with mobility problems especially benefited from this service. Then, three initiatives appear in the list, all regarding financial aid to citizens: the budget modification by the local government in order to allocate € 500,000 to the COVID-19 emergency; the simplification of an increase in the contribution to youth education, and the creation of shopping vouchers to support families who needed them. These measures were appreciated by citizens because they clearly tried to counter the economic waste that the pandemic had caused in several of the country's productive sectors.

Two public initiatives received the same score. The first was the telephone listening service "Tell us about your days", which provided psychological support to citizens suffering problems of loneliness or isolation or any case of general psychological malaise. The results from the exploration of the general mood of the population show how necessary this service was and why people appreciated it. The second initiative was the opening of "Le Serre", an estate of 900 hectares of greenery that offers walkers and cyclists a nature trail equipped with five picnic areas. This initiative aimed to address the physical constraints caused by the lockdown, allowing citizens to walk in safety. Citizens were required to book access through the municipality's app - "APPeccioli" – to avoid gatherings. We then asked for evaluation of the "11 Lune" festival, which in the past had attracted famous, international artists to Peccioli but had to be remodelled by involving local artists and limiting the number of attendees. This well-known cultural event suffered a little for the sudden adjustments. Moreover, there were two financial initiatives that were important for the overall community but were not perceived as important by individual citizens: the advance of the dividend to Belvedere shareholders and the allocation by the municipality, in agreement with Belvedere and the Banca Popolare di Lajatico, of a fund of € 1,000,000 to support local businesses. Finally, there was the moderate (but positive) appreciation of the "Pensavo Peccioli" festival, which has been redesigned in online mode and renamed "Cosa sarà". The resistance that many citizens of Peccioli expressed against digital media explains their negativity towards this festival, which was transferred completely online.

The differences between citizens' average evaluations are small, ranging from 3.76 to 4.82, but they are almost all significant (at least $p_s < .05$), as the paired-sample t tests reveal. Out of the 55 paired comparisons of the average evaluations of the initiatives carried out by the local government, only ten do not show a significant difference: 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 5–7, 5–8, 6–7, 6–8, 7–8, 8–9, 9–10. It is worth noticing that the scores that these initiatives received from citizens are very accurate and that the variability, measured by the coefficient of

variation,[4] is in general quite low, indicating that citizens share positive opinions about the local government's initiatives during the pandemic emergency.

Table 4: Means of citizens' evaluations of the specific initiatives of the municipality during the COVID-19 emergency on a five-point scale (from 1 "very dissatisfied" to 5 "very satisfied"), standard deviations, and coefficients of variation.

Initiative	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
1. Production and distribution of masks	4.82	0.450	9.34
2. Home delivery of groceries and medicines*	4.79	0.519	10.84
3. Budget modificiation*	4.65	0.517	11.12
4. Contribution to youth education	4.56	0.665	14.58
5. Shopping vouchers*	4.33	0.905	20.90
6. Telephone listening service "Tell us about your days"	4.31	0.782	18.14
7. "Le Serre" green space	4.31	0.980	22.74
8. "11 Lune" festival	4.21	0.962	22.85
9. Advance of dividend to the shareholders of Belvedere*	4.09	0.863	21.10
10. Local Business Fund*	4.00	0.842	21.05
11, Festival "Pensavo Peccioli"	3.76	1.052	27.98
Overall evaluation			
Management of the emergency	4.39	0.807	18.38
Institutional communication	3.72	0.965	25.94

* Items marked with an asterisk were not addressed by adolescents: thus, the number of respondents was 246.

We further explored by means of a t test for independent samples and a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc test) if the various social groups based on gender, age, and activity differed in their evaluations. The core of the differences concerns the evaluation of the two festivals, except that women also appreciate the local business fund (t_{254}=-2.80, p<.01) more than men, maybe because they value more that the small shops remain open despite the pandemic.

Appreciation of the "11 Lune" festival was very high among all the age groups, while it decreased a little bit, but significantly, among older adults ($F_{4,262}$=5.72, p<.0001). According to the Bonferroni test, their evaluation is significantly lower compared to the evaluations of other age groups, with the exception of ado-

---

4. The coefficient of variation is the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean multiplied by 100. It is used to compare the variability when the means are different from one another.

lescents. Also, the activity of participants is connected to different evaluations ($F_{4,263}$=5.39, p<.001), in the sense that pensioners expressed a significantly lower appreciation of this festival than students and the unemployed.

The evaluation of the "Pensavo Peccioli" festival, dedicated to public discussions with eminent journalists, highlights several differences among the social groups. The t test for independent samples shows that women appreciated this initiative (t_{265}=-2.78, p<.01) significantly more than men (M=3.92 vs M=3.56). Variance analysis shows that the younger groups did not give a different assessment from the older one (adolescents: M=4.27, young people: M=4.00, young adults: M=4.13 vs adults: M=3.92, older adults: M=3.26) ($F_{4,262}$=9.25, p<.0001). The Bonferroni test shows that older citizens' evaluation is lower than those of the other age groups, with the exception of young people. Participants' evaluations also differ according to activity ($F_{4,262}$=9.25, p<.0001), as pensioners' evaluation is lower than that of students and housewives. Older citizens' limited appreciation of these festivals is not surprising because old people usually experience a certain inertia in their artistic tastes (e.g. music) and cultural interests, which remain similar to when they were young.

Citizens with a disabled family member attribute a lower evaluation to initiatives such as the telephone listening service "Tell us about your days" (t_{265}=1.98, p<.05) and the advance of dividends to the shareholders of Belvedere (t_{254}=2.32, p<.05), because these initiatives probably were not able to resolve their material problems.

Two unexpected variables draw our attention: place of residence (living in Peccioli or the hamlets) and the presence of self-sufficient older adults in the family. The first variable is related not only to the two festivals, but to all the initiatives carried out by the local government, except the masks. Participants living in the hamlets give a significantly lower evaluation than those living in Peccioli to the two festivals, "Pensavo Peccioli" (t_{265}=2.37, p<.05) and "11 Lune" (t_{265}=2.72, p<.01), and of the opening of the green space of "Le Serre" (t_{265}=2.65, p<.01) and the financial support for youth education (t_{265}=2.45, p<.05). The geographical distance between the national and local levels is also represented in the microcosm of a small village and its hamlets. This finding invites reflection on the value of proximity in the management of political consent.

Having self-sufficient older adults in the family also causes participants to give a significantly lower evaluation of the "Pensavo Peccioli" (t_{265}=4.68, p<.0001) and "11 Lune" festivals (t_{265}=3.05, p<.01), the opening of the green space "Le Serre" (t_{265}=2.18, p<.05), the budget modification (t_{254}=2.52, p<.05), and shopping vouchers (t_{254}=2.14, p<.05). These results are in line with the muted enthusiasm of older adults for the festivals and their minor sensitivity to the

financial problems created by the pandemic, maybe because they receive their pension every month.

Overall evaluation of the management of the emergency by the local government and its institutional communication during the lockdown is positive, with a moderate standard deviation (respectively $M=4.39$, $SD=.807$; $M=3.72$, $SD=.965$), which indicates moderate variability of the answers (Table 4). However, according to the paired-sample t test, the first score is significantly higher than the second one ($t_{266}=12.54$, $p<.0001$), which means that there is room for improvement in communication methods and strategies on the part of the municipality. Furthermore, there is a moderate and significant correlation between the two items ($r=.418$ according to the Kendall rank correlation coefficient $p<.001$) in the sense that as appreciation for the work of the municipality increases, so does the appreciation for institutional communication. Based on their standard deviations, we did not expect great diversification of these two assessments when crossed with other variables.

We ran two linear multiple regressions analyses regarding the evaluation of the local government's administrative and communication activity, considering as independent variables gender, age, activity, place of residence, change in economic situation during the emergency, and the average score of all the evaluations regarding the local government's initiatives. In respect of the first item investigated (evaluation of the local government's management), an overall significant regression was found ($F_{9,247} = 21.31$, $p<.0001$), with an adjusted r^2 of $.4166$. It emerged that being occupied and the average score of all the evaluations are significant predictors of the assessment of the local government's management. In particular, being occupied ($\beta = -0.3822$, $p.<.05$) yields a lower score compared to the other categories, while the average score of all the single evaluations is positively related to the overall assessment of the local government's activity ($\beta = 0.9992$, $p.<.0001$). With regard to the communication activity of the local government, another significant regression was found ($F_{9,246}= 11.68$, $p<.0001$), with an adjusted r^2 of $.2737$. It emerged that the only significant predictors here are a change in citizens' economic situation during the pandemic and the average score of all their evaluations of local government's management. In particular, we found that experiencing improvement in one's economic situation causes participants to give a higher judgement ($\beta = 0.2175$, $p.<.05$) and that the average assessment of the local government's activity is positively related to the evaluation of local government's communication ($\beta = 1.1136$, $p.<.0001$). We remind the reader, though, that for 65.0 per cent of citizens the economic situation was unchanged, for 6.2 per cent it was improved, and for 28.8 per cent it worsened.

5 Discussion

We will use our research questions as a guide to structure the discussion of the results. We begin by providing an answer to our first research question: Did the local government replicate and implement what had been decided at the national level or did it elaborate any specific strategy? The study documented that, given the large political, cultural, social and organisational distance between the national level and the local level, it was inevitable that something would be achieved within the terms set by the central level, while other measures often aimed to fill gaps or even to anticipate the decisions of the central government, and others deviated from the national trends in order to be more adherent to the needs of the local community.

Our second research question was as follows: Was Peccioli's municipality able, at the local level, to exploit the potential of civic cultures? What emerged from this study suggests a limitedly positive answer, since the quarantine cancelled the public space as the dimension where citizens could play a proactive role in the management of the public good, and it hindered the activities of volunteer associations.

The third research question was as follows: How was the municipality's pandemic management perceived by citizens? As we expected, citizens expressed a firm consensus towards the local government's behaviours, thanks to the advantages of proximity. Although there was a margin for improvement in the communicative relationship between citizens and the local government, the overall emergency management received solid approval from citizens, highlighting that the social body of the village is based on strong sense of community and social cohesion. This is, of course, thanks to both citizens and local government.

A final comment on how qualitative and quantitative data have intertwined in this study: they were complementary, since they were able to document both the perspective of those who had to manage, politically and organizationally, an unprecedented situation like the pandemic and that of citizens, who were invited to evaluate how effective the local government had been in its management.

6 Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study

The strong point of this study is that the approach adopted made it possible to analyse the perspective of both citizens and town councillors and officials, which allowed us to have a more complete vision of the management of the COVID-19 emergency. The main weak points of the study are as follows: a) all the measures presented and discussed here are self-reported measures and thus may be affected by interpretative biases related to the presentation of the self

and to social desirability, a limit that characterises almost all surveys; and b) the limited number of interviews with town councillors and officials.

Future research could further reflect on the significance of the local political experience on the part of town councillors and officials during the pandemic, also in terms of the possible innovations triggered by the management of this emergency. Furthermore, it is necessary to introduce new methodological tools to develop the empirical part further by integrating it with new approaches ((e.g. gamification applied to public participation, Open Space Technology (OST), etc.)).

Bibliography

Balland, Pierre-Alexandre, Boschma, Ron, and Frenken, Koen (2015): Proximity and Innovation: From Statics to Dynamics. Regional Studies, 49: 907–920. DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2014.883598.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000a): Missing community. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000b): Globalization. New York: Columbia University Press.

Beck, Ulrich (2000): I rischi della libertà. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Belvedere (2021): Società trasparente. Available from: https://belvedere.peccioli.net/societa-trasparente/ (Accessed 21. 1. 2023).

Boase, Jeffrey, and Humphreys, Lee (2018): Mobile methods: Explorations, innovations, and reflections. Mobile media and Communication, 6: 153–162. DOI: 10.1177/2050157918764215.

Boyatzis, Richard E. (1998): Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Bowyer, Benjamin, and Rogowski, Jon C. (2017): Mode Matters: Evaluating Response Comparability in a Mixed-Mode Survey. Political Science Research and Methods, 5: 295–313. DOI:10.1017/psrm.2015.28.

Braun, Virginia, and Clarke, Victoria (2019): Thematic analysis. In P. Liamputtong (ed.): Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences: 843–860. Singapore: Springer.

Caspretti, Stefano (2013): La strategia del consenso nel caso della discarica di Peccioli. Partecipazione e Conflitto, 6: 102–120. DOI: 10.3280/PACO2013-001006.

Castells, Manuel (1997): Local and Global: The management of cities in the information age. London: Earthscan.

Dahlgren, Paul (2006): Doing citizenship: The cultural origins of civic agency in the public sphere. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 9: 267–286. DOI: 10.1177/1367549406066073.

De Certeau, Michel (1988): The practice of everyday life. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Deslatte, Aaron, Hatch, Megan E., and Stokan, Eric (2020): How Can Local Governments Address Pandemic Inequities? Public Administration Review, 80: 827–831. DOI: 10.1111/puar.13257.

Eurostat (2020): Urban and rural living in the EU. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200207-1 (Accessed 21. 1. 2023).

Farinosi, Manuela, Fortunati, Leopoldina, O'Sullivan, John, and Pagani, Laura (2019): Enhancing classical methodological tools to foster participatory dimensions in local urban planning. Cities, 88: 235–242. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.11.003.

Farinosi, Manuela, Fortunati, Leopoldina, O'Sullivan, John, and Pagani, Laura (2020): Capturing citizens' opinions through a combination of survey and online social data. International Journal of Communication, 14: 3655–3680.

Floridia, Antonio (2008): Democrazia deliberativa, dalla teoria alle procedure: la legge della Regione Toscana sulla partecipazione. Stato e Mercato, 82: 83–110.

Forgione, Ilde (2020): La gestione locale dell'emergenza da Covid-19. Il diritto dell'economia, 66: 71–105.

Giddens, Anthony (1983): Comments on the Theory of Structuration. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 13: 75–80. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1983.tb00463.x.

Gordon, Eric, and De Souza e Silva, Adriana (2011): Net locality. Why location matters in a networked world. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Guiso, Luigi., Sapienza, Paola, and Zingales, Luigi (2011): Civic capital as the missing link. In J. Benhabib, M. O Jackson, and A. Bisin (eds.): The Handbook of Social Economics: 417–480. San Diego and Amsterdam: Elsevier. Available from: http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol32/26/. DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2015.32.26 (Accessed 21. 1. 2023).

Hendra, Richard., and Hill, Aaron (2018): Rethinking Response Rates. Evaluation Review, 43: 307–330. DOI: 10.1177/0193841X18807719.

Huberfeld, Nicole, Gordon, Sarah, and Jones, David K. (2020): Federalism Complicates the Response to the COVID-19 Health and Economic Crisis: What Can Be Done? Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law, 45: 951–965. DOI: 10.1215/03616878-8641493.

Klausch, Thomas, and Schouten, Barry (2016): Mixed-Mode Surveys. Wiley StatsRef. DOI: 10.1002/9781118445112.stat07869.

Konvitz, Josef W. (2016): Cities and Crisis. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lagendijk, Arnoud, and Lorentzen, Anne (2007): Proximity, Knowledge and Innovation in Peripheral Regions. European Planning Studies, 15: 457–466. DOI: 10.1080/09654310601133260.

Malandrino, Anna, and Demichelis, Elena (2020): Conflict in decision making and variation in public administration outcomes in Italy during the COVID-19 crisis. European Policy Analysis, 6: 138–146. DOI: 10.1002/epa2.1093.

Mandato, Marco (2020): Il rapporto Stato-Regioni nella gestione del COVID-19. Nomos: Le attualità del diritto, 1: 1–8.

Martínez, Lina, and Short, John R. (2021): The Pandemic City: Urban Issues in the Time of COVID-19. Sustainability, 13: 3295. DOI: 10.3390/su13063295.

McMillan, David W. (1996). Sense of community. Journal of Community Psychology, 24 (4): 315–25.

Perrotti, Daniela (2012): La ruralité urbaine. Environnement urbain/Urban environment, 6: 100–117. DOI: 10.7202/1013715ar.

Regione Toscana (2020): Statistiche Flash. Available at: https://www.regione.tosca-na.it/documents/10180/ 11935533/Statistiche+flash+occupazione+3+trimestre+2020.pdf/25e341ab-4fdc-98a4-a1a6-b6264662ad5b?t= 1607943582056 (Accessed 22. 1. 2023).

Rindfuss, Ronald R., Choe Kim, Minja, Tsuya, Noriko O., Bumpass, Larry L., and Tamaki, Emi (2015): Do low survey response rates bias results? Evidence from Japan. Demographic Research, 32: 797–828.

Ryan, Gery W., and H. Russell, Bernard (2003): Techniques to identify themes. Field Methods, 15: 85–109. DOI: 10.1177/1525822X02239569.

Rocklöv, Joacim, and Henrik, Sjödin (2020): High population densities catalyse the spread of COVID-19. Journal of Travel Medicine, 27: taaa038. DOI: 10.1093/jtm/taaa038.

Schwarz, Norbert, Fritz, Strack, Hans-J., Hippler, and George, Bishop (1991): The impact of administration mode on response effects in survey measurement. Applied Cognitive Psychology, 5: 193–212. DOI: 10.1002/acp.2350050304.

Silverman, David (2016): Qualitative Research. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Smith, William G. (2008). Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation? A Record-Linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online Survey Response Behavior. Available from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED501717 (Accessed 21. 1. 2023).

Tarde, Gabriel (1895). La logique sociale. Félix Alcan: Paris.

Van Dijck, José (2020): Seeing the forest for the trees: Visualizing platformization and its governance. New Media and Society, 23 (9): 2801–2819. DOI: 10.1177/1461444820940293.

Authors' data

Dr. **Leopoldina Fortunati**, Senior professor
University of Udine, Department of Mathematics, Computer Science and Physics
Via delle scienze, 206, 33100 Udine, Italy
E-mail: leopoldina.fortunati@uniud.it
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9691-6870

Dr. **Manuela Farinosi**, Associate Professor
Department of Mathematics, Computer Science and Physics, University of Udine
Via delle Scienze, 206, 33100 Udine, Italy
E-mail: manuela.farinosi@uniud.it
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8404-3187

Dr. **Laura Pagani**, Associate Professor
Department of Economics and Statistical Sciences, University of Udine
Via Tomadini, 30/a, 33100 Udine, Italy
E-mail: laura.pagani@uniud.it
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7052-7498

Igor Jurekovič

ONKRAJ REDUKCIJE RELIGIJE NA VEROVANJE: ZAKAJ KONCEPTUALIZIRATI TELO V PREUČEVANJU RELIGIJE

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku pokažemo, zakaj je analitično zmotno reducirati religijo na verovanje. Sprva na podlagi pregleda relevantnih virov pokažemo na obstoj družbenega konsenza, ki pravi, da je religija stvar verovanja. Nadalje pokažemo, da si ta isti konsenz deli eden izmed prevladujočih raziskovalnih programov sociologije religije – teorija racionalne izbire. V drugem delu prispevka pokažemo, da bi s konsenzom morali prelomiti na podlagi dveh primerov: utelešene religije in karizmatičnega krščanstva. Raziskave utelešene religije učijo, da delovanja človeške kognicije ni mogoče ločiti od telesa. Hkrati primer karizmatičnega krščanstva predstavlja globalno popularno religijo, za katero je značilno, da je izrazito telesna. Na podlagi primerov besedilo sklenemo s pozivom k epistemološkemu prelomu v luči aktualnih in napovedanih sprememb religijske demografije.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: religija, verovanje, telo, karizmatično krščanstvo, utelešena religija

Beyond the Reduction of Religion to Belief: Why We Should Conceptualise the Body in the Study of Religion

ABSTRACT

The paper demonstrates why reducing religion to a belief is analytically incorrect. First, we point to a social consensus that views religion primarily as a matter of belief. Further, we show that this consensus is shared by one of the most popular research programmes in the sociology of religion – rational choice theory.

Second, we argue the consensus should be reconsidered in light of recent research on embodied religion and Charismatic Christianity. The former reveals that the workings of human cognition cannot be separated from the body. Moreover, the example of Charismatic Christianity represents a globally popular religion characterised by its distinctly corporeal character. Based on these examples, the text concludes by making a call for an epistemological break in the light of current and projected changes in religious demography.

KEY WORDS: religion, faith, body, Charismatic Christianity, embodied religion

1 Uvod[1]

Telo je v zadnjih štiridesetih letih postalo izjemno popularno v preučevanju humanistike in družboslovja. V tem času so se oblikovale različne dominantne paradigme teorij telesa: fenomenologija telesa ter teorije utelešenosti, sociologija telesa in kulturno-antropološke teorije telesa (Koch 2012: 8–20). Trendu preučevanja telesa ni ušlo niti nekonfesionalno preučevanje religije. Četudi si pri izbiri paradigme telesa ni edino, je telo tudi v družboslovnem preučevanju religije postalo eden ključnih analitičnih poudarkov. Sodobno nekonfesionalno preučevanje religije namreč zaznamuje t. i. materialni obrat (Hazard 2013; Meyer, Morgan, Paine in Plate 2010). Gre za paradigmatski premik k preučevanju religije, ki v središče raziskovalnega zanimanja postavi »predmete, prakse, prostore, telesa in občutke« (Hazard 2013: 58). V tem sklopu so mdr. nastale študije religijske vizualne kulture (Morgan 2010), preučevanja religijskih prostorov (Beekers in Tamimi Arab 2016) ter, na primer, konstitutivne vloge svetlobe in zvoka v religijskem obredju (Rakow 2020) in religijskih teles (Purkis 2019).

Med naborom različnih religijskih materialnosti se v tem besedilu osredotočamo na telo. Menimo, da je analitični premik h konceptualizaciji religijskega telesa nujna posledica okostenelih, epistemoloških okvirov modernega preučevanja religije, ki so jo snovalci znanstvenega preučevanja religije razumeli kot »nabor prepričanj, s katerimi se posameznik zavestno strinja« (Hazard 2013: 58). Kritiki moderne opredelitve religije trdijo, da teoretsko in analitično neupravičeno postavlja materialne razsežnosti religij v ozadje, tj. da jih razume kot »manj pomembne *manifestacije* predhodnih verovanj ali idej, ki dosežejo popoln izraz v diskurzivnih oblikah, kot so doktrine« (ibid., poudarek dodan). V znanstveni literaturi materialističnih preučevanj religije poznamo takšno konceptualno na-

---

gnjenje kot »protestantsko pristranskost« (Furey 2012; Meyer in Houtman 2012) ali »protestantski idealizem« (Bräunlein 2016: 371). Protestantizem – oziroma z njim povezani družbeni in teološki prevrati – naj bi »oblikoval in stabiliziral globoko zakoreninjeno prepričanje, da je prava religija stvar ,prepričanja' ali ,vere' in posameznikove notranjosti; poudarek na središčnosti *pomena* in *prezir do materialnih oblik sta protestantski dediščini*« (ibid.: 372, poudarki dodani).

V pričujočem prispevku želimo pokazati, da telesa ne gre analizirati zgolj zato, da bi dopolnili morebitne raziskovalne niše, temveč da bi privedli do epistemološkega preloma v samem načinu razumevanja in preučevanja religije. S pričujočim besedilom želimo slovensko preučevanje religije priključiti materialnemu obratu, kateremu, kolikor nam je znano, se slovensko družboslovno preučevanje religije še ni posvetilo. To bomo storili v dveh korakih. Najprej bomo na podlagi slovarskih, pravnih in pedagoških virov skicirali družbeni konsenz o enačenju religije in vere. Ker pa je namen besedila spodbuditi prevetritev raziskovanja, bomo nato na primeru teorije racionalne izbire (TRI) v kontekstu religije pokazali, da se isti konsenz preslikava tudi na raven najpopularnejših analitičnih pristopov. V drugem delu besedila želimo pokazati, zakaj je analitično smiselno ta konsenz prelomiti. To bomo storili na primeru znanstvenih odkritij s področja utelešene religije (ang. *embodied religion*) in na podlagi empiričnega primera karizmatičnega krščanstva, za katerega raziskovalci dokazujejo, da gre za primer izrazito telesne religije. V zaključku bomo strnili analizo in jo kontekstualizirali v luči napovedanih sprememb religijske demografije.

Besedilo predstavlja v prvi vrsti *konceptualni* doprinos k slovenski sociologiji religije. Temu primerno je prispevek metodološko zamejen. V prvem delu kritično analiziramo diskurz redukcije religije na verovanje v relevantnih slovarskih, zakonodajnih in pedagoških virih, s čimer želimo pokazati na konstrukcijo in reprodukcijo vednosti o religiji (Hjelm 2011). S tovrstnim pristopom nadaljujemo v sklopu kritike TRI v kontekstu religije, pri čemer se osredotočamo na kritično branje del utemeljitelja teorije racionalne izbire Rodneyja Starka (Stark in Bainbridge 2007; Stark, 1999). V tretjem poglavju sintetiziramo in analiziramo relevantno znanstveno literaturo s področja utelešene religije in karizmatičnega krščanstva. Ker področji ne poznata opravljenega sistematičnega pregleda literature, smo za potrebe obsežnejše raziskave to storili sami. Pri analizi študij se poslužujemo kritičnega branja z epistemološke pozicije materialnega obrata.

2 Oris konsenza

Poznamo več različnih pristopov k opredelitvi religij. Po Stausberg in Gardiner (2016: 16–24) jih lahko delimo na slovarske, realne in določevalne. Slovarske definicije opisujejo »načine uporabe termina v jezikovni skupnosti« (ibid.: 17), zaradi česar so uporabne kot splošne orientacije po vsakdanji rabi termina. Med realnimi definicijami, ki predpostavljajo »objektivni obstoj, katerega značilnosti so njemu lastne« (ibid.: 16), najdemo večino družboslovnih, tj. znanstvenih opredelitev. Določevalne definicije pa so redkejše – pri tovrstnih opredelitvah ne gre za vprašanje splošne definicije, temveč za vnaprej pripravljeno definicijo, ki je lahko bolj ali manj uporabna znotraj *posamezne* študije. Torej, da bi ugotovili, kakšen je družbeni konsenz o opredeljevanju religije, moramo analizirati vire slovarskih in realnih definicij. Namen pregleda slovarskih definicij je razumeti *vsakdanjo* rabo termina, zato bomo k obravnavi prišteli še pravne in izobraževalne opredelitve religije, saj te prav tako kažejo na obči način uporabe termina. Slovarske, pravne in izobraževalne opredelitve bomo analizirali v preostanku tega poglavja, realnim pa se bomo posvetili v tretjem. Tako bomo pokazali, kaj drži za družbeni konsenz o razumevanju religije in kako se ta odseva tudi na ravni najpopularnejših realnih definicij.

2.1 Slovarska razsežnost konsenza

Pod geslom »religija« v Slovarju slovenskega knjižnega jezika (FRAN 2014) najprej izvemo, da religija pomeni »zavest o obstoju boga, nadnaravnih sil« oziroma »vera, verovanje«. V pojasnitvi podpomena besede slovar pravi, da gre za »sistem naukov, norm, vrednot in dejanj, obredov, *v katerih se ta zavest kaže* (ibid., poudarki dodani). Drugi pomen besede religija pa SSKJ razume kot »nazor, prepričanje, ki velja kot najvišja, najpomembnejša vrednota«, na primer »humanizem je religija našega časa« (ibid.). Drugi pomen je morda manj običajen, a vseeno skupaj s prvim tvori rdečo nit: pri religiji gre za trdno prepričanje oziroma verovanje – v boga ali nadnaravne sile, če religije ne razumemo v drugem, prenesenem pomenu. Bistveni del tovrstnega razumevanja religije je prepričanje, da se v dejanjih in obredih *kaže* religija. Religijski rituali torej niso konstitutivni del religije kot take, temveč predstavljajo njeno manifestacijo. Čeprav se bomo družboslovnim opredelitvam posvetili v nadaljevanju, gre na tem mestu izpostaviti še strokovno slovarsko definicijo religije, ki jo lahko najdemo v leksikonu Cankarjeve založbe, posvečenem družboslovju (Družboslovje 1979). Glede na to, da je delo izšlo leta 1979, morda ni presenetljivo, da je opredelitev marksistična. Religija je, namreč, »oblika odtujene družb. *zavesti*, ki ima večkrat značaj *svet. nazora* in zrcali v obliki nadnaravnih sil (boga, bogov, demonov,

svetnikov itd.) prevladujoče naravne in družb. sile« (ibid.: 248, poudarki dodani). Torej, tako na ravni splošnih kakor tudi na ravni strokovnih slovarjev ugotovimo, da je religija stvar verovanja in drugih mentalnih kategorij, kot sta zavest in svetovni nazor, ki se *kaže* v dejanjih in obredih.

2.2 Pravna razsežnost konsenza

Natančnih pravnih opredelitev religij v demokratičnih državah ne poznamo (Črnič 2001: 1006). Še najbližji uradni približek definicijam religije najdemo v zakonih in ustavnih členih, ki opredeljujejo svobodo vesti ali kar *veroizpovedi*. Uporaba tega izrazito krščanskega koncepta kot sopomenke religije je še zlasti problematična v luči sodobnih, religijsko pluralnih družb. Pojem veroizpoved je iztrgan iz svojega teološkega konteksta in abstrahiran na mesto skupnega imenovalca vseh religij. Tako je v 41. členu slovenske ustave, ki narekuje področje svobode vesti, zapisano, da je »*izpovedovanje* vere in drugih opredelitev v zasebnem in javnem življenju svobodno« (Ustava Republike Slovenije 1991, poudarek dodan). Če ob strani vendarle pustimo izrazito problematično sklicevanje na *izpovedovanje* vere, opazimo, da je svoboda vesti – *misli* – tista, ki zajema tudi versko svobodo. Podobno rdečo nit najdemo v drugih zakonskih aktih. Zakon o verski svobodi (ZVS) v svojem 2. členu opredeli versko svobodo, ki »obsega pravico do svobodne izbire ali sprejetja *vere*, svobodo izražanja *verskega* prepričanja in odklonitve njenega *izražanja* ter svobodo, da vsakdo sam ali skupaj z drugimi, zasebno ali javno *izraža* svojo *vero* v bogoslužju, pouku, praksi in verskih obredih ali drugače« (Zakon o verski svobodi 2007, poudarki dodani). V 7. členu ZVS, v katerem je opredeljena cerkev ali druga verska skupnost, pridemo najbližje neposredni opredelitvi religije (ibid., poudarki dodani):

> *Cerkev ali druga verska skupnost je prostovoljno, nepridobitno združenje fizičnih oseb iste veroizpovedi, ki se ustanovi z namenom javnega in zasebnega izpovedovanja te vere ter ima lastno strukturo, organe in avtonomna interna pravila, lastno bogoslužje ali drugo versko obredje in* izpovedovanje vere.

Navedbe 2. in 7. člena ZVS jasno pokažejo, da je religija stvar vere ali prepričanja, ki se izraža skozi religijsko obredje. ZVS je nadalje relevanten, saj opredeljuje postopek registracije cerkva in drugih verskih skupnosti. Institut cerkve ali druge verske skupnosti je edini pravno-formalni način, preko katerega država prepozna določeno skupnost kot versko oziroma religijsko. ZVS med 13. in 21. členom ureja registracijo, delovanje in prekinitev statusa cerkve in druge verske skupnosti. Z vidika razumevanja religije je najbolj zanimiv 14.

člen, ki narekuje, kaj mora skupnost ob prijavi priložiti. Tretja točka člena zahteva poleg administrativnih podatkov tudi predložitev »opisa temeljev svojega *verovanja* v slovenskem jeziku, v katerem opredeli svoj verski nauk in svoje versko poslanstvo, svoje bogoslužje in druge verske obrede ter svoje morebitne verske praznike« (ibid.). Obenem mora skupnost predstaviti »temeljna verska besedila cerkve ali druge verske skupnosti v integralnem besedilu« in ustanovne akte. Skozi slovensko zakonodajo se tako izrisuje konsenz redukcije religije na vero, k čemur dodamo še združevanje v ustanove, ki temeljijo na svetih besedilih, ter organizirajo versko obredje, preko katerega posamezniki in skupnost izražajo svojo vero. Prav te poteze predstavljajo tipično redukcijo religije na verovanje (Spickard 2017: 21–26), ki ga v nekonfesionalnem preučevanju religije razumemo kot protestantsko pristranskost (Meyer in Houtman 2012).

Krovni akt, ki ureja področje religije na ravni Evropske unije, je Konvencija o varstvu človekovih pravic in temeljnih svoboščin (1950). Povedno je, da besede »religija« ne bomo našli v slovenskem prevodu Konvencije – pač pa besedilo v ta namen vztrajno uporablja besedo »vera«. Slednjo ureja 9. člen (Svoboda mišljenja, vesti in vere), ki v prvi točki pravi, da ima vsakdo pravico do svobode mišljenja, vesti in vere. Druga točka, ki govori o omejevanju, pravi, da lahko »svobodo izpovedovanja vere ali prepričanja« določi le zakon (npr. Zakon o verski svobodi). Besedilo Konvencije je med drugim zanimivo, ko slovensko verzijo primerjamo z angleško. V angleščini namreč 9. člen (Svoboda mišljenja, vesti in religije) pravi, da ima »vsakdo pravico do svobode misli, vesti in *religije*« (poudarek dodan). Prav tako v drugi točki člena ne beremo o omejevanju svobode »izpovedovanja vere ali prepričanja«, temveč o »svobodnem *izkazovanju* religije ali prepričanj« (Konvencija o varstvu človekovih pravic in temeljnih svoboščin, 1950). Skratka, angleška verzija Konvencije vsaj na površini vztraja pri razlikovanju med religijo in verovanjem, čeprav tudi sama govori o izkazovanju religije skozi obredje. Po drugi strani pa je slovensko pravno pojmovanje, ki vztraja pri uporabi besede »vera« in ga je mdr. moč razbrati iz slovenskega prevod Konvencije, v očitnem nesoglasju z nekaterimi ključnimi mednarodnimi konvencijami.

Črnič (2001) v svojem prispevku k sodobnim družboslovnim opredelitvam religije sicer opozori, da se med sodnimi procesi oblikujejo vsaj delovne opredelitve religije, h katerim prispevajo strokovni izvedenci – družboslovci. Toda avtor opozarja, da si pravna praksa v tej točki ni edina: »Včasih prevlada strokovno mnenje, pogosto pa so institucionalne odločitve oblikovane na temelju popularnih definicij religije« (ibid.: 1007). V tej luči so zakonski in ustavni členi vseeno najboljši približek pravnim opredelitvam religije. Čeprav lahko zaključimo, da pravna ureditev držav religije neposredno ne opredeli, nam opredelitve verske svobode ter cerkva in verskih organizacij vendarle razkrijejo nekaj o značilnostih

religije, kot jih razume naša pravna ureditev. Karkoli je že religija, slovensko pravo trdi, da mora biti v tesnem stiku z verovanjem, ki ga posameznik, praviloma vključen v skupnost, ki temelji na svetem besedilu, lahko svobodno izraža v zasebnem ali javnem življenju.

2.3 Pedagoška razsežnost konsenza

Preden si pobliže pogledamo družboslovne opredelitve religije, se na kratko pomudimo še pri opredelitvah religije, ki izhajajo iz izobraževalnega gradiva šolskega pouka o religijah. To naj bi bil nenazadnje prostor oblikovanja osnov religijske pismenosti. Učenec slovenske javne šole se lahko o religiji uči bodisi pri specializiranem, obveznem izbirnem predmetu verstva in etika bodisi v okviru vsebin drugih predmetov, npr. zgodovine ali slovenščine. Ker je vsebina nespecializiranega pouka o religijah odvisna od učitelja, se osredotočimo na specializirani predmet o religiji. Pri tem gre najprej opozoriti na nedavno študijo *Religija in javna šola* (2021), v kateri avtorja Črnič in Pogačnik ugotavljata, da je obisk predmeta verstva in etika minoren. Predmet je največjo stopnjo priljubljenosti doživel med šolskima letoma 2004/05 in 2007/08, ko ga je na leto izbralo povprečno 1713 oziroma le trije odstotki vseh slovenskih šolarjev zadnjega triletja. S šolskim letom 2008/09 se začne znaten upad popularnosti – v zadnjem analiziranem letu, 2017/18, je predmet na leto povprečno obiskovalo le 376 oziroma 0,6 odstotka učencev (Črnič in Pogačnik 2021: 85). Torej, ne glede na vsebino predmeta ne moremo pričakovati, da bi predmet pomembno vplival na predstave šolarjev o tem, kaj religija je. Še več: tudi če bi predmet učenci množično obiskovali, Črnič in Pogačnik ugotavljata, da je opazen »manko vsaj najbolj osnovnih družboslovnih konceptov in teorij« ter da predmet »svojega osrednjega koncepta obravnave sploh ne definira« (ibid.: 81). Z drugimi besedami: pričakovati gre, da je vsebina predmeta zavezana zastarelim koncepcijam religije, ki jo enačijo z vero.

Tako lahko iz učnega načrta predmeta verstva in etika (Krševan in drugi 2005) razberemo, da »verstva in verske tradicije v zgodovini in danes vplivajo na način soočanja ljudi z eksistencialnimi, nazorskimi in etičnimi vprašanji« (ibid.: 5). Nadalje izvemo, da je med splošnimi cilji predmeta »razvijanje zmožnosti za soočanje z vprašanjem smisla /.../ s poznavanjem različnih tradicij in perspektiv kot opor ter spodbud pri usmerjanju in osmišljanju lastnega življenja« ter pridobivanje »kritičnega odnosa do religijskih (in tem vzporednih nereligijskih) tradicij in ponudb« (ibid.: 9). Skratka, učni načrt predmeta verstva in etika nam na prvi pogled ne pove kaj dosti, a vendarle dovolj, da lahko razberemo konsenz, na katerega smo opozorili že pri slovarski in pravni razsežnosti. Na to težavo opozorita tudi Črnič in Pogačnik na ravni imena predmeta, ki »zavajajoče enači religijo z elementom verovanja« (2021: 93).

Pokazali smo na bolj ali manj trden obstoj redukcionističnega razumevanje religije v vsakdanji rabi. Tako slovarske kakor tudi pravne in šolske opredelitve religije pravijo, da gre v prvi vrsti za verovanje, bodisi v boga, bogove ali nadnaravne sile, ki ga je moč *izražati* na različne načine, bodisi zasebno bodisi vključeno v verske ustanove, ki temeljijo na svetih knjigah.

3 Konsenz na ravni sociologije religije

V zadnjem koraku skiciranja konsenza se posvetimo še realnim definicijam religije. Druge študije so pokazale, da učbeniško razumevanje religije v sociologiji pravi, da gre pri religiji za družbeni pojav, za katerega so značilna verovanja, ki jih posedujejo posamezniki, ki so združeni v posebne institucije, temelječe na svetih besedilih, in v katerih sodelujejo v verskih obredih (Spickard 2017: 21–26). Da bi natančno pokazali na prevladujoči konsenz redukcije religije na vero, ki jo posameznik ali skupnost izražata v institucionaliziranih obredih, bomo na tem mestu to storili na točno določenem primeru pristopov sociologije religije. Nemara najboljšo ponazoritev teh trdovratnih epistemoloških in ontoloških okovov namreč predstavlja teorija racionalne izbire v kontekstu religije, ki »spada med pomembnejše teoretične koncepte v sodobnem družboslovju« (Lavrič 2007: 39). TRI je v sociologiji religije[2] v zadnjih štiridesetih letih postala eden izmed prevladujočih raziskovalnih programov, zlasti znotraj ameriške sociologije (Spickard 2017: 21), zato jo upravičeno analiziramo kot manifestacijo redukcionističnega konsenza v sociološkem raziskovanju religije.

Po Rodneyju Starku in Williamu Bainbridgu (2007), utemeljiteljih teorije racionalne izbire v kontekstu preučevanja religije, »ljudje iščejo to, kar zaznavajo kot nagrado, in se izogibajo temu, kar zaznavajo kot strošek« (ibid.: 36). Pri tem avtorja nagrade in stroške opredelita tavtološko: stroški so tisto, »čemur se ljudje skušajo izogniti«, nagrade pa tisto, »za kar si ljudje povzročijo stroške, da bi jih dobili« (ibid.). Nagrade so različne: variirajo od zelo specifičnih, kot je dopustovanje na morju, do zelo splošnih, na primer osebna sreča in mir na svetu. Tudi njihova vrednost ni enaka – nekaterih si preprosto želimo bolj kot drugih. Na tej točki teorije pridemo do tistih značilnosti nagrad, ki so najbolj pertinentne za teorijo religije, ki temelji na specifičnem prepričanju o človekovem delovanju – namreč k temu, kako se človek odloča o nagradah. Stark in Bainbridge trdita, da »človeško delovanje vodi zapleten, vendar končen sistem obdelovanja informacij, ki deluje tako, da prepoznava probleme in jih skuša rešiti« (2007: 37),

---

2. Kjer je v nadaljevanju samostojno uporabljena kratica TRI, se ta navezuje na teorijo racionalne izbire v kontekstu religije.

pri čemer je *um* tisti, ki usmerja delovanje človeka. Um je tisti, ki išče razlage, da bi rešil probleme – razlage pa so »trditve o tem, kako in zakaj je mogoče doseči nagrade in si nakopati stroške« (ibid.: 38). Njuna opredelitev delovanja človeške kognicije je pomembna v luči kasnejših obravnav utelešene kognicije.

Tragika nagrad je v tem, da nekatere niso dosegljive. Ta točka dedukcije je bistvenega pomena za vpeljavo teorije religije. Če imajo ljudje opravka z nagradami, ki jih ni, v zameno iščejo tiste alternativne razlage, »ki postavljajo njihovo doseganje [zaželenih nagrad] v daljno prihodnost ali v kakšen drug nepreverljiv kontekst« (ibid.: 44). Z drugimi besedami: v takšnih situacijah ljudje posežejo po *kompenzatorjih*, ki jih Stark in Bainbridge razumeta kot »pričakovanja nagrade v skladu z razlagami, ki niso zlahka dovzetne za nedvoumno ovrednotenje« (ibid.: 44). Kompenzatorji so torej tisto, kar obljublja uresničitev nagrade v nekem drugem kontekstu, ki ne more biti povsem potrjen – religiozen, nadnaraven. Torej gre za »neotipljive nadomestke za zaželeno nagrado« (ibid.). Ljudje razumejo kompenzatorje enako kot nagrade, hkrati pa se ti tako kot nagrade delijo na posebne in splošne. Ker so za Starka in Bainbridga »človeški ‚zakaji‘« (ibid.: 45), torej vprašanja, vezani na končni smisel življenja, neizbežen del človeške narave, so kompenzatorji, ki ponujajo primerne razlage, neizbežen družbeni pojav. Skratka, religija v človeški družbi *mora* nastati. Na ta način TRI utemelji nespremenljivost človeških religioznih potreb, ki jo pripiše biologiji in univerzalni človeški naravi. Kar se torej tiče religije, naj bi ljudje imeli univerzalno potrebo po sistemu verovanj oziroma razlag, tj. religiji, ki naj bi ponujala kompenzatorje sicer nedosegljivih nagrad – religiozne odgovore na večna eksistencialna vprašanja. Iz tega sledi definicija religije kot »sistema splošnih kompenzatorjev, ki temeljijo na nadnaravnih predpostavkah« (ibid.). Religija je torej nabor (kompenzacijskih) razlag, ki obljubljajo onstranske nagrade, dostopne le preko nadnaravnih sil. Čeprav vere še nismo neposredno izpostavili kot temelj religije po TRI, se vendarle nakazujejo orisi religije, ki je reducirana na idejno raven.

V svoji reviziji temeljev teorije racionalne izbire (1999) se Stark namreč neposredno sklicuje na slavno opredelitev religije po Edwardu Tylorju. Ta je religijo razumel kot verovanje v nadnaravna bitja (Tylor 1958), s čimer je kasneje Stark želel neposredno izpodbijati Durkheimovo (1965) alternativo teističnim definicijam religije. Stark predlaga, naj ljudem verjamemo, ko pravijo, da je določena družbena praksa produkt verovanja v bogove in izmenjave z njimi, namesto da bi jim pripisali lažna prepričanja, za katerimi naj bi se skrivali npr. durkheimovsko čaščenje družbe (Stark 1999: 269–272). V luči Starkovega poudarka na religijskih *verovanjih* ni presenetljivo, da religijsko delovanje zavzame sekundarno vlogo oziroma je iz definicije namerno izključeno. Stark pojasni, da gre pri tem za namerno »nadgradnjo« njegove poprejšnje opredelitve religije,

ki je vključevala tako verovanje kot tudi delovanje: »Moje zrelo mnenje je, da ju gre ločiti, saj ljudje pogosto verujejo, ne da bi delovali« (ibid.: 274), s čimer Stark – in posledično TRI – zavzame, kot pravi Stark sam, povsem »kognitivno opredelitev religije« (ibid.). Stark tako religijo razume »v prvi vrsti kot intelektualni produkt«, zato predlaga, »da razumemo *ideje* kot njen temeljni vidik« (ibid.: 270). Stark do potankosti natančno opredeli pripadanje TRI konsenzu redukcije religije na vero. Glede svoje opredelitve religije je bil še bolj neposreden v nedavnem intervjuju. Na vprašanje, kako bi opredelil religijo, je odgovoril (Merritt 2017, poudarki dodani):

> *Moja definicija ni edinstvena – gre za definicijo, ki jo sleherni razumen človek uporabi pri opisu religije. [...] religijo razumem kot* sistem misli, ki ponuja splošno pojasnitev življenja ali obstoja, ki temelji na predpostavki, da obstaja Bog (ali bogovi).

Navedeni citat nazorno ponazori tako vsakdanje kakor tudi teoretsko razmišljanje o religiji. Glede na to, da je Stark pionir teorije racionalne izbire religije, ta pa je po drugi svetovni vojni postala eden vodilnih raziskovalnih programov sociologije religije (Spickard 2017), lahko predpostavljamo, da Starkovo mnenje odraža bolj ali manj dogovorjen konsenz o ključni značilnosti religije znotraj nekonfesionalnega preučevanja religije. Ob tem velja podčrtati tudi njegovo prepričanje, da je njegova definicija zdravorazumska, tj. da ji sledi »sleherni razumen človek« (Merrit, 2017). S tem poudari svoje – in naše – prepričanje, da je redukcija religije na verovanje stvar zdravorazumskega dogovora.

Konsenz, ki smo ga orisali v drugem in tretjem poglavju, je jasen: religijo reducira na vero, ki jo posamezniki izražajo javno ali zasebno, v obliki verskega obredja. Pri tem sta ključna oba dela: primarnost vere in njen *izraz* v obredih. Ugotovili smo, da konsenz obstaja tako na ravni vsakdanje in pravne rabe kakor tudi na ravni teoretsko-analitičnega zapopadenja religije. V nadaljevanju si bomo pogledali, zakaj bi bilo smiselno prekiniti s tovrstnim razumevanjem religije.

4 Čemu konceptualizirati telo?

TRI v kontekstu religije je deležna številnih kritik (gl. npr. Bruce 2000). Te so med drugim izpostavile problematičnosti tylorističnega razumevanja religije, ki zna biti površno pri analizi neteističnih religijskih polj (Billington 2001; Fitzgerald 1997). Prepričani smo, da gre kritika religije kot medkulturne kategorije lahko dlje od kritike predpostavke o obstoju boga. Kajti temeljna predpostavka tovrstnih pristopov je primarnost *vere* – ne glede na obstoj boga ali bogov. Na tej točki se porajajo tri vprašanja: prvič, od kod izvira takšen konsenz; drugič, kaj naj bi bilo narobe s tovrstnim konsenzom; in tretjič, če že moramo kaj predrugačiti,

zakaj za to potrebujemo opredelitev telesa? Najprej velja spomniti, da konsenz religijo reducira na vero, religijsko delovanje (in s tem religijsko materialnost) pa na *izražanje* verskih prepričanj. Odgovor na vprašanje, od kod izvira konsenz, zahteva daljšo razpravo, ki bi morala vključiti (vsaj): oblikovanje modernega koncepta religije (Keane 2007: 84–97; Orsi 2016: 25–37); analizo ključnih srednjeveških razprav glede statusa transsubstancije (Orsi 2016: 12–47); analizo protestantske pristranskosti, ki predstavlja pomemben rez v razumevanju pomena religijskih predmetov, teles in obredja (Muir 1997: 147–228; Roper 1994: 171–199). Skratka, daljša razprava, ki presega okvir pričujočega besedila, bi morala izluščiti genealogijo koncepta religije, ki od svojega nastanka vsebuje podrejenost telesa in materialnosti idejnim, mentalnim razsežnostim religije.

Da bi drugi del besedila vendarle stal na trdnih temeljih, na kratko povzemimo ključno lastnost moderne koncepcije religije, ki se je oblikovala skozi omenjene procese: podreditev materialnosti – telesa – religijskim verovanjem. Redukcija religije na vero je namreč rezultat oblikovanja modernega somatofobnega konsenza. Teoretsko somatofobne koncepcije religije so se izkristalizirale v ključnem zgodovinskem dogodku – protestantski reformaciji (Mellor in Shilling 1997: 98–131; Orsi 2016: 34–37). Ta je ključna zaradi oblikovanja t. i. dis-kurzivne simbolizacije religije (Mellor in Shilling 1997: 98). S tem merimo na dejstvo, da so mediji odnosa z bogom postali Sveto pismo, lingvistični simboli in zavestna refleksivnost posameznikov. Postopoma se je oblikoval prehod od imanentnega Boga, ki je bil preko svojih visceralnih posrednikov – npr. svetnikov, relikvij – na dosegu telesa, do radikalno transcendentnega Boga, v katerega v prvi vrsti *verujemo*. Protestantska reformacija je »abstrahirala ljudi iz njihovih naravnih, nadnaravnih in družbenih okolij« ter vernike spodbujala, naj »razumejo in aktivno strukturirajo svoje življenje kot posamezniki skozi aktivno in v temelju kognitivno zapopadenje Božje besede (ibid.: 98). V takšnem intelektualnem miljeju, nenaklonjenem religijski materialnosti in telesu, se kasneje oblikujejo prvi nekonfesionalni pristopi k preučevanju religije (Keane 2007: 84–97; Orsi 2016: 25–37; gl. tudi Sharpe 1986).

Če je konstitutivna lastnost modernih koncepcij religije – in opisanega konsenza – ta, da stvari telesa (in materialnosti na splošno) ločuje od reči vere in idej in jim jih podreja, potem smiselno sledi, da je rekonceptualizacija odnosa med telesom in umom, med religijsko materialnostjo in religijsko idejnostjo nujna za natančnejšo opredelitev religije, ki bi prelomila z obstoječim konsenzom redukcije religije na verovanje. Da bi podkrepili naše prepričanje, se bomo v nadaljevanju najprej posvetili sodobnim raziskavam s področja t. i. utelešene religije (ang. *embodied religion*), ki kažejo, da telesa ne gre razumeti zgolj kot izrazni aparat religijskih prepričanj, temveč kot njihov konstitutivni del.

4.1 Utelešena religija

Preučevanje utelešene religije temelji na preučevanju in oblikovanju teorij utelešene kognicije, ki so jo raziskovalci razvili v drugi polovici 20. stoletja kot alternativo dominantni paradigmi kognitivne znanosti – kognitivizmu. Po slednjem spoznavanje razumemo kot »duševno predstavljanje« (Varela, Thompson in Rosch 2017: 78), torej kot reprezentiranje danega zunanjega sveta. Delovanje uma je po načelih kognitivizma stvar »upravljanja s simboli, ki predstavljajo lastnosti sveta, tj. reprezentirajo, da je svet v tem ali onem stanju« (ibid.). Um – možgani – prejmejo dražljaje, informacije, ki jih nato preoblikujejo in sprožijo primerno telesno reakcijo. Dalje, kognitivisti so prepričani, da inteligentno vedenje predpostavlja »reprezentiranje določenih stanj in lastnosti sveta« (ibid.: 115). Drugače povedano – in to se neposredno povezuje s teorijo racionalne izbire v kontekstu religije, ki smo jo predstavili v prvem delu – kognitivno vedenje lahko pojasnimo, »če privzamemo, da so agensova dejanja *osnovana na predstavah relevantnih lastnosti okoliščin /.../* če so njegove predstave točne, bo tudi njegovo vedenje /.../ uspešno« (ibid.: 115). Skratka, svet, kot ga razumejo kognitivisti – tudi na ravni preučevanja religije –, je zunanji in neodvisen od spoznavnega agenta, ki soočen s svetom ustvarja funkcionalne odzive.

Kognitivizem, teorijo racionalne izbire (v kontekstu religije) in moderne koncepcije religije povezuje ključna moderna rdeča nit: kartezijanski dualizem uma in telesa. Zatorej je smiselno, da sodobna odkritja psihologije religije, kognitivne znanosti in nevroznanosti pretvorimo v teorijo religije, ki bi razumela delovanje telesa in uma kot prepleteni sistem. Prav to želijo storiti raziskovalci utelešene religije[3], ki jih najpogosteje najdemo v psihologiji religije (npr. Fuller in Montgomery 2015; Jones 2020; Ransom in Alicke 2013; Soliman, Johnson in Song 2015) in kognitivni znanosti (npr. Barsalo Barbey, Simmons in Santos 2005; Cave in Norris 2012; Nikkel 2019). Gre za zelo raznovrstne raziskave in študije, katerih skupni imenovalec je preprost: religijsko obredje je ključnega pomena v oblikovanju verovanj, saj nevrofiziologija gibanja in drže telesa vpliva na to, kaj in kako mislimo, zaznavamo in čutimo (Jones 2020: 13). Epistemolo-

---

3. Psiholog James Jones se v preglednem prispevku neposredno zoperstavi kognitivistič-nim teorijam spoznave, ki na ravni preučevanja religije porodijo enačenje religije z verovanjem (2020: 13–14): »Trdimo, da za človeško spoznavo ni značilno preprosto oblikovanje amodalnih, abstraktnih reprezentacij sveta. Kognicije ne gre razumeti kot preprosto reprezentiranje sveta ali verjetja v določena načela /.../. Z zornega kota nevropsihologije je človeška spoznava bistveno kompleksnejša od modelov kognitivizma. Zato verjamemo, da je kognitivistični model redukcije religijskega spoznavanja na verovanje presplošen.«

ška predpostavka utelešene religije je, da človeška kognicija »ni zgolj rezultat abstraktnih mentalnih dejavnosti amodalnega procesiranja informacij«, temveč je hkrati odvisna od »telesne izkušnje in umeščenosti v okolje« (Soliman, Johnson in Son 2015: 854). Z drugimi besedami: religijsko obredje ni zgolj izraz verovanj, temveč je tudi njihovo počelo. Odkritja utelešene religije lahko grobo kategoriziramo takole: prvič, utelešena kognicija vpliva na naša verovanja. To zajema tako vpliv gibanja na naša prepričanja kakor tudi dejstvo, da naše zaznave prostora in časa vplivajo na lastnosti, ki jih pripisujemo nadnaravnim silam. Drugič, utelešenost predstavlja temelj naših moralnih intuicij, na primer povezanost desnoročnosti z dobrim in levoročnosti z zlim. Tretjič, utelešenost kognicije omogoča tvorjenje solidarnih vezi med udeleženci religijskega obredja. In nazadnje, četrtič, religijska prepričanja pripadniki religije utelešajo (ibid.: 854–859).

Vsem področjem utelešene religije se ne moremo posvetiti, zato izpostavimo tiste, ki preučujejo vpliv drže in gibanja telesa na verovanja. Študije kažejo, da določena gibanja in drže omogočajo določena prepričanja (verovanja) in njihovo intenzivnost. Tako na primer Fuller in Montgomery (2015) v svoji študiji ekspanzivnih in zadržanih telesnih drž ugotavljata, da oblika telesne drže vodi v specifična religijska prepričanja. Udeleženci njune študije so zavzeli bodisi zadržano, sedečo »nizko telesno držo« bodisi ekspanzivno, stoječo »visoko telesno držo«, nato pa so odgovorili na vprašalnik o svojih prepričanjih. Prva skupina udeležencev je ne glede na poprejšnja prepričanja poročala o bolj »konservativnih« prepričanjih, druga skupina pa o bolj »liberalnih« (ibid.: 231–234). Podobna študija Ransom in Alicke (2013) je pokazala, da klečanje in sedenje vpliva na (religijsko) zaznavanje dogodkov in podob. Klečeči udeleženci študije so pojave in podobe pogosteje interpretirali kot nadnaravne. Študije utelešene religije, ki preučujejo povezavo med religijskim delovanjem in religijskim verovanjem, obenem analizirajo specifične drže telesa, ki so značilne za posamezne skupnosti. Teh študij je zaenkrat zares malo (praviloma se osredotočajo na krščanske skupnosti), a tvorijo pomembne korake v preučevanju religije kot utelešenega počela in verjetja (Van Cappellen in Edwards 2021; Van Cappellen in dr. 2021). Psihologinja Patty Van Cappellen je s sodelavci najprej oblikovala dve idealnotipski dimenziji drže telesa: ekspanzivnost/zadržanost telesa in usmerjenost telesa navzgor/navzdol (Van Cappellen in Edwards 2021), nato pa v različnih krščanskih skupnostih analizirala drže pri nedeljskih bogoslužjih (Van Cappellen in dr. 2021). Za nadaljevanje besedila je pomembno, da so študije pokazale znatne razlike med krščanskimi skupnostmi – ekspanzivna telesna drža, obrnjena navzgor, je na primer tipična za karizmatične krščanske skupnosti.

Ključnega pomena pri študijah utelešene religije je dejstvo, da telo »deluje nazaj«. To dognanje predstavlja dve ključni, povezani opozorili za družboslovno preučevanje religije: prvič, telesa ne smemo razumeti kot golega izvrševalca predhodnih religijskih prepričanj; in drugič, telo ni *tabula rasa*, ki se zgolj upogiba volji družbene konstrukcije. To je zlasti pomembno za družbenemu konstruktivizmu zavezano sociologijo (Vásquez 2011: 149–172). Torej, določena – npr. krščanska – skupnost bolj ali manj strogo oblikuje določeno organizacijo telesa in čutnosti (Brahinsky 2012) skozi svoja obredja, s čimer oblikuje določen telesni režim (de Witte 2011: 497), ki nadalje oblikuje – sodoloča – religijske izkušnje in verovanja. Da telo tvori konstitutivni del prepričanj, nazorno prikažejo in dokažejo nevrološke študije izkustev karizmatičnih kristjanov (Newberg in dr. 2006; McGraw 2011). Študija (Newberg in dr. 2006), ki je preučevala pretok krvi v možganih med govorjenjem v svetih jezikih (glosolalija), ki predstavlja distinktivno izkušnjo karizmatičnega krščanstva, je odkrila pomemben upad delovanja frontalnih režnjev med karizmatično telesno izkušnjo. Raziskava je pokazala skoraj desetodstotni upad pretoka krvi v tem delu možganov med glosolalijami v primerjavi s cerkvenim petjem. To je pomembno iz dveh razlogov: prvič, podatki se ujemajo z opisom vernikov, ki pričajo o izgubi nadzora med glosolalijami (ibid.: 70); drugič, s tovrstnimi študijami uspemo zavrniti prepričanja, da gre pri govorjenju v svetih jezikih enostavno za določeno obliko psihopatologije. Pri tem moramo razumeti, da je prefrontalni korteks zadolžen za »delovanje delovnega spomina, pozornosti, sprejemanje odločitev, izraz svobodne volje, načrtovanje in splošno koordinacijo zaznave, spomina in misli« (McGraw 2011: 64). Iz rezultatov študije tako sledi, da je govor v svetih jezikih produkt disinhibicije obnašanja in nevrološkega delovanja, ki je neposredna posledica gibanja in drže karizmatičnega telesa. Teorija disinhibicije religijske izkušnje pojasni kot povsem vsakdanji pojav, ki ga največkrat spoznamo v opitosti. Karizmatična organizacija bogoslužij, ki vključuje natančno, materialno in tehnološko organizacijo telesa ter čutnosti (Rakow 2020), torej lahko privede telo do dejansko utelešene religijske izkušnje. Pri tem pa je pomembno, dodaja McGraw, da se teorija nevrološke disinhibicije odlično povezuje z nekaterimi teorijami karizmatične religioznosti, ki si jih bomo pobližje pogledali v nadaljevanju.

4.2 Karizmatično krščanstvo

Dognanja s področja utelešene kognicije in utelešene religije kažejo, da je sleherna religija – kakor tudi sleherno družbeno početje – utelešena, da torej subjektivnosti družbenih akterjev ne gre zreducirati na od telesa ločene misli. To pomeni, da bi lahko pojave, povezane z utelešenostjo, proučevali v katerikoli religiji. To je za našo analizo zelo pomembno – zgoraj smo namreč opozorili

na obstoječe kritike koncepta religije kot analitično zadovoljivega v *medkulturnih* analizah. V besedilu želimo poudariti, da moderni koncept religije ni dovolj analitično natančen niti pri raziskovanju krščanskih pojavov, torej raziskovanju v miljeju, ki je porodilo moderni koncept religije. To bomo storili tako, da bomo za predmet preučevanja vzeli razsežnosti svetovno popularne religije, karizmatično krščanstvo (Pew Research Forum 2006), za katero so si raziskovalci edini, da izkazuje izrazito telesnost (gl. npr. Brahinksy 2012; Singleton 2011; Vásquez 2009; Wilkinson 2017).

Karizmatično krščanstvo je težko natančno opredeliti; znanstvena literatura ne pozna jasnih kriterijev, po katerih bi lahko neko skupnost opisali kot karizmatično (Anderson 2010: 13–15; 2014: 1–7). Pridevnik »karizmatično« izhaja iz grške besede *charismate*, ki pomeni ‚darovi svetega duha‘. Najbolj prepoznaven dar svetega duha je govor v svetih jezikih oziroma glosolalija. Drugi darovi vključujejo različne oblike ekstatičnih, telesnih izkušenj, kakršne so ozdravljenje z vero (ang. *faith healing*) ali različne oblike molitev. Kategorija »karizmatično krščanstvo« pogosto obvelja kot nadpomenka raznolikih krščanskih skupnosti, ki jih znanstvena literatura deli v tri osrednje kategorije. Čeprav si v grobem zgodovinsko sledijo ena za drugo, različne karizmatične skupnosti praviloma soobstajajo, zato jih ne gre razumeti kot povsem ločene, zaporedne manifestacije (Anderson 2010: 22–23): prvič, poznamo klasične (protestantske) binkoštnike (ang. *pentecostalism*), med katerimi je največja svetovna skupnost cerkva Assemblies of God; drugič, popularnosti binkošnikov je sledil pojav pentekostalizacija, tj. prevzemanje teoloških in ritualnih poudarkov s strani drugih zgodovinskih cerkva – tako protestantskih kakor tudi ortodoksnih in katoliških. Prav karizmatična prenova v katoliški cerkvi velja za najznačilnejši primer drugega vala; in tretjič, na prelomu 21. stoletja so čedalje popularnejše t. i. neokarizmatične skupnosti, katerih tipična lastnost je nepovezanost s katerokoli izmed zgodovinskih cerkva. Raziskovalci neokarizmatičnim skupnostim pogosto pripisujejo zavezanost t. i. teologiji blagostanja (ang. *prosperity gospel*) – odvisno od klasifikacije, ki ji raziskovalci sledijo. Vsem trem oblikam skupnosti sta skupna poudarjena teologija svetega duha ter duhovno in materialno opolnomočenje skozi izkušnjo resnične prisotnosti Jezusa Kristusa v njihovem vsakdanu. Reprezentativne skupnosti vsakega izmed valov najdemo tudi v Sloveniji.

Število karizmatičnih kristjanov je težko oceniti. Nekateri avtorji ugotavljajo, da karizmatično krščanstvo vseh valov danes tvori četrtino vseh kristjanov oziroma šteje slabo milijardo ljudi (Anderson 2014: 307), medtem ko druge raziskave kažejo, da karizmatiki štejejo slabih 600 milijonov pripadnikov oziroma 27 odstotkov vseh kristjanov (Pew Research Forum 17 :2011). Peter Berger, eden izmed najpomembnejših sociolog religije v zadnjih petdesetih letih, v luči

teh številk sicer trdi, da se mu zdijo podcenjujoče. Tako zapiše, da se mu zdi, da »je večina krščanstva na globalnem jugu vsaj zmerno pentekostalizirana« (2014: 24). Ne glede na to, kateri oceni števila prikimamo, velja karizmatično krščanstvo za najhitreje rastočo religijsko gibanje v zgodovini človeštva (ibid.). Glavnina raziskav o karizmatičnih kristjanih se osredotoča na pojave, povezane z družbeno modernizacijo. Takšne raziskave temeljijo na variaciji teorij deprivacije (gl. npr. Lalive d'Epinay 1969; Willems 1967; Chesnut 1997), teorijah sekularizacije (Martin 1990) ter na prenovljenih weberjanskih teorijah afinitete med karizmatičnim krščanstvom in kapitalistično modernizacijo – bodisi na globalnem severu (Hollenweger 1984) ali globalnem jugu (Barker 2007).

Središče najsodobnejših preučevanj karizmatičnega krščanstva predstavlja telo oziroma religijska utelešenost.[4] Že nekatere pionirske sociološke študije so namreč nakazovale, da za veliko popularnostjo karizmatičnega krščanstva ne stoji določena teologija, določena »slovnica verovanja« (Martin 1990: 52), temveč specifična telesna izkušnja svetega. Manuel Vásquez, eden vidnejših sodobnih raziskovalcev karizmatikov in predstavnikov materialnega obrata (2011), je lastnost, zaradi katere so karizmatiki popularni, opisal s t. i. pnevmatskim materializmom (2009: 276). Pneuma je grška beseda za vdih, s čimer želi Vásquez opisati »duhovno silo, ki animira materijo« (ibid.), ki je značilna za tiste oblike krščanstva, ki delovanje svetega duha postavijo v središče svoje izkušnje. Tisto, kar je materialistično v takšnem krščanstvu, nadaljuje Vásquez, pa je zanikanje kartezijanske dihotomije med telesom in umom, zaradi česar so telesne izkušnje tako pomemben del karizmatikov: »[Ti karizmatiki] niso zgolj pnevmatski, temveč so tudi povsem materialistični v smislu, da zavračajo evropsko, kartezijansko dihotomijo med dušo in telesom in zaničevanje slednjega« (ibid.). Gre torej za lastnost, ki si jo delijo s sodobnimi pristopi utelešene religije.

Da imajo karizmatiki specifičen odnos do telesa, ki ga je treba ločiti od »običajno« krščanskega, je prepričan tudi sociolog religije Andrew Singleton (2011). Trdi, da pojav krščanskih karizmatičnih skupnosti nakazuje preobrat v razumevanju telesa v krščanstvu: »Skoraj dva tisoč let je telesu ukazano določeno početje med slavljenjem (npr. klečanje med molitvijo) ali pa je disciplinarno in zanikano kot del dnevnih religijskih praks. Singleton v karizmatičnem krščanstvu vidi premik

---

4. Prav tradicionalni fokus raziskav sklopa teorij deprivacij razkriva protestantsko pristranskost, kateri se želimo zoperstaviti. Prvotne študije binkoštnikov v Združenih državah Amerike so funkcionalistično trdile, da binkoštniki s »striktnim moralizmom, absolutnimi vrednotami in gotovostjo v družbi negotovosti« (Hunt 2002: 6)) pritegnejo družbeno deprivilegirane vernike. Takšne študije predpostavljajo mentalno sovpadanje razpoloženja neke skupnosti in verovanj, ki jih ponuja specifična religija, a so hkrati slepe za druge, materialne razsežnosti religije, ki bi znale pritegniti nove pripadnike.

podrejenega telesa, premik od »urejenega asketizma do vnete ‚konsumpcije' moči Boga« (2011: 381). To, nadaljuje, pomeni, da telo ni več podvrženo strogemu nadzoru, da bi vernik dosegel višjo stopnjo duhovnosti, temveč je ta dosežena preko nenadzorovanega telesa: »Telo je prostor, kjer se ‚moč' Boga manifestira *skozi* vernika (kot ponazarja govorjenje v svetih jezikih)« (ibid.). Skratka, »fizično telo – ne um – predstavlja središče višjega izkustva Boga v vernikovem življenju. Karizmatična duhovnost je resnično utelešena« (ibid.: 393).

Tudi drugi, sodobni raziskovalci karizmatičnega krščanstva so si edini, da je nekaj posebnega v odnosu do telesa, nekaj, kar bi lahko imenovali logika telesa (Brahinsky 2012), ki zajema karizmatično nagnjenost k določenim čutilom, in doktrine, ki »se recipročno oblikujejo /.../ v daljšem procesu kultiviranja in treniranja, s poudarkom na ko-konstitutivnem dialogu med njimi« (ibid.: 218). Spet drugi raziskovalci karizmatično telesnost opisujejo kot telesni režim (de Witte 2011: 497), ki v karizmatičnem krščanstvu »ceni ekspresivne, čustvene oblike slavljenja in razume telo kot *primarni medij interakcije z duhovnim svetom*« (ibid., poudarki dodani). Karizmatično bogoslužje je zlasti fizično, vključuje »kinestetič-no participacijo teles v gibanju« (Wilkinson 2017: 33). Gibanje, torej, je ključno za karizmatična bogoslužja: »[Verniki] se tresejo, plešejo, pojejo, jokajo, smejijo, derejo in kolapsirajo po tleh,« pravi antropologinja Naomi Richman (:2019 469) v svoji študiji nigerijske karizmatične skupnosti. Podobno kot Singleton tudi Richman poudari, da je nekaj novega v karizmatičnem telesu, v karizmatični subjektivizaciji (ibid.), ki vključuje bistveno več kot zgolj »ponotranjenje določe-ne hermenevtike svetih besedil ali memoriziranje nabora doktrinarnih izrekov« (ibid.). Za karizmatično subjektivizacijo je namreč značilen »utelešeni proces«, ki vključuje »postopno kultivacijo določenih telesnih dispozicij, pasivnih in aktivnih, na primer skozi uprizarjanje molitve, posta, eksorcizma ali maziljenja« (ibid.). Skratka, gre za *priučenje* telesnih praks, o katerih je pionirsko pisal francoski antropolog Marcel Mauss (1996: 203–226).

Karizmatične telesne prakse pa ne vključujejo le določenih (ne)gibov, temveč tudi sprejemanje določenih oblik občutenj (ang. *sensational forms*), ki jih nemška antropologinja Birgit Meyer razume kot »zaukazane oblike priklica in organi-ziranja dostopa do transcendentnega, ki zajema tako oblike religijske vsebine (verovanja, doktrine, nabor simbolov) kakor tudi norme« (2010: 751). Forme občutenj torej predstavljajo družbeno organizirane oblike čutnih medijev, s ka-terimi vstopimo v odnos z religioznim. Kot take, pravi Meyer, so »del specifične religijske estetike, ki organizira čutni odnos ljudi s presežnim« (ibid.). Vidimo torej, da je za karizmatično telo in materialnost značilna organizacija čutnosti, materialnosti in telesa, ki slednjega ne ukalupija v polje golega *izvrševalca* re-ligioznega, temveč kot konstitutivni subjekt religijske izkušnje. Večina sodobnih

raziskovalcev karizmatičnih skupnosti oblikuje določeno teorijo organizacije ter disciplinranja čutov in telesa, teorijo, ki jo nato prenašajo v preučevanje drugih religij (npr. Csordas 2002; Luhrmann in dr. 2010; Meyer 2010; Althouse 2017).

Skratka, težava modernih koncepcij religije ne leži zgolj v predpostavki verovanja v *boga*, temveč v predpostavki *vere* kot ključne razsežnosti religije kot družbenega pojava. Na primeru utelešene religije in karizmatičnega krščanstva smo pokazali, da nam tako sodobne psihološke in nevrološke raziskave o delovanju človeške kognicije kakor tudi pojavi izrazito telesnih religij ne dovoljujejo, da vztrajamo pri redukciji religije na vero.

5 Zaključek: k posodobitvi raziskovalnih programov

Poudarek na telesu v preučevanju religije je več kot zgolj modna muha – nakazuje namreč epistemološki prelom. V članku smo želeli storiti dvoje: prvič, pokazati na prevladujoči konsenz, ki religijo enači z vero; in drugič, v dveh korakih pokazati, zakaj takšno razmišljanje ni zgolj kulturno in ideološko pristransko, temveč enostavno napačno. Zlom enačaja med religijo in vero je ena izmed ključnih posledic raziskav materialnega obrata v zadnjih treh desetletjih. V besedilu smo jih analizirali le nekaj, da bi pokazali na nujnost prevetritve koncepta religije. Želja po posodobitvi raziskovalnih programov preučevanja religije ne izvira iz namere, da bi s prstom kazali na »zle« predhodnike, ki so »pristransko«, krščanskocentrično konceptualizirali religijo. Paradigmatska sprememba, po kateri kličemo, ne pomeni sestopa na »čisto«, ideološko neobremenjeno gledišče, s katerega je pojem religije končno povsem razviden – takšnega gledišča družboslovci ne poznamo. A prelom z zastarelimi teoretskimi in empiričnimi pristopi je nujen, če želimo, da bo družboslovno preučevanje religije lahko držalo korak z dejanskimi odkritji drugih znanosti in napovedanimi spremembami religijske demografije dandanes – torej, da bodo teorije in kategorije, s katerimi pojasnjujemo religijsko polje, ostale analitično relevantne.

Kljub znatnim žepom sekularizacije je danes svet tako religiozen kot vedno – če ne še bolj (Berger 2014). Po raziskavah Pew Research Centra (2015; 2017) se nam do leta 2050 obetajo korenite spremembe religijske demografije (gl. Tabela 1). Napoveduje se nadaljnji upad števila kristjanov v Združenih državah Amerike in Evropi, pojav, ki bo šel z roko v roki s premikom »središča« krščanstva v podsaharsko Afriko in Južno Ameriko. Po napovedih lahko pričakujemo, da bo vsak četrti kristjan živel v podsaharski Afriki, kar bo predstavljajo 1,1 milijarde kristjanov (po ocenah je leta 2010 tam živelo 517 milijonov kristjanov). Nekoliko nižje rasti bodo deležni kristjani v Latinski Ameriki in na Karibih, kjer naj bi se število kristjanov povečalo s 531 milijonov leta 2010 na 665 milijonov leta 2050.

Tabela 1: Demografsko gibanje religijskih skupin.

Religija	Populacija 2010	% svetovnega prebivalstva 2010	Napovedana populacija 2050	% svetovne populacije 2050	Porast populacije 2010–2050
Krščanstvo	2.168.300.000	31,4	2.918.070.000	31,4	749.740.000
Islam	1.599.700.000	23,2	2.761.480.000	29,7	1.161.780.000
Nereligiozni	1.131.150.000	16,4	1.230.340.000	13,2	99.190.000
Hinduizem	1.032.210.000	15,0	1.384.360.000	14,9	352.140.000
Budizem	487.760.000	7,1	486.270.000	5,2	-1.490.000
Ljudska religija	404.690.000	5,9	449.140.000	4,8	44.450.000
Druge religije	58.150.000	0,8	61.450.000	0,7	3.300.000
Judovstvo	13.860.000	0,2	16.090.000	0,2	2.230.000
SKUPNO	**6.895.850.000**	**100**	**9.307.190.000**	**100**	**2.411.340.000**

Vir: Pew Research Center (2015: 8).

Pomembno je razumeti, da so te številke obraz korenitih, *kvalitativnih* sprememb v obredju in verovanju kristjanov, kar dobro ponazarja primer karizmatičnega krščanstva, ki smo ga na kratko orisali zgoraj. Krščanstvo ni edina religija, ki si obeta demografski prirast – niti ni najhitreje rastoča. Islam se bo kot najhitreje rastoča religija na svetu do leta 2050 povsem približal številu kristjanov. Po drugi strani se bo povečalo tudi število tistih, ki se ne izrekajo za pripadnike nobene religije – npr. v Franciji in Združenih državah Amerike. A hkrati se bo njihov delež svetovne populacije zmanjšal (Pew Research Center 2018: 5). Na kratko opisane številke pomenijo tektonske premike, za katerimi stojijo razlike v rodnosti, smrtnosti, starosti populacije in migracijah (Pew Research Center 2017; gl. tudi Jenkins 2010).

Čeprav lahko v demografiji iščemo vzroke gibanja religijskih sprememb, pa nam zgolj ti ne povedo veliko o religiji in religijah prihodnosti. Da bi nekonfesionalno preučevanje religijskih pojavov dohajalo kvantitativne religijske spremembe, moramo odvreči zastarele konceptualizacije religije, ki so temeljile na evropski, predvsem protestantski tradiciji. Na to nas v programskem prispevku mdr. opozarja Meyer (2020), pionirka materialnega obrata in soustanoviteljica znanstvene revije *Material Religion* (Meyer, Morgan, Paine in Plate 2010). Genealogijo koncepta religije – najprej prepoznavanje ozkogledosti redukcije religije na verovanje v boga in nato, po našem mnenju, korenitejši odklonilen odnos do religijske materialnosti gre vtkati v niz *dejstev* nekonfesionalnega preučevanja religije. A tega ne gre storiti le z namenom, da pokažemo na epistemološke stranpoti naših predhodnikov, temveč da oblikujemo sodobne raziskovalne programe, ki bodo uspeli teoretizirati in empirično zapopasti kvantitativne in kvalitativne religijske spremembe na globalni ravni. Kajti dekonstrukcija koncepta, ne glede

na njeno nujnost, je sama po sebi nezadostna. Njena prva izrazita posledica je občutek paradigmatske negotovosti. Čeprav je slednji »nujen predpogoj kritične samorefleksije«, tako Meyer, pa je obenem tudi velik izziv za disciplino, ki se tako močno zgleduje po svojem temeljnem konceptu (2020: 114).

Če se je dekonstrukcija konceptov »religij« in »svetovne religije« sprva osredotočala predvsem na predpostavko o obstoju boga (Fitzgerald 2000), smo danes lahko prepričani, da je prepoznavanje korenitejšega odklonilnega odnosa do materialnosti, predvsem telesa, ključni korak v oblikovanju sodobnih raziskovalnih programov. Pri tem pa velja podčrtati naslednje: ko konceptualizacijo telesa povežemo s paradigmatskim prelomom, njeno vsebino zavežemo končnemu cilju, ki ne dopušča, da telo raziskujemo zgolj zato, ker se poprej morda z njim nismo toliko ukvarjali, temveč da ga konceptualiziramo in preučujemo tako, da ga rešimo okovov podrejenosti verovanju.

SUMMARY

The social-scientific study of religion has taken a material turn that entails researching material aspects of religions in finer detail. This includes a stronger emphasis on the role played by religious bodies. The focus on the body is not new within the wider research agenda of social science and humanities. However, we believe it holds special importance in the non-confessional study of religions. We hold that careful understanding of the body is the key to breaking away from the so-called protestant bias or protestant idealism that gave rise to the modern somatophobic concept of religion. Its defining feature was – and continues to be – the separation of body and mind, with the former being subordinate to the latter. The main consequence of this separation is the reduction of religion to a matter of belief.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part aims to demonstrate the continuing existence of such a consensus within our society. This is accomplished by examining relevant sources of everyday, legal and pedagogical language use like dictionaries, legal documents and the curriculum. We thus show that the widely held consensus of reducing religion to a matter of belief, the contents of which believers may manifest through religious rituals, remains firmly in place today. Still, the purpose of the paper is to argue for a paradigmatic shift in scientific understanding of religion. Accordingly, we conclude the first part of the paper by demonstrating how the aforementioned consensus informs one of the leading research programmes within the sociology of religion – rational choice theory. Its researchers treat religious ideas and beliefs as primary, subordinating religious rituals to mere manifestations of religious belief. Although the theory

of rational choice of religion has been criticised for adopting a theoretical approach that fails to consider a-theistic religions, we believe the core issue lies in the assertion that belief constitutes the primary dimension of religions. As we reveal, such a consensus makes not only cross-cultural, but even intracultural research of Christianity analytically careless.

After establishing the existence of the consensus and its key characteristics, we proceed to the second part of the paper. Here we attempt to show that the current research into embodied religion and Charismatic Christianity is forcing a reconsideration of the validity of reducing religion to a belief. First, embodied religion is a branch of embodied cognition research, which reveals how cognition should not be understood as a mental process separated from the body. Embodied religion research thus clarifies how the body, its posture and movement fundamentally inform religions, particularly the formation of beliefs. The central value of such research is that it emphasises that religious rituals cannot be understood as a mere manifestation of prior beliefs, but as their co-determinants. This means that the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, manifested in the protestant bias, which informs the modern reduction of religion to a belief, is analytically untenable.

This point is further underscored by the global popularity of Charismatic Christianity that is claimed to be the fastest-growing Christian community, entailing protestant Pentecostalism, mainline charismatic renewal within, for example, the Catholic Church, and non-denominational Christian communities. Its popularity is most evident in the Global South, even though the origins of protestant Pentecostalism, the first wave of Charismatic Christianity, are claimed to lie in the United States. As a popular religion of the poor, historical research has largely focused on theories of deprivation and modernisation. Still, as informed by the material turn contemporary research asserts the Charismatic body was one of the most important drivers of the popularity of Charismatic Christianity. Studies have labelled this characteristic pneumatic materialism, which dispels with the mind–body dualism, informed by the central theology of the Spirit. While researchers may disagree on conceptualising the centrality of the Charismatic body as a body logic, body regime or sensational form, they fundamentally regard Charismatic Christianity as an example of a religion that cannot be analysed in terms of reducing it to a given theology or set of beliefs.

Taken as whole, the research into embodied religion and Charismatic Christianity points towards a new conceptualisation of religion that places greater importance on religious materiality, especially the body.. In summary, we show that rejecting based on the reduction of religion to belief should not be viewed as a mere exercise in deconstructing the biases of our scientific forefathers, but fundamentally as a constructive attempt to actively reflect contemporary and

projected global changes of religious demography. Namely, we believe that social scientific research of religion must conceptualise the body, thereby engaging in a paradigmatic shift, in order to remain analytically relevant.

Literatura

Althouse, Peter (2017): Emotional Regimes in the Embodiment of Charismatic Prayer. V M. Wilinson in P. Althouse (ur.): Pentecostals and the Body: 36–54. Leiden: Brill.

Anderson, Alan (2010): Variaties, Taxonomies, and Definitions. V A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, A. Droogers in C. van der Laan (ur.): Studying Global Pentecostalism: 13–29. Berkley: University of California Press.

Anderson, Alan (2014): An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Attanasi, Katherine, in Yong, Amos (2012): Pentecostalism and Prospertiy: The Socio--economics of the Global Charismatic Movement. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barker, Isabelle (2007): Charismatic Economies: Pentecostalim, Economic Restructuring, and Social Reproduction. New Political Science, 29 (4): 407–427.

Barsalou, Lawrence, Barbey, Aron, Simmons, Kyle, in Santos, Ava (2005): Embodiment of Religious Knowledge. Journal of Cognition and culture, 5 (1–2): 14–57.

Beekers, Daan, in Tamami Arab, Pooyan (2016): Dreams of an Iconic Mosque: Spatial and Temporal Entanglements of a Converted Church in Amesterdam. Material Religion, 12 (2): 137–164.

Berger, Peter (2014): The Many Altars of Modernity. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Billington, Ray (2001): Religion Without God. London: Routledge.

Brahinsky, Josh. (2012): Pentecostal Body Logics: Cultivating a Modern Sensorium. Cultural Anthropology, 27 (2): 215–238.

Bräunlein, Peter (2016): Thinking Religion Through Things. Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, (28): 365–399.

Bruce, Steve (2000): Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cave, David, in Sachs Norris, Rebecca (ur.) (2012): Religion and the Body: Modern Science and the construction of Religious Meaning. Leiden: Brill.

Chesnut, Andrew (1997): Born Agian in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Csordas, Thomas (2002): Body/Meaning/Healing. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Črnič, Aleš (2001): Teorija in praksa definiranja religije. Teorija in praksa, :(6) 38 1016–1004.

Črnič, Aleš, in Pogačnik, Anja (2021): Religija in šola. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.

De Witte, Marleen (2011): Touched by the spirit: Converting the senses in a Ghanaian Charismatic Church. Ethnos, 76 (4): 489–509.

Durkheim, Émile (1965): The Elementary forms of Religious Life. New York: The Free Press.

Fitzgerald, Timothy (1997): A critique of "religion" as a cross-cultural category. Method & Theory in the Study of Religion, 9 (2): 91–110.

Fitzgerald, Timothy (2000): The Ideology of Religious Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fuller, Robert, in Montgomery, Derek (2015): Body Posture and Religious Attitudes. Archive for the Psychology of Religion, 37: 227–239.

Furey, Constance (2012): Body, Society, and Subjectivity in Religious Studies. Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 80 (1): 7–33.

Hazard, Sonia (2013): The Material Turn in the Study of Religion. Religion and Society: Advances in Research, 4: 58–78.

Hjelm, Titus (2011): Discourse analysis. V M. Stausberg in S. Engler (ur.): The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion: 134–150. New York: Routledge.

Hollenweger, Walter (1984): After Twenty Years' Research on Pentecostalism. Theology, 87 (720): 403–412.

Hunt, Stephen (2002): Deprivation and Western Pentecostalism Revisited: The Case of "Classical" Pentecostalism. PentecoStudies, 1 (1): 1–29.

Jenkins, Philip (2010): Novi krščanski svet: prihod globalnega krščanstva. Ljubljana: KUD Logos.

Jones, James (2020): How Ritual Might Create Religion: A Neuropsychological Exploration. Archive for the Psychology of Religion, 00 (0): 1–17.

Keane, Webb (2007): Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Koch, Anne (2012): Reasons for the Boom of Body Discourses in the Humanities and the Social Sciences since the 1980s.V A. Berlejung (ur.): Menschenbilder und Körperkonzepte im Alten Israel, in Ägypten un im Alten Orient: 3–42. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Lalive d'Epinay, Christian (1969): Haven of the Masses. London. Lutterworth Press.

Lavrič, Miran (2007): Sodobne aplikacije teorije racionalne izbire na področju sociologije religije. Družboslovne razprave, XXIII (56): 39–55.

Luhrmann, Tanya, Nusbaum, Howard in Thisted, Ronald (2010): The Absorption Hypothesis. Learning to Hear God in Evangelical Christianity. American Anthropologist, 112 (1): 66–78.

Martin, David (1990): Tongues of Fire. Oxford: Blackwell Press.

Masuzawa, Tomoko (2005): The Invention of World Religions. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Mauss, Marcel (1996): Esej o daru in drugi spisi. Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis.

McGraw, John (2011): Tongues of Men and Angels: Assessing the Neural Correlates of Glossolalia. V D. Cave in R. Sachs Norris (ur.): Religion and the Body: Modern Science and the Construction of Religious Meaning: 57–79. Leiden: Brill.

McGuire, Meredith (1990): Religion and the Body: Rematerializing the Human Body in the Social Sciences of Religion. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29 (3): 283–296.

Mellor, Philip, in Shilling, Chris (1997): Re-forming the body: religion, community and modernity. London: SAGE Publications.

Merritt, Jonathan (2017): Sociologist Rodney Stark gets cranky about Religion. Religion News Service, 9. 2017. Dostopno prek: https://religionnews.com/2017/09/18/rodney-stark-cranky-religion-illuminating-and-hilarious/ (7. 10. 2022).

Meyer, Birgit (2010): Aesthetics of persuasion: Global Christianity and Pentecostalism's sensational forms. South Atlantic Quarterly, 109 (4): 741–763.

Meyer, Birgit (2020): Remapping our mindset: towards a transregional and pluralistic outlook. Religion, 50 (1): 113–121.

Meyer, Birgit, in Houtman, Dick (2012): Introduction. V D. Houtman in B. Meyer (ur.): Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality: 1–26. New York: Fordham University Press.

Meyer, Birgit, Morgan, David, Paine, Crispin, in Plate, Brent (2010): The Origin and Mission of Material Religion. Religion, 40 (3): 207–211.

Morgan, David (2010): Religion and Material Culture. London: Routledge.

Muir, Edward (1997): Ritual in Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Newberg, Andrew, Wintering, Nancy, Morgan, Donna, in Waldman, Mark (2006): The Measurement of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow during Glossolalia: A Preliminary SPECT study. Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging, 148: 67–71.

Nikkel, David (2019): A Theory of Embodied Nature of Religion. The Journal of Religion, 99: 137–172.

Orsi, Robert (2016): History and Presence. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

Purkis, William (2019): "Zealous Imitation": the Materiality of the Crusader's Marked Body. Material Religion, 14 (4): 438–453.

Rakow, Katja (2020): The Light of the World: Mediating Divine Presence through Light and Sound in a Contemporary Megachurch. Material Religion, 16 (1): 84–107.

Ransom, Michael, in Alicke, Mark (2013): On Bended Knee: Embodiment and Religious Judgments. Current Research in Social Psychology, 1–9.

Richman, Naomi (2018): Machine gun prayer: the politics of embodied desire in Pentecostal worship. Journal of Contemporary Religion, 35 (3): 469–483.

Roper, Lyndal (1994): Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe. London: Routledge.

Sharpe, Eric (1986): Comparative religion: a history. London: Duckworth Publishers.

Singleton, Andrew (2011): The Rise and Fall of the Pentecostals: the role and significance of the body in Pentecostal spirituality. Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 23: 381–399.

Soliman, Tamer, Johnson, Kathryn, in Song, Hyunjin (2015): It's Not ,'All in your Head'': Understanding Religion from an Embodied Cognition Perspective. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10 (6): 852–864.

Spickard, James (2017): Alternative Sociologies of Religion. New York: New York University Press.

Stark, Rodney (1999): Micro Foundations of Religion: A Revised Theory. Sociological Theory, 17 (3): 264–289.

Stark, Rodney, in Bainbridge, William (2007): Teorija religije. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.

Stausberg, Michael, in Gardiner, Mark (2016): Defintion. V M. Stausberg in S. Engler: The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion: 9–33. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tylor, Edward Burnett (1958): Religion in Primitive Culture. New York: Harper & Row.

Van Cappellen, Patty, in Edwards, Megan (2021): The Embodiment of Worship: Relations Among Postural, Psychological, and Physiological Aspects of Religious Practice. Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion, 6 (1–2): 56–79.

Van Cappellen, Patty, Cassidy, Stephanie, in Zhang, Ruixi (2021): Religion as an Embodied Practice: Documenting the Various Forms, Meanings and Associated Experience of Christian Prayer Posture. Psychologoy of Religion and Spirituality. DOI: 10.1037/rel0000412.

Varela, Francisco, Thompson, Evan, in Rosch, Eleanor (2017): Utelešeni um. Ljubljana: Založba Krtina.

Vásquez, Manuel (2009): The Global Portability of Pneumatic Christianity: Comparing African and Latin American Pentecostalism. African Studies, 68 (2): 273–286.

Vásquez, Manuel (2011): More than Belief. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilkinson, Michael (2017): Pentecostalism, the Body, and Embodiment. V M. Wilinson in P. Althouse (ur.): Pentecostals and the Body: 17–35. Leiden Brill.

Willems, Emilio (1967): The Followers of the New Faith. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.

Viri

Družboslovje [Leksikoni Cankarjeve založbe] (1979): Religija. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba.

FRAN (2022): Religija. Dostopno prek https://www.fran.si/iskanje?FilteredDictionary Ids=133&View=1&Query=religija (17. 12. 2022).

Kerševan, Marko, in drugi [predmetna kurikularna komisija za verstvo in etiko] (2005): Učni načrt za izbirni predmet: Verstva in etika. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Zavod RS za šolstvo.

Konvencija o varstvu človekovih pravic in temeljnih svoboščin (1950). Dostopno prek: https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_slv.pdf (17. 12. 2022).

Pew Research Center (2006): Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals. Dostopno prek: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2006/10/05/spirit-and--power/ (17. 12. 2022).

Pew Research Center (2011): Global Christianity. Dostopno prek: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/12/19/global-christianity-movements-and-denominations/ (17. 12. 2022).

Pew Research Center (2015): The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050. Dostopno prek: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/ (17. 12. 2022):

Pew Research Center (2017): The Changing Global Religious Landscape. Dostopno prek: https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/04/05/the-changing-global--religious-landscape/ (17. 12. 2022).

Ustava Republike Slovenije (1991). Dostopno prek: http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=USTA1 (17. 12. 2022).

Zakon o verski svobodi (2007). Dostopno prek: http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4008 (17. 12. 2022).

Podatki o avtorju

asist. **Igor Jurekovič**
Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta
Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
E-mail: igor.jurekovic@ff.uni-lj.si

Aljoša Pužar

"BL" (BOY LOVE), "GL" (GIRL LOVE) AND FEMALE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND AFFECT IN SOUTH KOREA

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to trace the destiny of the homoerotic narrative genres of BL (Boy Love) and GL (Girl Love) in the South Korean context and, more precisely, to determine the impact of this family of genres on South Korean gendered reality. The paper presents an overview and a small selection of ethnographic voices related to the genres while trying to understand the specific local conditions of the production and consumption that have ensured BL and GL have had a lasting influence in South Korea among pop-cultural audiences and female creators.

KEY WORDS: Boy love, Girl love, South Korea, community of practice, community of affect

»BL« (Boy Love), »GL« (Girl Love) ter ženske skupnosti prakse in afekta v Južni Koreji

IZVLEČEK

Glavni namen članka je izslediti usodo homoerotičnih pripovednih žanrov BL »Boy love« (»fantovska ljubezen«) in GL »Girl love« (»dekliška ljubezen«) v južnokorejskem kontekstu ter, natančneje, ugotoviti vpliv te družine žanrov na južnokorejsko družbenospolno realnost. Prispevek bo predstavil pregled in majhen izbor etnografskih glasov, povezanih z žanri, pri tem pa poskusil razumeti posebne lokalne pogoje produkcije in potrošnje, ki so prispevali k vplivu BL in GL v Južni Koreji med popkulturnim občinstvom in ustvarjalkami.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: fantovska ljubezen, dekliška ljubezen, Južna Koreja, skupnost prakse, skupnost afekta

1 Introduction

The East Asian narrative (and visual-narrative) conventions of homoerotic stories mainly produced and consumed by persons self-defined as heterosexual females have been around for half a century. Originating in 1970s Japan, the BL (Boy Love) convention, primarily in comics and fan fiction, has spread globally in both paper-based and digital formats, shaping and influencing female culture in different regions (Wood 2006; Li 2009; Madill 2021). The same is true for the genre of GL (Girl Love), albeit to a very different degree: the BL remained more popular and widespread, better defined in terms of narrative structures, and for a long time better separated from the male homosexual narratives and practices than the GL is when it comes to lesbian narratives and consumption (Madruga 2021).

BL as a wider term is sometimes overlapping in meaning with its more sexual sub-genre of *yaoi*, and indeed, confusingly, the entire BL is often known in the West under the umbrella term of *yaoi*. Around mid-1990ies the names such as "Y genre" and "H genre" (the latter meaning "Homo genre") were popularized in South Korea for materials that included explicit BL sex, and the Japanese term *yaoi* remained relatively rare among the non-cosmopolitan Korean readers and grassroots creators. GL is overlapping in meaning with the Japanese sub-genre of *yuri*, translated in Korean as 백합 (*baekap*). Both yuri and *baekap* mean literally "lily" (Lilium flower) and share the Chinese ideogram 百合, as they both imply female-to-female liaisons of varying nature (entailing somewhat wider and more inclusive spectrum of relationships than the BL, particularly in its sexualized *yaoi* form)[1]. In this article, I will use the terms "BL" and "GL" in the same way and to the same degree as it appears to be prevalent among the present majority of South Korean fans of the homoerotic genres primarily intended for heterosexual female audiences and co-created by them. BL and GL creators and fans are known in South Korea as *BLer(s)* and *GLer(s)* respectively (*bielleo*, 비엘러; *jielleo*, 지엘러), and I will use these terms when appropriate.

---

1. The terminology related to these genres have a long history, largely related to earlier modernist literary articulations of homoerotic motifs in Japanese context. For the sake of the strict word limitations, these histories need to remain beyond the limits of this article, but are easily available in dedicated and thorough Wikipedia articles covering BL and GL in more than one language. In this article, for both the authentic Korean words and those imported to Korean spoken norm from other languages, I have used Revised Romanization of Korean (국어의 로마자 표기법), the official South Korean language romanization system (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Proclamation No. 2000-8). Versions in Hangeul are left only for the first mention of more important terms. For Japanese words, I have used the standard Hepburn romanization system.

While homoerotic narratives existed from times immemorial across different cultures, most authors agree that these particular conventions of BL and GL have come around in Japan during the late 1960s and early 1970s with the initial divulgation and influence of the longer creative fictional narratives centered on general homosocial or platonic-romantic homoerotic stories, that were often elaborate and highly stylized. This earlier literature provided basic characters and plots, offering some legitimacy of exploiting the homosocial and homoromantic contents or motifs (Kotani 2007). BL, and to a lesser degree GL, were soon to embrace more sexual, violent, or otherwise transgressive plots, merging with narrative fashions and genres that in the West would be known as slash fiction.

At the grassroots level and in strictly pop-cultural environments, most BL narratives center on the firm convention of the erotic development between *seme* and *uke*.[2] The *seme* is usually portrayed as more masculine, older, taller, and often also socially dominant, smarter, or wealthier. *Seme*'s face is often drawn with a stronger chin, shorter hair, and smaller eyes. *Uke*, on the other hand, is depicted as more "feminine" in the conventional sense, i.e., the character of *uke* is often epicene or fluid, but not too often in some molar (structured, labeled, attracting, identarian) sense of a non-binary person, but rather in a molecular (fluid, processual, fleeting, disperse) sense celebrated by the hazy figuration of so-called "new (soft hetero) masculinity" in East Asia. While *uke* gets contrasted to and pursued by a dominant *seme*, visually or in narrative depictions they both can have some of the "soft new masculinity" aspects, with such aspects dominating the character of *uke*.

Many subsequent variations of this main relation were proposed by creators, with characters such as the badass *uke*, the clueless *uke*, the sadistic *seme*, the romantic *seme*, etc. Among the characters-types of particular interest for gender and queer studies is also the "pregnant *uke*" (or the *uke* that can be impregnated), from the overlapping speculative sub-genre of Omegaverse, whose notable presence in both global and South Korean BL has popularized the triadic distinction between a dominant "alpha", a neutral "beta", and a submissive "omega" BL character.

Korean terms for *seme* and *uke* are *gong* (공, a dominant or top character) and *su* (수, a submissive or bottom character), with Japanese terms still being widely used. Due to the primary focus on the main male characters, female characters are either less important or even completely absent from the pop-BL or *yaoi*. This narrative convention or the basic set of relations is fully preserved also in

---

2. Following Japanese male gay slang, seme refers to the top position in anal sex, meaning "to attack," while uke refers to the bottom position, meaning "to receive".

the original local professional South Korean work competing with translations from Japanese, and in the world of grassroots creativity.

In GL *(yuri, baekap)* sub-genre, this convention is somewhat more rare, due to the ongoing dominance of romantic plots. While the narrative of an innocent schoolgirl vs. a predatory lesbian, the general top and bottom dynamics, but also the usual distinction in lesbian styles or figurations between a *butch* and a *femme* (Pužar 2019: 160–162) occasionally appear in GL, the entire genre is traditionally less sexualized than pop-BL or *yaoi*, and more flexible when it comes to the main relations between characters (Nagaike 2010). Also, GL remains more open to the transgender and queer figurations, beyond the surreal or fantasy-related Omegaverse figurations, in part also thanks to the queer GL creators that operate outside of the fetishistic and crypto-heteronormative frameworks more typical of BL (Park 2022).

The purpose of this article is to offer a brief overview of activities and feelings of those people (mainly self-defined as female) that appropriate and partly co-create BL and GL, and whose agency is celebrated through somewhat outdated cultural studies fantasies of developing subcultural styles, claiming freedoms, and resisting hegemonic or dominant modes of expression (Noh 2001; Kwon 2019). I hypothesize, in addition to this understandable vision of positivity, that these movements of culture remain more ambiguous, and rather form loops or strings of discourse, affect, and materiality, spiraling between the institutionalized capitalist producers, state regulators, and the ranks of fans, but also between the socio-cultural realms of the patriarchal-hegemonic and the liberatory-emancipatory. This paper intends to reveal but a small part of this ambiguity, using the author's ethnographic archives and field observations.

Ethnographic portions of this article are based on my fieldwork in Seoul, South Korea, which lasted from 2011 to 2015 and was part of my second PhD project, under the academic and ethical supervision of School of English, Communication and Philosophy (Cardiff University, UK). All ethnographic materials used here were obtained following the standard procedures of informed consent, data anonymization, with briefing and debriefing of the interlocutors. No legal minors or members of vulnerable social groups were part of this research. My Korean ethnography engaged with urban and largely urbane South Korean young women living in the broader Seoul metropolitan area, but often coming from other regions of the peninsula. The main method was the pre-arranged unstructured online conversation (digital chat). Some interlocutresses delivered written testimonials on selected topics. My two research assistants at Yonsei university delivered introductory overviews on BL, and facilitated my visits to the comic book joints. Ethnographic materials coming from 23 interlocutresses were admitted to become

part of the research archive. This article uses only a small portion of this archive.[3]

This older ethnographic data was cross-checked or triangulated for the purpose of this article with more recent (digital) field observations and sampling of materials available online. Secondary sources (books, articles and academic dissertations), and recent digital materials in public domain (public forums, boards, platforms) were consulted and accessed throughout 2022 and 2023. Additionally, I briefly took a look at the publicly available users' statistics for some popular BL and GL titles on Aladin (알라딘), one of the largest online bookstores (and second-hand book chains) in South Korea. Due to the registration procedures (that in South Korea often entail full identity disclosure), this publicly available data includes indications of age and gender. This source broadly confirmed that what we know about the consumption of BL and GL still holds– audiences are mostly female and largely adolescent and young adult (with teens being anecdotally included, but statistically invisible due to the impossibility of their official registration). The recent (in part quantitative) study on GL (Yora 2020; Yora 2023), confirmed these basic premises, as did the comparable studies from other environments (for instance: Pagliassotti 2008; Zsila et al. 2018). While not in any sense crucial or exhaustive, these secondary and quantitative clues allow for the ethnography and field observations to also entail some additional awareness of the general cultural trends.

This descriptive ethnographic work encompasses three tasks: to showcase the complexity and ethical ambiguity of the phenomenon, to amend the existing literature by defining South Korean BL and GL creators and fans as the "community of practice" and the "community of affect", thus replacing the usual discussion on the emancipatory politics of these genres by the more neutral capture of their layered, heterogeneous and often paradoxical affective patterns (patterns of intensity or proto-political potentiality). Additionally, where the ethnography allows it, the work will capture subtle generational changes in these practices and affects.

2 Communities of Practice and their History

A large transnational community of BL and GL lovers can be for all intents and purposes considered a multi-layered and complex community of practice as theorized by the anthropologist Jean Lave and education theoretician Etienne Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).[4]

---

3. For more complete insight into this ethnography that covers various topics in Korean gender and youth studies Slovenian readers can consult Pužar 2019.
4. I am grateful to Dr. Natalija Majsova for introducing me to their work.

BL and GL creators and fans share concerns or passions, patterns (and topics) of learning, and regularity of interactions. At the same time, they are not institutionalized in any traditional sense. That makes them a large community of practice, entailing many sub-communities, specific societal boundaries, and a large and active periphery, all in the sense theorized by Wenger as a "node of mutual engagement that becomes progressively looser at the periphery, with layers going from core membership to extreme peripherality" (Wenger 1998: 118). While this community reaches so-called global audiences and local ones alike, it is still very usual to observe its subsets at the national level, or the one defined by the national languages and markets, as is also the case with this article focusing on South Korean female *BLer(s)* and *GLer(s)*.

Conventional histories of female communities of practice encompassing female BL and GL fans start in the late 1970s with the Japanese *dōjinshi* community. *Dōjinshi* is a Japanese term for self-published compositions – normally magazines, *manga*, or novels – often created by non-professionals or at the grassroots creativity level. *Dōjin* (同人), literally meaning "the same person," is a term used to represent a group of people sharing a common objective or interest, meaning very close to the standard definition of the community of practice. BL and GL *dōjin* produced many sexualized parodies of popular homosocial or platonic homoerotic narratives. Overall, the initial *dōjin* activity introduced simpler plots, made them more edgy or transgressive, and engaged largely with simplified narratives and visual styles.

The Korean term for *dōjin* is *dongin* (동인) a name for a large and multilayered community of practice that from the early 1980s to this day consumes and co-creates pop culture under the constant influence of Japanese fashions and genres, including BL and GL, while at the same time developing local styles and practices, also as a consequence of more recent national and international dominance of Korean pop in its many ramifications (Kwon 2019).

In 1982, the comic circle KWAC (Korea Woman Amateur Comics) self-published a *dongin* magazine, the very first notable project of its kind of South Korean origin. Authoritarian military regimes of the early 1980s, with stringent censorship on publications, that concurrently exhibited a high degree of anti-Japanese sentiment, contributed to these early steps remaining rather informal and smaller in scale, verging on underground activity. With the collapse of these regimes, and upon the general societal opening marked by the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korean cultural industries started to bloom, presenting an important source of materials and motifs for the *dongin* creators (Kwon and Kim 2013).

Local economic growth contributed to steadier cultural consumption that included pop narratives and visual narratives pertaining to BL and GL. Japanese

cultural influences and local reinventions started to move online, upon the popularization of the commercial Korean "PC services" that existed in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a separate online communication system that merged with the global Internet only in 1995. While the imports of many products of Japanese pop culture were still legally prohibited, PC communication allowed for the pirated versions of Japanese comics to be easily accessible in South Korea followed by *dongin* fan-made parodies and other derivative grassroots creations. The first wave of South Korean online communities (Chon et. al. 2005) assured what now seems to be a historical heyday of Korean comics. The first genre to take root in South Korea, and to develop a local style was *sunjeong manhwa* (순정 만화) or "romance comic", that in terms of styles and audiences laid the groundwork for the thriving BL and GL culture of the subsequent decades. At that point, the activity was already largely female and targeted at other females.

BL and GL community of today includes professional and non-professional creators (with anything in between) of original and/or derivative BL and GL narratives, ranks of their readers/spectators/followers, and even larger ranks of pop-music (J-pop, K-pop, etc.) fans (along with fans of other pop products) that regularly "ship" their idols of the same gender (coupling them in the homoerotic sense), all the way to the occasional or sporadic onlookers. Sometimes, they are readers and writers in a traditional sense; sometimes they digitally self-fashion themselves as idols and exchange lascivious BL messages with other such digital selves or avatars; sometimes they even form monogamous digital homoerotic couples under the narrative influence of BL or GL without considering themselves to be anything but heterosexual (Pužar 2019:162–164); sometimes they choose to play digital games inspired by the genre. At times, BL or GL narratives present the central focus of their popular culture consumption, sometimes they are but a small part of it, in which case fans belong to the wide peripheries of the related community of practice.

The variety of forms and sub-practices proliferate at an uncanny speed. In the following ethnographic narrative, one finds female-to-female exchanges and transgenerational activities, the birth of the derivative grassroots creativity, along with early capitalist operations related to the initial offline romantic comic book boom in South Korea:

> *I don't remember exactly when I saw comic books for the first time... I was maybe 5 or 6 and my cousin who lived with us had some of them... she was already in middle school... Also, my mother worked in a bookstore for a while. She said to me that she reads all the comic books first, and only then detective stories. When I was in my first elementary, school kid, she used to buy me comic books. Later, I would buy them myself, from when*

I was 7 years old (1992) until I was 10 (1995). In front of our school in [the small provincial city on the outskirt of Seoul metropolitan area] there was a paper shop with school stationery and toys, and in one corner they also had some books. And there were also those comic books. The price was 4,000~5,000won (3–4 dollars). I collected "Nana" which was a monthly magazine of comics. After it went out of print, I was buying "Mink"... a sister magazine of "Wink". Wink was more adult in describing love... including BL. My cousin was reading it, and she later started to be a cartoonist herself (Y, female, b. in 1984; raised in a working-class smaller urban setting, Buddhist).

Once individual overseas trips were allowed in the early 1990s, more affluent Korean fans started to visit Japan in person, bringing in Japanese *manga*, *anime*, and games, a practice existing to this very day:

Yeah, I went to Japan and bought things... I really liked them as it was hard to get them in Korea, so they felt special. I really wanted to get things from gacha machines that spit plastic capsules... Cos we had something like that when I was in elementary school but only the cheap toys... it was such an upgrade when I went to Japan haha (X, female, b. in 1995; raised in an upper-middle-class urban setting in the broader Seoul area, Catholic).

Within the spectrum of Japanese pop genres hitting South Korean shores, the sexualized BL or *yaoi* generated a particularly enthusiastic Korean fandom. Ozaki Minami's homoromantic and mildly homoerotic titles *Zetsuai 1989* (released in 1990) and *Bronze: Zetsuai Since 1989* (released in 1992) were acclaimed as "the entrance to *yaoi*" contributing to the general acceptance of BL culture among South Korean pop audiences and creators (Kim 2013).

Several local artists were soon to gain prominence. The visual artist (cartoonist) Lee, Jung Ae (b. in 1963), that debuted in 1986, remains known for introducing the main characters that identify as the third gender. The series "Have Spring Come to Mr. Louis?" (루이스씨에게 봄이 왔는가), first released in 1990 in the influential magazine Renaissance (which existed from 1988 to 1994), caused a huge sensation among the readers for directly depicting the gay characters' love life. For this breakthrough, considered audacious, Lee Jung Ae earned the reputation of the inventor of "Korean *yaoi*" (Kim 2013).

In 1995 Wink magazine started to publish "Let Dai" (Let 다이) a BL work by Won Soo Yeon (b. in 1961), one of the most prominent creators of Korean *manhwa*, especially in the romantic genre. The layered story of the pathological or evil *seme* and "normal school boy" (not to mention: previously straight) type of *uke*, along with some secondary female characters, and the usual repertoire

of dystopian landscapes, rape, and betrayal, became very popular, and it was serialized until 2005.

> *For many of us it was huge. For me and my friends that used to go to man-hwa rental shops* (M, female, b. in 1983; raised in a lower-middle-class suburban setting, Religion unknown).

Here we see the historically strong printed comic book rental industry that allowed for the divulgation of various genres beyond what would normally be affordable or allowed by parental oversight, and that was subsequently largely forced out by the Internet revolution. Of some interest here are female-to-female intergenerational influences (through shared ownership, borrowing, swapping, and sharing) that marked older offline consumption of the genre, as, in part, testified by this ethnographic account:

> *I never actively searched for BL, and it was not very easy to see it around the late 1990s and early 2000, at least not in the book rental shop in my neighborhood. But they got it, eventually, so I could read it. The first BL book I remember (or that strongly remained in my memory) was an adult BL comic book. I read it when I visited my mother's younger sister. She had them. I was a middle school student. Recently, the industry of webtoons (including BL) became huge in South Korea so I started to read BL genre a lot* (Y, female, b. in 1984; raised in a working-class smaller urban set-ting, Buddhist).

Indeed, the developments in online communication expedited the spread of BL and GL in Korean culture. The pirated version of comics as well as the infor-mation related to the purchase and sharing of BL and GL material were actively and fervidly divulgated and discussed in Korean online communities. This early heyday was temporarily curbed by the increased State regulation and censorship, entailing anti-Japanese, anti-homosexual, and overall moralistic overtones, that temporarily changed the destiny of BL and GL. Yet, the creators and audiences protested, and the regulation was subsequently made more lenient (Kim 2013; Kwon 2019).

When as late as in 2016, during my fieldwork on South Korean BL, one of my research assistants and I visited one of the large *manhwa* cafés in Seoul (a joint uniting older concept of the comic book rental store and the space of so-called "room café") the nervousness of the employees that we asked about BL (I didn't, at that point, study GL) was palpable. The percentage of the "transgressive" genres on the shelves was disproportionally low, compared to anecdotal knowledge and available audience studies, but also to a few existing quantitative markers of the genres' success.

What was under pressure or was not readily available offline moved fully to the digital realm, especially within the newly bloomed K-pop fandom. Despite various regulatory pressures and censorship, the ranks of K-pop fans not only embraced and divulgated but also strongly increased and stabilized the production and consumption of BL and GL grassroots creations (Kwon 2019).

The fandom-propelled grassroots creation did not fully bloom until the early 2000s, though, with the debut of the second generation of K-pop idols - groups such as Shinhwa, god, and TVXQ. [5] This generation of fans already established specialized online fan cafés exclusively dedicated to secondary/derivative creations dominated by BL and GL.

I got to know about the BL genre through friends in middle school. It was a girls' school and there were a small group of girls who were into anime... we carried our own sketchbook everywhere and often took a look at others' notebooks and drew in them too. Something like the sketchbook for graffiti practice. We had a few favorite anime (both cartoons and paper books) and there was a sub-genre of imaginary BL couples. There were plenty of secondary artworks from the fans... I was mainly the audience. On the other side, there was a whole new BL fandom of K-pop idols (TVXQ, Big Bang, Super Junior...) – and I was introduced to this genre as I started to like the K-pop groups. Fans were making so-called "love lines" and produced secondary photos and video clips (ex. when the two singers were hugging, fans would snip out the moment and make it look like the couple thing). But in early 2000 fans were also writing BL novels, so-called "fanfic". I would download the novels from blogs... surely there was a fandom community but I was a shy audience (R, woman, b. in 1994; raised in an upper-middle-class setting in the larger provincial city on the south of the Korean peninsula, Catholic).

This ethnographic account already shows the layers of group influence, personal creation, pop consumption (and fandom), and the combination of various offline and online activities. Also, it testifies to the interesting fact that in South Korea "fanfic" (*paenpik*, 팬픽) represents a standard local name for longer and usually homoerotic (BL and GL) narratives, with "fan fiction" (*paenpiksyeon*, 팬픽션) used as a term for the general broader genre of derivative fiction, often western in origin.

The complexity of BL and GL narrative worlds, along with complicated dynamics between individuals and groups, and between various activities, with

---

5. I use the official English names of these K-pop groups here, that roughly correspond to the Korean versions.

effects of different infrastructures and technologies affecting generations differently, precludes one straightforward and all-encompassing way of capturing the "politics" of BL and GL communities in South Korea, be it "emancipatory" or otherwise. In the next chapter of this article, I shall, therefore, outline those affective patterns that, at least according to my ethnographic archive, crucially shape the proto-political dimensions (political potentialities) of this community.

3 Communities of Affect and the Proto-Politics of BL and GL

The purpose of this chapter is to outline some major accents in the overall organization of affect that transpire from the available ethnography and field observations. The community of practice is seen here as the community of affect, and as such it entails various tensive points, nexuses and plateaus of intensity. Such simple delineation of the affective dynamics might contribute to our fuller understanding of the complexities of BL and GL, and its potential "politics". With that, I have in mind the attempts of Brigitte Bargetz and her combining of Sedgwick's and Ranciere's views on the affective distributions to show their ambivalence, and to go beyond the sheer optimism of liberation and pessimism of cultural anchoring, towards the idea of the emancipatory that transcends such polarizations (Bargetz 2015), as lives of *BLer(s)* and *GLer(s)* unfold under the aegis of immense complexity.

The first such accent or plateau of intensification stems from the replacement of conventionally female figurations in romantic and erotic narratives with male ones in BL, and from switching from hetero-romance to homo-romance in GL. In androcentric patriarchal and prevalently heteronormative environments, such changes cannot be affectively irrelevant or empty, as shown by various testimonies and confirmed by the best available literature that is trying to capture the affectivity of BL and GL in the South Korean context (Noh 2001; Yang and Bao 2012; Kwon 2019; Park 2022).

Let us take a look at one of the written testimonials by a female BL fan reported by Noh in 2001:

> Because I am constantly infused with the value of chastity, I unconsciously avoided stories of women cheating on their husbands. In Harlequin Romances, heroines are virgins, but heroes have lots of sexual experiences. However, in yaoi, because the heroine is also male, I don't need to feel uncomfortable. For example, if a girl in pornography seems to have an orgasm while she is raped by a group of boys, I am not excited but abashed. However, if the raped one is a man, I can enjoy it more easily (Noh 2001: 9).

This testimonial confirms the empowering or liberatory move of swapping the narrative bodies – changing the underprivileged/unprotected for the privileged/protected patriarchal body. At the same time, the statement is showcasing the full preservation of the narratively shaped patriarchal power structures and of the affective organization that normalizes sexual violence, rape culture, and underage erotica.

Some of these patternings are already conventionally contained within the BL genre, and to a somewhat lesser degree within GL. While both genres stem from romantic novels and comic books, they more often than not entail additional reductions, simplifications, and melodramatic intensifications, not to mention (especially in BL) direct pornographic additions and, most importantly, the conventional polarization between active "macho" and passive "flower" masculinity, a distribution that is by all means next-to-heteronormative, rather than "queer", despite the contemporary optimistic readings, especially related to "flower masculinity" (Jung 2011; Lessard 2019).

The normalization or glamorization of sexual abuse, violence, and rape, which are regularly interpreted in positive terms, with rape scenes in BL barely ever defined as criminal, remains another important dimension that deserves affective unpacking. A *seme* raping an *uke* operates as a literary device that signifies uncontrollable love, rather than violence. Rape scenes are often written in a way that emphasizes the innocence and fragility (also: pseudo-femininity) of an *uke* to contrast it with the masculinity of a *seme*. When asked about it, my interlocutresses seem to be aware of the issue, but the problem doesn't produce a lot of negative or anxious engagement. BL and GL fans certainly have full awareness of the political dimension of these narratives (in terms of partaking in generational sensitivities and the overall societal focus on the politics of gender equality), but there is also a sense of distance and awareness of the self-standing autonomous nature of narrative worlds and mental narrative worlds alike:

I strongly think BL is just fantasy. These serious concerns were discussed in earlier stages of BL history. But it's not wrong for people to have sexual fantasies of raping and violence. If they don't do it in real life. I have noticed that some viewers put bad comments about it, but also a lot of people support the freedom of fantasy worlds. I support all fantasies since it's not real (G, female, b. in 1987; raised in a lower middle class suburban setting, No religion).

Rape? Back then I thought it was more of an instrumental element in the storyline. Lack of political correctness haha... (X, woman, b. in 1993; raised in an upper middle class setting in the larger city of the Seoul Metropolitan Area, Protestant).

The debate on this problem is ongoing in Korea and beyond (Noh 2001; Kwon 2019; Paasonen 2021), while there is also an attempt at the medicalization of some types of female desire related to BL, i.e., its interpretation within the tricky psychiatric discourse on paraphilias (Madill and Zhao 2022). This latter line of inquiry remains interesting here only insofar as it opens debates on how various states of desire and related expressions of societal moral panic remain differently gendered.

For a long time, considering mass female participation in the consumption and creation of these genres, especially by the girls in their formative years, I used to assume a type of transgenerational affective contagion that contributes to the core of melodramatic articulations of love in South Korea, regardless of the narrative pornographic reductions (Pužar 2022). Still, when asked about it ("do you think reading these narratives prompted you or programmed you for certain types of relationship dynamics, emotionality or intimacy"), my interlocutresses remained silent or inconclusive, i.e., the ethnography as of yet could not yield such insights.

> *Yeah, for sure this would influence the readers but I can't say to which degree. Doesn't Disney fairytale fantasy get ruined as we actually experience love relationships? lol...* (R, woman, b. in 1994; raised in an upper-middle-class setting in the larger provincial city on the south of the Korean peninsula, Catholic).

What can strike any ethnographer as peculiar or of different intensity is hierarchical or rank-based order within the communities of BL and GL creators and fans, including strict administrative or managerial regulations, that amount to ones expected among freemasons or other secretive exclusive societies, as seen in the following written ethnographic account, by a young female intellectual who in her teens used to be a fervid fan of the K-pop group Girls generation (also known as SNSD and *Soshi,* from the Korean name of the group *Sonyeo sidae*[6] /소녀시대/) and member of female-only communities that cherished heteronormative romantic love fanfic involving members of the group, but also occasional openly erotic GL narratives that would regularly spur heated debates, and often would provoke expressions of prescriptive prudishness and homophobia.

> *Those fanfic sites and communities, compared to other "official" and "public" fan sites, are extremely hard to get in. You have to know they exist in the first place to start looking for them and they are hard to find, since it's an unspoken rule that you don't speak about that "yin" (eumji,*

---

6. The official English name of the group is used here, along with RR of the Korean name.

음지, *shadowed land) stuff in other sunlit communities of SNSD. And it's even harder to be a member. Some of them have an entrance examination, I'm not kidding. In order to be able to actually read the postings, you have to write a poem using the first letters of SNSD members' names or parody a sijo [시조, traditional lyric poetry] to express your love of Soshi, etc. There are even communities that branch out from there, forming even smaller groups. In order to get in some of them, you have to upload a picture of an SNSD album you bought or their solo concert ticket. The register automatically rejects males, with the 7th number of social ID being 1 instead of 2. The atmosphere is free and the way some people talk there is shocking, compared to the way they talk in the usual communities. It's almost a transformation that rivals that of Dr. Jekyll* (S, cis-female, born in 1990, raised in an affluent upper-class setting in the nation's capital, Agnostic, coming from an extremely conservative Protestant background).

According to some other portions of this large testimony, along with this unexpected formalism and prescriptive impulses, there is a perceived and lived tension between the label or orientation of "lesbian" and the love for the non-identarian (non-labeled in terms of identity politics) GL homoerotic content. Open expressions of homosexual or homoerotic interest or arousal, around the year 2010, still produced censorship and strong homophobic backlash within these self-regulated female communities.

A female SNSD fan, as oppressed as she is in a patriarchal society, might be just enjoying a less dangerous version of heterosexuality by reading fanfics. However, the boundary between a fanfic fan and a "real" lesbian itself is blurry to begin with. When I suggested this in a serious, un-joking-mannered post that I purposely wrote to get a reaction, it really offended some people. The regulator deleted it before I could copy and paste the comments. But one of the bluntest denials to this "accusation" was: "Liking SNSD and reading fanfics is NOT equal to being a lesbian. How can you even suggest it? Let me spell it out for you because it looks like you're not going to give up anytime soon. (...) Being a lesbian means that you want another girl's fingers in your vagina. I don't. Now, will you leave?" Well, I was suspended for 3 days for posting that, but my retort would have been: do you have to want another man's penis in your vagina in order to be a heterosexual? I'm guessing the answer is no (S, cis-female, born in 1990, raised in an affluent upper-class setting in the nation's capital, Agnostic, coming from an extremely conservative Protestant background).

This account of blatant homophobia, so different from more optimistic descriptions of SNSD Chinese fans by Yang and Bao (Yang and Bao 2012) opens one of the crucial questions that persists for both BL and GL, and that is the relation of this community of practice and affect to the lives within LGBTQ+ community in what remains a distinctly homophobic environment, despite considerable societal changes towards the acceptance in the last decade (Hong 2021).

As BL and GL often openly deal with homoerotic motifs, genres are sometimes superficially perceived as homosexual. Also, there is an apparent increase in homosexual consumption of these pseudo-homosexual genres (Kwon 2019; Park 2022). That said, BL and GL were often criticized by the LGBTQ+ community as being nothing more than escapist fantasies, lacking realism and societal awareness in featuring and depicting homosexual motifs (Madruga 2021). Genres often fail to address prejudices against people that self-define as homosexual or gay, showing persistent and strong narrative and ideological attachment to the intimate worlds and needs of heterosexual women.

When asked about the tricky relation of BL with real-life homosexuality and its slow normalization in a homophobic society, ethnographic voices turn quite detached and largely inconclusive:

> *I don't know really, but I doubt that it helped the public image of real homosexuals. Not much, maybe. I remember one male gay interview, and he said that people don't accept ugly gays. I think real GL couples in many schools helped those girls more than those webtoons did. And boys rarely read BL* (P, female, b. in 1983; raised in a middle-class smaller urban setting in the South Korean North-East, No religion).

The younger interlocutress is of a somewhat more optimistic opinion, that might be interpreted not only with regards to these popular homoerotic genres but also as a trace of the general spirit of changing times, when it comes to South Korean homophobia, and quite possibly of the class difference:

> *In a long term, I guess this opened our minds to be more open about homosexual motifs. Because we were picturing two men (or women) kissing in our heads* (R, woman, b. in 1994; raised in an upper-middle-class setting in the larger provincial city on the south of the Korean peninsula, Catholic).

Present popularity and openly public presence of more recent BL and GL media products in South Korea reveal fuller generational integration and normalization of homoerotic motifs, among both heterosexual and homosexual audiences, along with the overall increased acceptance of the non-heteronormative articulations of gender and sexuality. Yet, most of the complaints directed to BL and GL in the past by real-life homosexual spectators remain unaddressed, from

the fantasy-bound perfection (aesthetic and ethical flattening) of the situations and characters to the superficiality and decontextualization, to the normalization and even glamorization of inequality and various levels of verbal and physical violence and abuse.

The case in point is "Semantic Error" (시멘틱 에러), a line of narratives and media narratives showing a full circle of production within the community of practice and affect. An online book uploaded to the large online community of pop-culture consumers and creators in 2018 under the pseudonym Jeo Soo-ri (저수리), that was soon taken over by commercial publishers and transformed first into a web-based *manhwa* series and soon after into a four-episode anime (cartoon motion picture), both during 2021. In February of 2022, a live-action drama with eight episodes (directed by Kim Su Jeong /김수정/) was released on popular streaming platforms (Watcha, Viki, and Gagaoolala), and was, in the meantime, combined and edited into a feature film.

The story is of the relatively uneventful university campus life that accommodates an (un)expected homoerotic affair between Chu Sang-woo, a rational, competitive, ambitious, and order-loving junior computer science major student, and an older more erratic figure: a popular and stylish design student Jang Jae Young who, frustrated by his academic failures, first appears as Sang Woo's bully, but then the romance between the two ensues.

Fans of the "Semantic error" immediately took upon creating derivative work, as it is shown in the following example of the recent fan work by the creator working under the name of Morona_ER, which involves five different characters and encompasses both BL and GL scenes.

The translation of the conversation between the cis-male couple is: "Sang-woo, what do you want to eat tonight? Pasta? Sushi? Or me?" "Outside, please shut up!" In the second row: "You were also eating it up yesterday..."

The cis-female couple's exchange is: "Our Ji-hye is so pretty that *eonni* [언니, older sister, the usual way for girls to address an older female friend] can't get her graduation work done. Anxious." "This is the fifth time *eonni* changed the reason for not being able to do the graduation work." In the second row: "Brutal honesty is cute too."

A single character in the middle of the second row (named Hyeong-taek), states: "Damn CCs!" (CCs standing for "campus couples").

One can notice how the BL scene, typically, brings more straightforwardly risqué and bawdy tones, and how the GL scene appears softer, and somewhat more cutefied.

Picture 1: Semantic Error BL and GL fan art by a creator @Morona_ER [converted to grayscale]. Available from: https://twitter.com/Morona_ER; Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

The remaining overlapping affective patternings of importance include those that pertain to relations between male and female figurations, to reductions and intensifications in narratives and in structural terms (packed within the genre development), to intensifications within the tensive nexus of the hetero/homo/pseudohomo/antihomo feelings and balances (including molar homosexuality vs molecular homoeroticism), to complicated relationship between liberatory and regulatory forces (outside and within the community of practice and affect).

Some patternings pertain to the sisterhood or positive homosociality of creators and fans (and fans that are grassroots creators).

The main moment in the overall organization of affect, i.e., the patterning that pervades all others, is certainly the one related to the direct and indirect pleasures and titillations, partly mixed with, but not overshadowed by, the fervor of the celebrity fandom and by the aesthetic appreciation of stories and visuals. Seeking and experiencing pleasure and titillation, and especially sexual pleasure, while in itself productive in vitalist terms (and as such balancing the Post-Neo-Confucian-postmodernity that still celebrates female chastity and politeness) remains the point of activation for various different affective and discursive formations and outcomes: from secretive and shy explorations pervaded by guilt to the louder sex-positive feminist manifestations and reparative queerings. Often interpreted in emancipatory terms, as a form of newly empowered female gaze that restructures or repairs the landscape of human intimacy in South Korea, this affective patterning remains central also across all other positions within the affective community, from passively embracing pedophilia and rape to attacking other sisters from the homophobic perspective.

> *What attracted the girls in puberty was the detailed and romanticized pornographic descriptions of lovemaking... haha... definitely raised sexual curiosity (...) I think these narratives were more of a phase in puberty. I cannot speak for the whole group but for me, it was definitely something that stimulated me sexually* (R, woman, b. in 1994; raised in an upper-middle-class setting in the larger provincial city on the south of the Korean peninsula, Catholic).

The role of these genres in the masturbatory behaviors of Koreans is under-researched, and ethnographic traces are rare:

> *I cannot know if many girls masturbate when they read BL, but I did it many times while reading BL novels or webtoons* (B, female, b. in 1986; raised in a working-class urban setting, Buddhist).

Brief online searches of Korean digital forums reveal a wide range of responses when it comes to genres acting as a direct masturbatory fuel, but also, persisting amounts of shame and mystification related to female masturbation (despite recent notable changes in public visibility of this aspect of female lives). While most of the relevant literature recognizes female excitement, desire and scopophilia, and various other forms of BL- and GL-related pleasure (Noh 2001; Yang 2018; Kwon 2019), the fully sexual channeling of the affective "grab" of these genres presently remains understudied.

4 Conclusion

Questions of female (especially young female) empowerment through creation and consumption, their sexual agency, the issues of affective conditioning (or emotional education) of female audiences, issues pertaining to homosocial communality of female readers, and the problems of the (in)visibility of homoerotic practices (either in separation from the molar/structured homosexual identity or not), have all been described in various studies assessing the popularity and importance of East Asian homoerotic popular narratives around the globe. Indeed, I was able to find traces of most of these dimensions in my South Korean fieldwork, in the local patterns of production and consumption of BL and GL.

The main underlying hypothesis of this paper was a simple one: This community of practice and its affective patterns cannot be legitimately read as straightforwardly emancipatory either for the women involved or for the broader field of gender(ed) relations.

The ethnography shows how the female community of *BLer(s)* and *GLer(s)*, with its numerous subcommunities and wide peripheries, provides a paradoxical space that is emancipatory and hegemonic/limiting in one. Partaking in this cultural space promotes sexual agency, creativity, and even some alternative (female-to-female) homosocial bonds and emotional investments. It nurtures some anti-systemic sentiments and activities (such as piracy), forms of horizontal bonds, and grassroots operations. On the other hand, it still often reflects and reproduces the crypto-heteronormative and conventionally patriarchal distribution of the ideology and affect, with toxic monogamy and other such forms upon which the entire structure of the South Korean "melodramatic loving" depends to this moment (Pužar 2022). It also remains fetishist in the sense that, at times at least, provokes a legitimate societal debate on paraphilias and practices of violence (such as the case of the possible discursive normalization of underage rape), beyond the newly accepted permissiveness and celebration of female ludic pleasures and emancipatory transgressions.

The vision of the emancipatory process must therefore be corrected by the vision of complexity that is spiralling between the patriarchal-hegemonic and the liberatory-emancipatory, and between the restrictive and permissive poles of South Korean culture. While the overall developments indicate the rising societal acceptance of female sex agency, homosexual visibility, and overall human rights, the pop-hybrids of these processes often remain ambiguous.

All these paradoxes and ethical dilemmas notwithstanding, any large and influential pop-cultural niche created by female creators for female consumers, especially the one that entails many homosocial connections and collaborations,

deserves a special mention and an additional analysis. The logical next step in analysing this specific community would be to keep providing both historical and contemporary empirical research on how the capitalist infrastructures, the structures of the mediasphere, and the entire underlying political economy of BL and GL influence individual and communal lives of South Koreans, as only fully intersectional approaches might modulate and improve the usual cultural studies analysis of these interesting communities of practice and affect.

Acknowledgement

Bibliography

Bargetz, Brigitte (2015): The Distribution of Emotions: Affective Politics of Emancipation. Hypatia, 30 (3): 580–596.

Chon, Kilnam, Park, Hyunje, Kang, Kyungran, and Lee, Youngeum (2005): A Brief History of the Internet in Korea. Available from: https://net.its.hawaii.edu/history/Korean_Internet_History.pdf (Accessed 23. 2. 2023).

Hong, Boram (2021): A Study on the Relationship between Korean Women's Dong-In (Doujin) Culture and Feminism – Focusing on the discourse of post-BL(Tal-BL). (한국 '여성' 동인문화와 페미니즘의 관계에 대한 연구 : 탈 BL(Boys' Love) 담론을 중심으로). Department of Sociology. The Graduate School of Chung-Ang University (master thesis)

Jung, Sung (2011): Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols. Honolulu: Hawaii University Press.

Kim, Hyojin (2013): Korean Dong-in Culture and Yaoi: Focusing on the Changes in the 1990s (한국 동인문화와 야오이: 1990 년대를 중심으로). Cartoon and Animation Studies: 263–290. Seoul: Korean Society of Cartoon Animation Studies.

Kotani, Mari (2007): Foreword to Saitō Tamaki "Otaku Sexuality". In C. Bolton, I. Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and T. Tatsumi (eds.): Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: 47–74. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kwon, Seung-Ho, and Kim, Joseph (2013): From censorship to active support: The Korean state and Korea's cultural industries. The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 24 (4): 517–532.

Kwon, Jungmin (2019): Straight Korean Female Fans and Their Gay Fantasies. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Lave, Jean, and Wenger, Étienne (1991): Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lessard, John (2019): Transnational Slash: Korean Drama Formats, Boys' Love Fanfic, and the Place of Queerness in East Asian Media Flows. In P. Demory (ed.): Queer/Adaptation: 155–174. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Li, Yannan (2009): Japanese Boy-Love manga and the global fandom: a case study of Chinese female readers (Doctoral dissertation).

Madill, Anna (2021): The Yaoi/Boys' Love/Danmei Audience. In Ross, K. et. al. (eds.): The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication: 1–5. Hoboken – Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Madill, Anna, and Zhao, Yao (2022): Are Female Paraphilias Hiding in Plain Sight? Risqué Male–Male Erotica for Women in Sinophone and Anglophone Regions. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 51: 897–910.

Madruga, Isabella (2021): The Explosion of the 'Boys' love (BL) genre. The Daily Fandom, 11. 11. 2021. Available from: https://thedailyfandom.org/the-explosion-of-the-boys-love-genre/#the-problems-with-boys-love (Accessed 24. 12. 2022).

Nagaike, Kazumi (2010): The Sexual and Textual Politics of Japanese Lesbian Comics: Reading Romantic and Erotic Yuri Narratives. Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies, 30. 9. 2010 (article 4).

Noh, Sueen (2001): Reading YAOI Comics: An Analysis of Korean Girls' Fandom. Available from: http://moongsil.com/study/yaoi_eng.pdf (Accessed 29. 1. 2023).

Paasonen, Susanna (2021): 'We watch porn for the fucking, not for romantic tiptoeing': extremity, fantasy and women's porn use. Porn Studies. DOI: 10.1080/23268743.2021.1956366.

Pagliassotti, Dru (2008): Reading boys' love in the West. Particip@tions, 5 (2). Available from: http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5_02_pagliassotti.htm (Accessed 23. 2. 2023).

Park, Bo Ram (2022): A Study on the Cultural Practices of Queer Women in the GL (Girls' Love) Community. (퀴어 여성 GL 향유자들의 문화실천에 관한 연구) (Master thesis). Department of Women's studies. Seoul: The Graduate School of Ewha Womans University.

Pužar, Aljoša (2019): Odraščanje v Južni Koreji: feministične etnografije transgresije. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za antropološke in prostorske študije.

Pužar, Aljoša (2022): "The two of us, inc." – notes on the post-entrepreneurial love. In K. Haensch (ed.): Uncanny entrepreneurship: 130–145. Hamburg: Textem.

Wenger, Étienne (1998): Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wood, Andrea (2006): "Straight" Women, Queer Texts: Boy-Love Manga and the Rise of a Global Counterpublic. Women's Studies Quarterly, 34 (1/2): 394–414.

Yang, Ling, and Bao, Hongwei (2012): Queerly Intimate: Friends, fans and affective communication in a Super Girl fan fiction community. Cultural Studies, 26 (6): 842–871.

Yang, Sungeun (2018): A Feminist Psychological Analysis on the Playful Embracement of Boys' Love Manga (여성심리학 관점에서 분석한 남성동성애만화 (Boys' Love manga) 의 유희적 수용. Journal of Korean Cinema Association, 18 (9).

Yora (2020): 벡합 향유층의 성적 지향 및 성별 정체성 설문조서 결과 및 분석 (Baekap users' sexual orientation and results and analysis). Naver blog, 19. 01. 2020. Available from: https://m.blog.naver.com/PostView.naver?blogId=ephedr a88&logNo=221777409943&referrerCode=0&searchKeyword=%EB%B0%B1% ED%95%A9%20%ED%96%A5%EC%9C%A0%EC%9E%90 (Accessed 4. 1. 2023).

Yora (2023): 백합, 이 좋은 걸 이제 알았다니 (Baekap, finally realized it's good). Seoul: Gufic.

Zsila, Ágnes, Pagliassotti, Dru, Urbán, Róbert, Orosz, Gábor, Király, Orsolya, and Demetrovics, Zsolt (2018): Loving the love of boys: Motives for consuming yaoi media. PLoS ONE, 13 (6): e0198895.

Authors' data

Ddr. **Aljoša Pužar**, Associate Professor
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences
Kardeljeva ploščad 5, Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: aljosa.puzar@fdv.uni-lj.si
Tel: +386 1 5805 280

Noel Christian A. Moratilla

FUGITIVE WITNESSING: STORIES OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

ABSTRACT

Policies on migrant workers are characterised by competing frameworks of governance that do not necessarily protect migrants. Despite their vulnerability, however, migrant workers also possess agential capacities. Guided by the concept of "fugitive witnessing", I discuss excerpts from the book "Bantay-Salakay: Anthology of Short Stories by Domestic Workers in Singapore, Hongkong and Taiwan" (Mga Bantay-Salakay: Antolohiya ng Maiikling Kuwento ng mga Indonesian Domestic Worker sa Singapore, Hongkong, at Taiwan), a collection of stories originally in Bahasa Indonesia and translated into Filipino. Specifically, I problematise how stories written by Indonesian domestic helpers reveal and negotiate varied aspects of migration. The paper concludes that stories of subaltern groups within the diaspora may serve as complex and discursive means to assess, interrogate and reform the contemporary phenomenon of labour mobility.

KEY WORDS: Indonesian migration, migrant stories, migrants' rights, diaspora

Ubežniška pričevanja: Zgodbe indonezijskih migrantskih delavcev in delavk

IZVLEČEK

Za politike, povezane z delavkami_ci migrantkami_i, so značilni različni okviri upravljanja, ki migrantke_e ne nujno ščitijo. Kljub svoji ranljivosti pa imajo delavke_ci migrantke_i tudi zmožnost delovanja. Na podlagi koncepta »ubežniškega pričevanja« bom obravnaval odlomke iz knjige Bantay-Salakay: Antologija kratkih zgodb gospodinjskih delavk_cev iz Singapurja, Hongkonga in Tajvana (Mga Bantay-Salakay: Bantay-Salakay: Antolohiya ng Maiikling Kuwento ng

mga Indonesian Domestic Worker sa Singapore, Hongkong, at Taiwan), zbirke zgodb v indonezijskem jeziku bahasa, ki so bile prevedene v filipinski jezik. Natančneje, problematiziral bom, kako zgodbe, ki so jih napisale_i indonezijske_i gospodinjske_i pomočnice_ki, razkrivajo različne vidike migracij in se o njih pogajajo. Prispevek ugotavlja, da lahko zgodbe subalternih skupin v diaspori služijo kot kompleksno in diskurzivno sredstvo za ocenjevanje, preizpraševanje in reformiranje sodobnega pojava mobilnosti delovne sile.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: indonezijska migracija, zgodbe migrantk_ov, pravice migrantk_ov, diaspora

1 Introduction

Contemporary institutions and values are now increasingly informed by the logic of neoliberalism, fueled by political and economic paradigms that justify the trend of many national governments toward relinquishing their responsibility to provide jobs in favor of an aggressive global labour market. In the past, conflict, invasion, and persecution drove large numbers of people away from their homeland as in the case of the Jewish, Armenian, and African diasporas. Currently, it is the neoliberalist ideology that drives big segments of the human population to abandon their country of origin and attempt to eke a decent living someplace else. Generally, such a decision is painful as it may mean having to leave one's family behind and, in not a few instances, making themselves susceptible to varied forms of abuse and violence. Add to these the feelings of alienation and what Simon Weil (2002: 39) calls "uprootedness". It would be a grievous mistake, however, to reduce migrants to hapless victims of the system and, thus, deemphasise their agentic capabilities. Migrants, while acknowledged as a marginal constituency, employ strategies to come to grips with their peripheral existence and even circumvent the very strictures imposed on them. Viewing diasporic communities, therefore, should necessarily involve a multilayered praxis that will account for the materiality of social conditions and also take stock of the varied ways by which the migrant as a subaltern subject can be empowered, insurgent, and transformative. Among the discursive strategies employed by migrants is the production of narratives largely based on their own lived experiences. As pointed out by Sarah Bishop (2019: 4), narratives of marginal groups such as migrants recuperate "underrepresented perspectives – to enfranchise voices that have historically been left out of academic research".

In Indonesia, one of the world's top labour-sending countries, the diasporic writings of domestic helpers and other service-oriented workers, or what have been called *Sastra Buruh Migran Indonesia* (writings of Indonesian migrants;

Piocos 2019) are increasingly gaining recognition and getting published. These developments, I would argue, constitute efforts to make the voices of migrant workers heard and, thus, democratise the literary/cultural field by widening the range of texts that can be considered literary. It has become axiomatic that literature is not just about self-contained texts; rather, literature is a cultural artifact and, as such, it is inextricable from the dynamics of history, society, and culture. Literature, in that regard, can be seen as visual and/or aural records that can serve as important tools for understanding, appreciating, interrogating, and interpreting social processes. But like other art forms, literature should be made more inclusionary by acknowledging and propagating the works of otherwise marginal groups such as labour migrants especially if such works deal with their writers' own subaltern conditions.

Given their language, themes, and other qualities, true-to-life narratives, especially when they concern victimization and abuse, can be analysed using a concept I call "fugitive witnessing," which points to how such narratives can illustrate a discursive strategy to uncover, challenge, and engage the excesses of power. As I shall explain later, the concept can be deployed to show how the migrant, from a position of relative inferiority and otherness, can transgress deeply entrenched norms, circumvent traditional restrictions, and enact various other forms of resistance.

Narratives written by migrants draw inspiration from real life and not a few of them recount actual experiences of marginality, they may have implications for the crafting of policies to secure the rights of workers in both the host country and the homeland. In short, the recognition of migrants' workers cultural productions constitutes a critical interrogation of political and artistic conventions, while attempting to secure the welfare of a sector that is by and large considered voiceless, inferior, and peripheral.

2 Indonesia as Source of Labour

Indonesia holds the reputation of being a leading labour-exporting country. Many of these migrants serve as domestic helpers in neighboring countries and territories like Hongkong, Singapore, and Taiwan. As a result of the unrelenting promotion of labour export (primarily because of the shortage of job opportunities), working overseas remains the most viable and popular option to many Indonesians. The argument for labour export often invokes the concept of "triple win" which involves three categories of actors – the sending country whose economy is propped up by remittances; the receiving country whose human capital shortage is addressed by the entry of foreign workers; and the migrants

who are able to support themselves and their families (Baubock and Ruhs 2021). According to Maksum (2021: 1), Indonesia's migrant workers have become "an unavoidable, albeit complex, consequence of globalization, but many have reaped economic benefits from their presence at both the global and individual levels".

There is concern, however, over the protection and welfare of Indonesian migrants. In the receiving country, migrant workers are generally vulnerable to varied forms of abuse which, however, may be underreported. The failure to report incidents of abuse victimizing migrant workers may be ascribed to the fear of being blamed, the lack of funds to pursue the case against the abuser, and the lack of awareness about the proper authorities to handle the concern (International Organisation on Migration 2010). It has been noted that justice may be elusive to the victimised migrant because "the handling of... cases... is conducted haphazardly without a clear system and strategy" (ibid.: 38). Frameworks of governance relative to labour export are characterised by seemingly competing goals and priorities: on the one hand, the Indonesian foreign ministry and non-government organisations are pushing for legal mechanisms to guarantee the security and protection of migrants; on the other hand, the labour ministry is perceived to be more supportive of recruitment agencies given their role in the further pursuit of labour export as a job-generating program (Bal and Palmer 2020). In 2010, the International Organisation for Migration or IOM lamented: "There is lack of compliance by some recruitment agencies indicating the need for the government to take a more active role in regulating the industry, as well as monitoring and ensuring compliance" (2010: xi).

To confound it all, little attention has been paid to the condition of post-migrant workers as an important human security aspect of migration. Certainly, government should not acknowledge migrants' remittances while turning a blind eye to their situation upon going home. As pointed out by Maksum (2021: 2), there should be "long-term strategies" for migrant workers, which include "creating more job openings so that the workers don't have to look for work abroad". The issues confronting post-migrant workers include poor financial management; difficulties in accessing finance for business; and contributing to the population problems of their place of origin, which in turn complicate perennial concerns relating to high unemployment and poverty.

3 Material, Methodology, and Framework: Disentangling *Bantay-Salakay*

Entitled *Bantay-Salakay: Anthology of Short Stories by Domestic Workers in Singapore, Hongkong, and Taiwan* (*Mga Bantay-Salakay: Antolohiya ng Maiikling Kuwento ng mga Indonesian Domestic Worker sa Singapore, Hong-kong, at Taiwan*), the book is edited by Filipino Carlos Piocos and was published in 2019 by the *Sentro ng Wikang Filipino* (Filipino Language Center), an institution dedicated to promoting the Filipino language . The book is a collection of stories all originally in Bahasa Indonesia and carefully translated by Piocos into Filipino, the national language of the Philippines. In his introduction, Piocos reveals that one of the reasons for producing the collection has to do with the fact that Indonesia and the Philippines are Southeast Asia's top labour-exporting countries, and in many ways, migrant workers from both countries share the same experiences and travails. Indeed, it is no exaggeration that the stories found in the book could resonate with Filipino readers as they would with their Indonesian counterparts. Piocos provides a two-pronged objective in his work:

> ... *to gather stories by Indonesian women, and more importantly, to reveal the different, but also similar, experiences of migration among Indonesian women...* (2019: xix).[1]

The Filipino term *bantay-salakay* in the title is Piocos' translation of the Bahasa term *penjajah*. Initially, the editor was torn between two other terms in Filipino – *mananakop* (coloniser) and *pakialamera* (meddler). In the end, Piocos settled for *bantay-salakay* (pluralised as *mga bantay*-salakay), a term that has no direct English translation but which was chosen on account of its provocative undertones. Literally, *bantay* refers to a "guard" or a "watcher" while *salakay* means "assault", and put together, the words become an oxymoron (i.e., the custodian as attacker) encapsulating the complex position of the domestic helper in the household and in the global labour market. The migrant is fissured by contradictions: one who is welcomed but also marginalised, one who is indispensable but also ignored, one who is vulnerable but also viewed as the source of moral panics. Indeed, *bantay-salakay* is a fitting metaphor for the domestic helper who is weighed down by her irreducible otherness, but one capable of making sense of her situation, narrating her afflictions, denouncing excesses of power, and exercising individual and collective agency.

The collection has a total of 26 narratives all originally written in Bahasa and published previously in various books and journals. After reading the narratives,

---

1. All English translations are by the author.

I identified the thematic concerns in each of the narratives which would serve as guide for the discussion. An initial clustering of the narratives was produced based on the thematics. In the process, those pieces that were too short or whose themes did not resonate with the other narratives were excluded. Eventually, three relevant themes emerged from the final classification.

The analysis of the narratives is guided by a concept that this paper calls "fugitive witnessing". Witnessing, in this context, is critical spectatorship characterised by a questioning attitude towards oppression and disenfranchisement at every turn. It is akin to Henry Giroux's (1996: 9) declaration that engaging the present is necessarily an "ethical response to the narratives of the past". Along those lines, the narratives analysed here can be read as testimonial writings, an emerging literary genre that underscores experiences of subalternity. I would argue that while it is not clear whether or not they are biographical or semi-biographical accounts, the narratives cited here are based on migrant workers' experiences and, as such, being synecdochically communal, hew closely to testimonial literature, invoking affective investments that are at once shared and collective.

The qualifier "fugitive" is also a crucial component of the framework. "Fugitive" here refers to a line of escape. But it is no mere absconding as it invariably involves a critical view of injustice, including both its causes and ramifications, as well as the enactment of possibilities. It may refer to an actual, physical act of transgressing the law, dodging figures of authority, or using the imagination to flee from the strictures of a highly regulated society. It may be instanced by the deployment of such discursive tools as sardonic humor or, in the case of stories, surreal plots as attempts to emancipate oneself and the disempowered segment to which they belong from excessive social impositions. It may also be illustrated by an attitude of suspicion or skepticism, if not a well-worked-out repudiation of the constraints and limitations of ideologically informed reality, at times blurring the demarcation between real life and fantasy. According to Appadurai (2005: 31), imagination has served as "an organised field of social practice, a form of work... and a form of negation between sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility".

It is imperative, of course, to view the migrant worker not as a muzzled victim but as a subtle dissenter, using discursive tactics to expose the underbelly of neoliberalism and highlight the inequalities brought about by labour export. For one thing, migrants' "bodily experiences" as related in their own narratives unearth the "ethical and legal violations of neoliberalism" (Baumik 2015: 91). Migrants' narratives likewise constitute an attempt to dispute the views of orthodox leftism that conveniently ignore and undervalue the ability of the exploited to circumvent critically and creatively the power of the oppressor. The views of

orthodox leftism which, to borrow the words of Giroux (2000: 6), accentuate "ghostly economism" should be replaced with the idea that power does not simply emanate from hegemonic institutions; rather, power, alongside technology and ideology, can conduce to "forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural forms that function to actively silence people" (Giroux 1985: xix). One should, therefore, pluralise the "notion of antagonism" (Giroux 2000: 6) and deploy varied tactics of engaging systemic domination, which include recuperating the narratives of exploitation and abuse.

The analysis is guided by the following questions: What thematic concerns pertaining to migrant workers' experiences can be gleaned from the narratives? How do these concerns illustrate fugitive witnessing within the context of labour diaspora? And what transformative possibilities are foregrounded or enacted in migrant workers' narratives?

4 Analysis and Discussion

This section of the paper analyses selected stories from the book and categorises them according to their thematic concerns. The reading yielded three relevant themes: The first has to do with the feelings of anxiety and alienation that are inextricable from living and working in a foreign land; the second pertains to the critical and conscienticised migrant, serving as a counterpoint to the representation of the migrant as docile victim; and the third refers to the ways by which authority, tradition, and social codes are transgressed by the migrant as coping and resistive mechanisms. Most of the passages cited here are originally in Filipino, and their English translation appears in the discussion for better readability.

4.1 Anxiety and Alienation

Anxiety and alienation are emotions that inevitably arise from being in a foreign land. At times, this is made complicated by the feelings of uncertainty and loneliness, of being uprooted and "unhomed" (Bhabha 1992), and of being the proverbial "other" in an unfamiliar milieu, as can be gleaned from the story *A Bowl of Chicken Feet Soup* (*Isang Mangkok na Sabaw na Paa ng Manok*). The narrator relates how her ways would often clash with the culture of the host country, even hinting at the impossibility of her complete assimilation. One glaring source of distress is her lack of familiarity with the language of the host country. After learning a few words, she finds herself disconcerted by how her employers would sometimes address each other with otherwise impolite expressions like *jisin* (crazy), regardless of the age of the interlocutor. The narrator observes,

"Then, I realised that respect means different things in different places" (2019: 25). Before long, she herself becomes the target of harsh derision and contempt. On one occasion, takes a verbal beating from her employers only because she has consumed all of the chicken soup in a family gathering. The protagonist's observation is painfully poignant: "Because of one minor mistake, he cruelly told me to be more careful and observant of the practices in this country" (ibid.: 28).

Similar reflections can also be seen in the story *Choices* (*Mga Pagpipilian*) in which the narrator also expresses her frustration over having to leave Indonesia and work in a country with a language and a culture markedly different from hers. What can be deduced here is a feeling of despair over having to be separated from her loved ones and be proverbially adrift in foreign territory only because there seems to be no other viable choice to climb the social ladder but to leave one's place of origin. Once in the receiving country, the migrant, without sufficient orientation and exposure, needs to cope with the dislocation and the concomitant anxiety of having to serve people with an unfamiliar culture and speaking an unfamiliar language (Yang, Featherston and Shlonsky 2022). To overcome the feelings of anguish and despair, the migrant has to repeatedly affirm her self-worth:

> Domestic helpers in other countries are steadfast soldiers. They are not just heroes of the global exchange market, but also heroes who do not know surrender and defeat. Inspired by hope, they are shaping, with their tears and sweat, a great future for their families... (*Choices* 2019: 76)

Feelings of alienation and otherness can also manifest themselves in one's sartorial preferences in which case a person may conceal their own cultural identity and associate themselves more closely with the culture of the host society. It does not necessarily border on self-loathing, but it can be construed as a deliberate, self-conscious response to the gnawing sense of dislocation and marginality. On the part of the migrants, acculturation can be "stressful" and lead to "problems of self-esteem and mental health" (Moyano 2019: 4) and how one dresses up may be a strategy for coping particularly in largely homogeneous cultures. This is suggested in *The Hijab from Turkey* (*Ang Hijab Mula Turkey*) where the narrator tries to shake off her Indonesian identity by dressing in Western-styled clothes. She asserts that it is an attempt to raise her self-esteem – "My social rank seems to improve because of how I dress up" (2019: 146). In this regard, it is also out of a desire to address the anxiety that stems from looking different from the natives of the place, and ineluctably put under erasure some aspects of her native identity.

4.2 The Critical and Conscienticised Migrant

In some of the narratives, what figures is the migrant worker as politically conscious intellectual who knows the rights of migrants even in foreign territory, and as such, counters the representation of the migrant as passive and nonchalant victim. This development of consciousness from "an oppressed existence" to "consciousness of the oppressed" is called "conscientisation," a term that has achieved popular usage in psychology, pedagogy, and the social sciences (Montero 2014: 298). It may be further defined as "the discovery of the dimension of the human being and the commitment with its consequences, leading to humanization of the people" (Barreiro 1986 in Montero 2014: 298).

One can see the conscienticised migrant in *Light in My Writing* (*Liwanag sa Aking Panulat*) where the protagonist, also the narrator, has a penchant for writing, and uses this talent as a strategy for dealing with and mitigating her loneliness and distress: "At least in writing I find solace and relief whenever I am overwhelmed by sadness over the little space I occupy in this apartment. My work becomes lighter because of my writing" (2019: 5). To confound it all, the narrator has to cope with her female employer's cantankerous mother who would often verbally abuse her. In any case, she seeks refuge in her writing, seeing this as a way to relieve herself from the heavy emotions that burden her on a daily basis. Her writing, however, is not exclusively anchored to self-expression; it is mediated by her lived experiences as a migrant—as the peripheral Other trying to maneuver through the dominant culture of the host country. Writing, in this case, articulates the dialectical link of emotions to "what and how things should happen in our lives" (Chun 2019: 316). It is also interesting to note how "light" serves, first, as a modest implement through which she could write deep into the night, and second, as a metaphor for hope, as if to suggest how her writing provided her with comfort and optimism in the midst of seeming uncertainty while in foreign territory.

The migrant's enlightened and critical erudition can also be seen in *The Quiet Library* (*Ang Tahimik na Aklatan*). Here, the protagonist ruefully observes that many of her fellow migrants are not cognizant of their rights as workers, and this she ascribes to their dismissive attitude towards books and reading. She believes that there is a connection between a migrant's ignorance and her susceptibility to abuse – a claim that is not without basis since many migrants who are not aware of their rights can easily fall prey to trafficking, unpaid work, sexual abuse, and other human rights violations (Oberoi and Taylor-Nicholson 2013; Basok and Ilcan 2006; Grant 2005; International Organisation for Migration 2010). This suggests the crucial importance of education and information as a preventive measure

against abuse and exploitation. In an effort to help educate fellow migrants, the narrator as socially responsible intellectual regularly puts up a mobile library at Victoria Park which serves as a venue for the sharing of books and ideas: "The transformation brought about by books is in stimulating the minds of migrants when they read, and encouraging them to develop their consciousness" (2019: 14). Citing famed intellectuals such as Cicero, Joseph Brodsky, Pramoedya Toer, and Maxim Gorky, the protagonist epitomises the conscienticised and organic intellectual who is not just concerned with work and personal welfare, but also with improving the lot of the very sector in which she belongs.

Migrants sometimes have to take a painful trajectory before they are able to help others – that is, they experience victimization first hand, survive it, and make their own interventions, either as individuals or as members of an advocacy-oriented organisation (Agustin 2003). The epistolary narrative, *A Letter Towards the End of April* (*Isang Liham sa Katapusan ng Abril*), relates the travails of the narrator, particularly the physical, emotional, and other abuses that she has gone through, her eventual redemption, and her work to keep fellow migrants from suffering the same dreadful fate that befell her. While migrant workers have been given the appellation *pahlawan devisa* (literally, "heroes of the foreign exchange"), the protagonist recalls the feeling of hopelessness in reference to her firsthand experiences of victimization and trauma. Fortunately, she is now affiliated with a non-government organisation (NGO) that concerns itself with ensuring the welfare of migrant workers. Towards the end of the story, the protagonist declares, "Whatever the job – domestic worker, street sweeper, garbage collector – everyone has rights" (2019: 23).

Corrupt government elements may also be complicit in the perpetuation of the issues confronting migrants. In some cases, government operatives connive with unscrupulous recruitment agencies if only to expedite the process of a worker's migration and subsequently put the worker in harm's way (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011; Verite 2016). As in the previous story, the narrator in *O Allah, I'm Coming Home* (*O Allah, Ako'y Pauwi Na*) is also aware of the terrible injustice that migrant workers are confronted with not just in the hands of their employers or other actors in the receiving country, but even in the hands of bureaucrats in their own homeland. In the story, the narrator named Kie puts forward searing criticism of the government for its perceived corruption and irregularities in the deployment of migrant workers:

This is probably how low the morality of government officials can get. As long as their pockets and stomachs are full, as long as they have elegant clothes to wear, as long as they have great shoes and houses, they will

remain indifferent to the less privileged whose burdens are getting heavier by the day (2019: 167–168).

She cites her own personal experience to buttress the claim: her passport indicates that she was already 26 years old when she was applying for work overseas even if she was actually three years younger. The disparity points to an anomalous bureaucratic stratagem to avoid any complication that may arise from a migrant worker's actual age. The narrator calls out the authorities for this continuing malpractice that has compromised the security of migrant workers in more ways than one.

If it is not the migrant herself, then a conscienticised family member (say, her own child) who can take up the cudgels for other migrants, old and new. In *Bring Me Back My Aminah*, Ana, the daughter of a deceased domestic helper who used to work in Hongkong, refuses an offer from no less than her mother's ward to live and work in the progressive city. Ana is apparently involved in a modest campaign that she has mounted in her small Indonesian village to help reintegrate former domestic helpers into society. When offered the chance to go to Hongkong, Ana makes a sober demurral: "I will stay here. In my country. They need me more than your family. And I don't want to let them leave their children. Like my mom left me" (2019: 197). This recalls at least two important points: First is the sacrifice that a migrant has to make for her family's upkeep, such as being away from loved ones and, if she has children, not being able to raise them personally. The other pertains to inadequate systemic mechanisms for reintegrating former migrant workers into society, thus necessitating the likes of Ana to make interventions often using the resources at their disposal. As the International Organisation on Migration (2010: xii) has observed, "(A) large number of labour migrants are in need of government services or assistance after their return". And while there are modest efforts on the part of the Indonesian authorities to organise training programs such as those on entrepreneurship, these campaigns are not always successful because of insufficient resources (ibid.).

4.3 Defying Authority

At the risk of being repetitious, there is need to go beyond the discourse of victimization that once informed most of the critical studies on migration. The migrant is not one who will just stand idly by in the face of injustice, but one who will boldly expose and criticise it, whether the perpetrator is a well-connected personality in the host country or an abusive family member. She employs both confrontational and indirect strategies to disrupt social power and prevailing value systems. She finds ways to circumvent the restrictions imposed on her by

tradition or by dominant authority, motivated by her belief that defiance in such cases is a just and noble option. Included in these resistive practices is recreating one's identity to defy social codes, say, those that pertain to traditional hierarchical relations or orthodox gender ideologies.

In *There Are No Diamonds in Diamond Hill (Walang Dyamante sa Diamond Hill)* the narrator adamantly stands by her allegation that she has suffered maltreatment in the hands of her employer and wants to leave the household to which she has been assigned. She insists on leaving her employer even if the agency does not seem to lend credence to her protestation:

> *I do know where I am getting the courage to confront my agency. The fact of the matter is that I do not know any other agency. I only know that if there is no one else to save me and solve my problem, I need to stand on my own two feet and fight for myself, no matter the consequence* (2019: 72–73).

In such instances, running away serves as one of the most viable forms of resistance in the face of abuse and servitude. Along that line, fleeing may not simply be viewed as a stratagem to ensure self-preservation but also to subtly unsettle and undermine the mechanisms of control and domination. In some countries, unfortunately, absconding is considered illegal and migrants who run away face stiff sanctions even if, in most cases, migrants leave because of abusive treatment (Naufal and Malit 2018; Chammartin 2005). In an attempt to correct this seeming injustice, the United Nations declared that "Migrants who 'run away' from abusive employers should not be detained and deported" (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2013).

Wilted Dreams in Formosa (Mga Nalantang Pangarap sa Formosa) centers on an even more drastic and violent action taken by a migrant worker to end her oppression—that is, murdering the person who has committed acts of violence against her. The person responsible for the murder is not the narrator herself but a fellow migrant named Ayu whose abuse, the narrator says, should have been reported earlier. The narrator muses on Ayu's fate with profound regret:

> *I should have informed the police or called the 1955 service hotline for migrant workers having problems with their employer or agency. Because I did not decide promptly, my friend's situation worsened and now she's going to prison. If only I was brave enough, Ayu would not have reached this point* (87–88).

While murder should not be condoned under almost any circumstance, the account somehow contradicts the portrayal of the domestic worker as a helpless, at times even willing, victim who only despairs over her affliction until she returns

to the home country. The vengeful murder is a transgression of the highest order, exemplifying what Fishman (1996: 38) calls "criminal resistance," an extreme form of resistance by someone from an oppressed and vulnerable sector, in this case that of women migrants. Nonetheless, there is little indication, if at all, of her being laden with guilt, and the narrator chooses to end her own life instead of allowing herself to be incarcerated as if to demonstrate her defiance to the very end. This situation – of the aggrieved migrant aggressively fighting back and killing her abuser – may easily be considered illegal and immoral under the dominant system of justice. As pointed out by Sloop and Ono (1997: 50), however, there are "competing logics of justice that are culturally struggled over", and the context within which a crime is committed by a victim against the oppressor may not necessarily resonate with traditional notions of morality and justice.

Not a few of the narratives point to how the migrant worker embraces a new gender identity in response to the high-handedness of the men in her life. Such an attitude can, of course, be ascribed to the patriarchal order in which the sufferance of women and their domination by men are perceived to be natural and irreversible laws of the universe (Soman 2009; Pierik 2022; Facio 1995). The following observation from UN Women is instructive:

> Being a migrant accentuates the risks of women and girls to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in countries of origin, transit, destination, and return. Their increased vulnerability to GBV derives not only from the intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination they face, but also as a result of structural and gender inequalities, including a lack of access to safe and regular migration pathways (UN Women (2021: 1).

One can see a revamp of identity in *The TB Story* (*Kwentong TB*), a riveting narrative about an otherwise scandalous affair between two women: Gie, the nickname of Giyandri, who makes the sweeping declaration: "All men are shameless" (2019: 138).; and Ree, a fellow migrant, who has suffered molestation in the hands of a Pakistani worker.

A lesbian relationship is also taken up in *At the MTR Station* (*Sa MTR Station*) in reference to a well-known public transport system in Hongkong. The couple in the story, Sandy and Sita have been together for months. But Sita has a husband and did not consider herself a lesbian prior to the relationship. It is suggested that her new affair, disgraceful and even repulsive by certain standards, is an act of protest against the philandering of her husband who is rumored to be misspending the money she has been sending. The advice Sita has been getting from neighbors and even from her own family also seems to excuse her husband's wrongdoings:

> *My neighbors have noticed my husband's infidelity, but they tell me not to separate from him... Even my own family has accepted him. They love him as a member of the family* (2019: 142).

Illustrated in the story is how the victimization of the migrant woman can take forms other than physical abuse—say, psychological injury—in the hands of the employer, a citizen of the receiving country, a fellow migrant, or even a loved one (American Psychological Association 2012). The story of Sita points to how trust has been flagrantly violated by her own supposed life partner. It is also notable that the train plays a significant part in the life of Sita, and it can also be teased out as an interesting trope for her own personal journey that is fraught, uncertain, and exciting.

The story *Life is Like Mochi* (*Ang Buhay ay Parang Mochi*) references a modest confection that symbolises and sustains the bond between the three main characters in the narrative – the narrator Lautin and the lesbian lovers Sabita and Angani. Indubitably, it is also their painful experiences of abuse and displacement that have kept them together, as their companionship has provided them with the necessary emotional support to confront the precariousness of living outside the homeland. According to Hombrados-Mendieta et al. (2019: 12): "(P)ositive interaction patterns should be promoted between immigrants and their friends and family, to build positive perceptions of social support. Special attention should be given to immigrants who lack family support." It is said that even before she met Sabita and Angani, Lautin had demonstrated her grit by leaving the house of her employer upon realizing that she could be repatriated for her medical problems. As for Sabita and Angani, their relationship can be construed as a strategy to rebuild their self-worth after each one's traumatic experiences: Sabita was raped by her own brother, while Angani had a failed relationship and suffered psychologically through her parents' divorce. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that both have harbored a deep-seated resentment of men. In any case, Lautin looks at the lowly mochi as a way to describe their friendship and philosophy in life:

> *By making mochi, I have learned the real meaning of companionship.... It is also in making mochi that one learns how to persevere in life. You have to dissolve the bitter memories to create something sweet.... It is also believed that mochi symbolises the human heart; it can be divided into two – one bad and the other good* (2019: 166).

Defiance may also be directed at the role of the migrant worker as a source of financial support for her family back home, as suggested in the story *O Allah, I'm Coming Home* (*O Allah, Ako'y Pauwi Na*). Weighed down by the pressure of working for her loved ones, the narrator engages in illegal substance abuse

and begins to be remiss on her financial obligations. Her lover Gha, also an Indonesian migrant woman, challenges social conventions by leaving her family, especially her abusive husband. For the couple, their relationship, created partly by their unpleasant experiences, takes precedence over the judgment of a narrow-minded society:

> Perhaps, love is crazy and blind. But I am happy that I'm with you. You are the center of my world. When sailing, however, the waves may rise high and threaten to sink the ship. Likewise, our quarrels add color to our relationship. But we carry on because you are mature and always do me a favor. And our relationship has become great, like love symphonies or like a poet's dreams (2019: 171).

In a way, the decision to leave Indonesia and continue staying outside the homeland constitutes an attempt to repress the unpleasant memories of the physical and emotional harm inflicted on migrants by their families. This suggests that apart from the desire for financial stability, "intimate" forms of abuse such as domestic and sexual abuse, not to mention tremendous family pressure could also be a reason for women to migrate, shirk their family responsibilities, and engage in what could be described as deviant behavior while abroad (Parish 2017).

5 Conclusion

The paper discussed stories of Indonesian migrants through the concept of fugitive witnessing which points to their role as witnesses to different forms of inequality and injustice while at the same time highlighting the many ways by which they can demonstrate their collective and individual agency. Whether the story is the narrator's own or that of a fellow migrant, one can see in each purposely selected account how the migrant serves as keen-eyed witness to varied experiences of injustice. Parenthetically, the agent of injustice is not always the harsh or overbearing employer; in some cases, it is the spouse, the recruitment officer, the family, or the fellow migrant who takes advantage of the domestic helper's vulnerability. On the other hand, the migrant is not reduced to the role of disempowered victim, but rather one capable of carrying on resistance and forging transformative and emancipatory possibilities not just for herself but for fellow migrants. Along these lines, the stories were categorised and analysed according to thematic concerns – the feelings of anguish and restlessness that are bound up with staying in unfamiliar and, at times, inhospitable territory; the critical, empathetic, and conscienticised migrant who decries her and other migrants' victimization; and lastly, the strategies by which the excesses of power that legitimate abuse and oppression are circumvented and transgressed.

The popular "triple win" notion is often invoked to stress the benefits of labour export. The migrant, in particular, is supposed to be accorded employment opportunities that are not available in the home country, but this comes at a considerable cost to her physical and psychological wellbeing. In other words, notwithstanding the supposed rewards of global labour mobility, migration can cast workers, the so-called "remittance heroes," into precarious conditions. It is, therefore, incumbent upon stakeholders, including the governments of both sending and receiving countries that the rights of migrant workers are strictly upheld and protected, and not merely treated as disposable bodies in the shadow of globalization. More importantly, economies should make sure that there are adequate jobs for workers so that leaving their country will not serve as their primary option for seeking employment, their energies and skills optimised to the advantage of the homeland.

Considering how labour export under the aegis of the neoliberal order has engendered new inequalities or perhaps expanded old ones, the project of gathering stories among diasporic communities ought to be undertaken, particularly those that are largely, if not entirely, based on lived experiences of migrants' abjection. I am not referring to stories produced by professional writers or bourgeoise academics some of which concern themselves less with the collective struggles of migrants than with exilic ego-boosting. I am referring specifically to the *more* marginalised sectors within migrant populations – domestic helpers, construction workers, care givers, entertainers, undocumented migrants, etc. – whose stories deal with real instances of oppression but, if not for independent presses and advocacy-oriented groups, may not be published and reach a broad readership. The narratives of such sectors cannot just be viewed as *stories*; rather, they constitute a communal, discursive strategy against exploitation and violence, forging bonds that are anchored in "collective experiences of despair, struggle, and hope" (Moratilla 2018: 39). Recuperating the narratives of/by subaltern migrants is a crucial step for assessing transnational labour migration as a defining characteristic of an inexorably globalizing world.

Bibliography

Agustin, Laura (2003): A Migrant World of Services. Social Politics, 10 (3): 377–396. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxg020.

American Psychological Association (2012): Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century. Available from: https://www.apa.org/topics/immigration-refugees/executive-summary.pdf (Accessed 1. 4. 2022).

Appadurai, Arjun (2005): Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bal, Charanpal, and Palmer, Wayne (2020): Indonesia and Circular Labour Migration: Governance, Remittances and Multi-Directional Flows. Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 29 (1): 3–11. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196820925729.

Basok, Tanya, and Ilcan, Suzan (2006): In the Name of Human Rights: Global Organisations and Participating Citizens. Citizenship Studies, 10 (3): 309–327. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020600772099.

Baubock, Rainer, and Ruhs, Martin (2021): The Elusive Triple Win: Can Temporary Labour Migration Dilemmas Be Settled Through Fair Representation? DOI: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3913992.

Baumik, Munia (2015): Techniques of Humiliation: Neoliberalism and the Noncitizen's Body. Dialogo, 18 (2): 91–103. Available from: https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1432&context=dialogo (Accessed 14. 2. 2023).

Bhabha, Homi K. (1992): The World and the Home. Social Text, 31/32: 141–153. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/466222.

Bishop, Sarah (2019): Undocumented Stories: Narrating the Immigrant Rights Movement. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chammartin, G. (2005): Domestic workers: Little protection for the Underpaid. Available from: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/domestic-workers-little-protection-underpaid (Accessed 5. 5. 2022).

Chun, Christian (2019): Writing as Resistance in an Age of Demagoguery. Writing and Pedagogy, 11 (3): 311–328. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1558/wap.40490.

Facio, Alda (1995): From Basic Needs to Basic Rights. Gender and Development, 3 (2): 16–22. Available from: https://student.cc.uoc.gr/uploadFiles/1116-%CE%9A%CE%9F%CE%99%CE%9D.105/Facio%20From%20basic%20needs%20to%20basic%20rights.pdf (Accessed 30. 7. 2022).

Fishman, Laura (1996): Slave Women, Resistance, and Criminality. Women & Criminal Justice, 7 (1): 35–65. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J012v07n01_03.

Foucault, Michel (1980): Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings (1972–1977) (Colin Gordon, Ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Giroux, Henry (1985): Introduction. In P. Freire (Author): The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation: xi–xxv. New York: Begin and Garvey.

Giroux, Henry (1996): Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence, and Youth. New York: Routledge.

Giroux, Henry (2000): Impure Acts: The Practical Politics of Cultural Studies. New York and London: Routledge.

Grant, Stefanie (2005): International Migration and Human Rights. Available from: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/jahia/webdav/site/myjahia-site/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/tp/TP7.pdf (Accessed 28. 6. 2022).

Hombrados-Mendieta, Isabel, et al. (2019). Positive Influences of Social Support on Sense of Community, Life Satisfaction and the Health of Immigrants in Spain. Frontiers in Psychology, 10: 1–17. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02555.

International Organisation for Migration (2010): Labour Migration from Indonesia: An Overview of Indonesian Migration to Selected Destinations in Asia and the Middle East. Jakarta, ID: International Organisation for Migration Mission in Indonesia. Available from: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/Final-LM-Report-English.pdf (Accessed 28. 6. 2022).

Maksum, Ali (2021): Indonesian Post-Migrant Workers: A Challenging Problem for Human Security. Social Sciences and Humanities Open, 4: 1–10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100223.

Montero, Maritza (2014): Conscientization. In Teo, T. (ed.): Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology: 296–299. New York: Springer. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_55.

Moratilla, Noel Christian (2018): The Migrant Worker as Disposable Body: Testimonial Narratives from a Nongovernment Organisation. Humanities Diliman, 15 (2): 38–60. Available from: https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/humanitiesdiliman/article/view/6651 (Accessed 8. 6. 2022).

Moyano, Manuel (2019): Alienation, Identity and Intercultural Working. Ex post paper RAN Health and Social Care. Available from: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/pages/page/ran-hsc-alienation-identity-and-intercultural-working-helsinki-23--24-october-2019_en (Accessed 8. 6. 2022).

Naufal, George, and Malit, Froilan Jr. (2018): Exploitation and the Decision to Migrate: The Role of Abuse and Unfavorable Working Conditions in Filipina Domestic Workers' Desire to Return Abroad. Bonn, DE: IZA Institute of Labour Economics. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3217495.

Oberoi, Pia, and Taylor-Nicholson, Eleanor. (2013): The Enemy at the Gates: International Borders, Migration and Human Rights. Laws, 2 (3): 169–186. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/laws2030169.

Parish, Anja (2017): Gender-Based Violence Against Women: Both Cause for Migration and Risk along the Journey. Available from: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/gender-based-violence-against-women-both-cause-migration-and-risk--along-journey (Accessed 12. 7. 2022).

Pierik, Bob (2022). Patriarchal Power as a Conceptual Tool for Gender History. Rethinking History, 26 (1): 71–92. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2022.2037864.

Sloop, John, and Ono, Kent (1997): Out-Law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment. Philosophy & Rhetoric, 30 (1): 50–69. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237936 (Accessed 4. 2. 2023).

Soman, Uthara (2009): Patriarchy: Theoretical Postulates and Empirical Findings. Sociological Bulletin 58 (2): 253–272. Available from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23620688 (Accessed 10. 6. 2022).

UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2013): UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants Concludes Country Visit to Qatar. Available from: https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2013/11/un-special-rapporteur-human--rights-migrants-concludes-country-visit-qatar (Accessed 14. 6. 2022).

UN Women (2021): From Evidence to Action: Tackling Gender-Based Violence Against Migrant Women and Girls. Available from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital--library/publications/2021/10/policy-brief-from-evidence-to-action-tackling-gbv--against-migrant-women-and-girls (Accessed 10. 6. 2022).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2011): Smuggling of Migrants: A Global Review and Annotated Bibliography of Recent Publications. Available from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Smuggling_of_Migrants_A_Global_Review.pdf (Accessed 2. 6. 2022).

Verite (2016): An Exploratory Story on the Role of Corruption in International Labour Migration. Available from: https://www.verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Verite-Report-Intl-Labour-Recruitment.pdf (Accessed 2. 6. 2022).

Weil, Simone (2002[Original published in 1952]): The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind (A. Wills, trans.). New York: Routledge.

Yang, Taoran, et al. (2022): Exploring Migrant Mothers' Experiences of Alienation in Association with Parenting: A Scoping Review. Child and Family Social Work, 27: 567–582. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12904.

Sources

Piocos, Carlos III (ed., trans.) (2019): Mga Bantay Salakay sa Loob ng Aking Bahay: Antolohiya ng Maiikling Kuwento ng mga Indonesian Domestic Worker sa Hongkong, Singapore, at Taiwan. Quezon City, PH: Surian ng Wikang Filipino. Available from: https://www.swfupdiliman.org/project/mga-bantay-salakay-sa-loob-ng-aking--bahay-clone/ (Accessed 5. 5. 2022).

Authors' data

Dr. **Noel Christian A. Moratilla**, Associate Professor
University of the Philippines, Asian Center
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City
E-mail: namoratilla@up.edu.ph

Ksenija Šabec

BETWEEN HOME AND THE WORLD: (BANAL) NATIONALISM AND REPRESENTATIONS OF A NATION IN SLOVENIAN FOLK-POP MUSIC

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept of banal nationalism as often unconscious, routine processes that nations reproduce on a daily basis. Banal nationalism is recognisable in the use of national symbols but also in language and culture. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether Slovenian folk-pop music is one of these processes, and in which ways and strategies we can detect its reproductive role in banal nationalism that on a daily basis reminds its listeners of their national identities. Methodologically, the article is based on the content and a textual analysis of compositions by three of the most often listened to folk-pop ensembles, demonstrating that the national narrative can be identified in a smaller proportion of all analysed compositions in three sections: the idea of nation as an imaginary community or home(land), national (auto)stereotypes, and patriotic feelings.

KEY WORDS: banal nationalism, Slovenian folk-pop music, nation, stereotypes, homeland

Med domom in svetom: (vsakdanji) nacionalizem in reprezentacije naroda v slovenski narodnozabavni glasbi

IZVLEČEK

Članek izhaja iz koncepta vsakdanjega nacionalizma kot pogosto neopaženih, nezavednih in rutinskih procesov, ki obstoječim nacijam omogočajo njihovo vsakdanjo reprodukcijo in ki niso prepoznavni samo v uporabi nacionalnih

simbolov, ampak tudi v jeziku in kulturi. Namen prispevka je torej ugotoviti, ali je slovenska narodnozabavna glasba eden od teh procesov ter v katerih načinih in strategijah prepoznavamo njeno reprodukcijsko vlogo vsakdanjega naciona-lizma, s katerimi svoje poslušalce, občinstva vsakodnevno spominja na njihovo nacionalno identiteto. Metodološko je članek utemeljen na analizi vsebine in tekstualni analizi besedil treh najbolj poslušanih slovenskih narodnozabavnih ansamblov, ki pokažeta, da je nacionalni narativ mogoče prepoznati v manjšem deležu vseh analiziranih pesmi v treh tematskih sklopih: ideji naroda kot zami-šljene skupnosti, doma, domovine; nacionalnih (avto)stereotipih in nacionalnih oziroma patriotskih občutkih.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: vsakdanji nacionalizem, slovenska narodno-zabavna glasba, narod, stereotipi, domovina

1 Introduction[1]

One of the main themes of Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (1995) is that signs of nationalism can be too familiar to be noticed. Whereas ordinary citizens may fail to observe national symbols in their daily routines, it is less forgivable that social theorists should routinely be so unobservant. Social scientists have disguised the nationalism of Western nations by labelling it positively as patri-otism, which they contrast favourably, but unjustifiably, with the nationalism of others. Consequently, the accepted use of the word nationalism always seems to locate it on the periphery. From the perspective of Paris, London or Washing-ton, places such as Moldova, Bosnia and Ukraine are peripheral, on the edge of Europe. From the perspective of Slovenia, places south of the Kolpa River, where the "Balkans" supposedly begin, are the periphery where nationalism is located. Therefore, nationalism is not perceived as merely an exotic force, but as a peripheral one. As Billig (1995: 5) claims, "those in established nations – at the centre of things – are led to see nationalism as the property of others, not of 'us'". And this is where the accepted view becomes misleading: it overlooks the nationalism of the West's (or more precisely, of "our") nation-state(s) or it prefers to name it differently, most often patriotism, liberal (Debeljak 2004a: 209–210) or aggressive nationalism (Rizman 2008: 103),[2] loyalty or social identification.

---

2. Both authors, Debeljak and Rizman, mention that illiberal nationalism also appears in Europe.

"In a world of nation-states, nationalism cannot be confined to the peripheries" (Billig 1995: 5). Nor does nationalism occur only in times of crisis. Between such times, nation-states continue to exist. Daily, they are reproduced as nations and their citizens as nationals. For such daily reproduction to occur, a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices must also be reproduced in a banally mundane way, for the world of nations is the everyday world. However, according to Billig, there is no readily available term to describe the collection of ideological habits that reproduce established nations as nations. Gaps in political language are rarely innocent, and nationalism is no exception. Having no name, it cannot be identified as a problem. Therefore, Billig insists on stretching the term nationalism to cover the ideological means by which nation--states are reproduced, often unnoticed, on a daily basis. However, to avoid confusion between extreme, violent and everyday, often inconspicuous, even routine forms of nationalism, Billig introduced the term "banal nationalism" to cover the ideological habits that enable the established nations (of the West) to be reproduced in everyday life, not as an intermittent mood but as the endemic condition. Yet, it would be wrong to assume that banal nationalism is benign because it seems to possess a reassuring normality or because it appears to lack the violent passions of the extreme right. "In the case of Western nation-states, banal nationalism can hardly be innocent: it is reproducing institutions which possess vast armaments to mobilise national populations to support the use of those armaments" (Billig 1995: 7). And because nationalism is also simple, intellectually undemanding and emotional at its core, it can be easily propagated, which is also the reason for its success (Debeljak 2004b).

Robert Coles is another author who recognises aspects of nationalism in everyday routines. In his book, *The Political Life of Children* (1986), he studies the ceremony of saluting the national flag in schools in the US, where, since the 1880s, school pupils stand at attention each morning before the national flag, often with hand on heart, and pledge allegiance to the flag of the US. The significance of the ceremony is not diminished by being treated as routine rather than an intense experience, but the sacral has become part of everyday life. Therefore, nationalism is not a passing emotion or a surplus phenomenon; it works its way into just about every corner of the mind's life. "Nationality is a constant in the lives of most of us and must surely be worked into our thinking in various ways, with increasing diversity and complexity of expression as our lives unfold" (Coles 1986: 59). The prevailing opinion, even among social scientists, is, of course, that such a ritual is an expression of patriotism and not nationalism, which opens up another debate about the relationship between the two, but we will not go into it at this point.

It should be emphasised that not all of the aforementioned are clear examples of the "ideal types" of banal nationalism. On the contrary, researchers of this phenomenon should examine the complexities of actual cases as they unfold messily in real life. Nationalism requires "an imaginary" so "that each nation imagines itself to be unique. And in imagining itself to be unique, the particular nation is just like all other nations, imagining themselves to be unique" (Billig 2017: 10). While Billig examines his thesis of banal nationalism in the fields of politics, mass media and academic discourse, we did so in the case of Sloveni-an folk-pop music, which, according to the Slovenian Public Opinion 2021/1 survey (Hafner-Fink et al. 2021), is the third most popular music genre (after pop and rock) in Slovenia (47.6% of respondents chose this answer). Since research examing the connection between nationalism and (especially folk-pop) music, at least in the area of the former Yugoslavia, is relatively few in number or has only been growing in recent years, we assume that the present text will at least to the certain extent fill this void.

In the following, the aforementioned "uniqueness" of the Slovenian national imaginary will be detected in the texts of three Slovenian folk-pop ensembles, which were selected on the basis of the Slovenian Public Opinion 2021/1 survey (Hafner-Fink et al. 2021) as the most listened-to Slovenian folk-pop ensembles: the Modrijani ensemble[3] as the most listened-to Slovenian folk-pop ensemble in the mentioned survey (57.7% of respondents), the Avsenik Brothers ensemble[4] as the second most listened-to (52.5% of respondents), and the Lojze Slak en-semble[5] as the third (39.5%). The methodological research is based on content and textual analysis of selected compositions. The selection of the compositions reviewed was based on their availability on a common website (Besedilo 2021). Methodologically, we followed Billig's research on political speeches and mass media discourse (1995), where he studied the topics or strategies of banal nationalism in at least four thematic sections,[6] of which we chose the following

---

3. The Modrijani ensemble has been active since 2000. To date, they have released 14 albums (153 songs), most of which have received awards for high numbers sold ("Modrijani" n.d.).

4. The Avsenik Brothers ensemble performed from 1953 to 1990. During that time, they released around 120 records and cassettes with a circulation of more than 30 million copies. In total, they released about 670 songs ("Avsenik" n.d.).

5. The Lojze Slak ensemble performed from 1964 to 2010 and released 32 albums with 574 songs ("Lojze Slak" n.d.).

6. The fourth section dealt with the issue of gender, specifically the representation of masculinity in the British national press as a specific sort of flag-wavings (Billig 1995: 119–125).

three: (1) nation as an "imagined community" of "our" people that is identified by key words such as home, homeland, domestic, tradition, countryside, mother etc.; (2) (auto)stereotypes of "our" nation and its character vs. other nations; (3) nationalist or patriotic sentiments that emphasize the importance of national belonging and praise the homeland in order to highlight its past and to evoke nostalgia. But before that, let's see where banal nationalism and music, in our case folk-pop music, meet.

2 Where Banal Nationalism and Music Meet

We begin the paper by examining the intersection between banal nationalism and music, particularly folk-pop music. Put differently, since banal nationalism is recognisable not only in its use of national symbols (flags and their protocols, anthems, national days, currency, postage stamps, etc.), but also by implicitly operating in language (political speeches, everyday discourse, mass media) and in cultural products, and therefore also in music, we are interested in what the main topics, ways, approaches, strategies and patterns are with which folk-pop music reminds its listeners and audiences of their national place and identity in the world of nations. A partial answer is offered by Shepherd and Wicke, who argue that "a viable understanding of culture requires an understanding of its articulation through music just as much as a viable understanding of music requires an understanding of its place in culture. The challenge, in making this return, lay in how to show, symmetrically, how music articulates social life and social life articulates music" (1997: 34). Many authors confirm the thesis of the connection between music and society or culture, as well as, more specifically, music and identity—including national identity (Aubert 2001; Kramer 1990; Lomax 1968; Merriam 1964; Muršič 1993). According to Adorno (1986: 203), music began to be more closely associated with the ideology of nationalism from the mid-19th century onwards. The nationalisation of music was reflected in the dominance of certain musical traditions and genres over others (e.g. classical and folk music and opera) and by emphasising the national characteristics of a particular nation. The most illustrative example of the latter is, of course, national anthems, which "bring the state as an abstract concept into the everyday world" (Muršič 1993: 108). Although music in itself does not have a semantic (i.e., national) meaning, its meanings or connotations are conferred by the social and cultural system in which it is embedded. And when we are in the field of meanings, we are also in the field of ideology. Ideology of (banal) nationalism is therefore a kind of crossroads of national identity and music. Music is therefore not national(istic) in itself, but must be recognised as such, and this is influenced by many factors.

It is also not possible to determine the intensity of the influence of each of these factors separately, as it is practically impossible to isolate them from the wider contexts of occurrence and from the diversity of audiences whose identities are not fixed in terms of their content and situation. Consequently, the national component cannot be tied only to a certain musical genre, although in our study, we will start from the assumption that at least Slovenian folk-pop music is the one that is most associated with national elements (Gabrovec 2016: 44). The connection between music and ideology is never simply definable but usually covertly permeating. Ideological content is added to music, as it is semantically open, in the process of creation, performance and reception. Music, which in itself is not primarily semantic or at least not semantically unambiguous, is therefore even threefold ideological, but this ideology is often difficult to recognise or rationally explain. Thus, it is often even more effective. Of course, all musical styles, music of different cultures, historical periods and sociological and functional contexts are subject to ideological connotations (Pompe 2012: 77–79). According to Hesmondhalgh (in Gabrovec 2016: 24), music is effective in terms of mobilisation because of its pleasurable aspect, because it affects emotions and emphasises common values and because it works on an unconscious level. Most important, however, is the social power of music, by which music unites people, and this occurs precisely on an unconscious, subliminal level (Muršič 1993: 147).

According to Stefanija (2010: 125), its communicative value lies in the fact that music is able to spread certain personal, social, political, ideological and other messages very penetratingly. The interaction between music and national identity is especially intense in those musical expressions that the national community or its actors recognise as traditional or referring to tradition, on which nationalism and national identity are distinctly based. Folk or ethnomusic is certainly the first of these, followed by folk-pop music.

So, the question we should be asking is not what (popular) music reveals about "the people" but how it constructs them. Therefore, music provides a resource through which agency and identity are produced (DeNora 2000: 4–5). The relationship is, therefore, reciprocal. Music serves as a kind of template against which feeling, perception, representation and social situation are created and sustained. Music is a referent (with varying degrees of conventional connotations, varying strengths of pre-established relations with nonmusical matters) for clarifying the otherwise potentially polysemic character of nonmusical phenomena (social circumstances, identities, moods and energy levels, for example) (DeNora 2000: 44). The point is that it is music's *recipients* who make these connections between social life, their identity and the music manifest or, in other words, musical

materials are active ingredients in identity work, as recipients "find themselves" in musical structures. Using music in this way, as a mirror for self-perception, is a common practice of identity work in daily life (DeNora 2000: 68–70). However, listeners need to find resemblance between a song's meaning and their own lived experience in order to make their own meaning from music and to connect with it deeply, as Hield and Price (2018: 4) note in their article on generating meaning from new folk songs among folk music listeners. It follows that the meaning listeners derive from songs is not equivalent to the meaning intended by the author and that connections cannot be assumed between either performers and listeners or for listeners as a homogenous body. Moreover, the process of meaning-making depends not only on the personal context but is also always culturally specific and liable to change over time. All of this suggests that "song meanings are more complex than an essential, reductionist interpretation of a song's lyrical content" and that "there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for meaning-making" (Hield and Price 2018: 16, 18–19). Of particular interest, however, is their finding of the influence of music on listeners' behaviour. Focus group participants otherwise embraced the idea that music narratives might prepare us for life in general, yet they did not feel that this had impacted their own future behaviours. Instead, they felt that songs were powerful when they retrospectively struck a chord with their experiences.

There is limited research on music as an active (co)shaper of national identity, at least in the former Yugoslav region. In his study, *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s: An Introduction* (1998), Pettan discusses Croatian music production during the Yugoslav War, which is actually the period of the formation of a new (Croatian) nation-state, that is, a period of aggressive (not banal) nationalism. Patriotic (nationalist) songs proved to be a tool for arousing patriotic (nationalist) feelings (even among emigrants) with mostly recurring motifs such as God, mother, home, homeland, important historical figures, natural and geographical characteristics and beauties of the nation and the state, its national flag, etc. At the same time, music was used as a way to humiliate and torture prisoners of war.[7] This has, of course, been the case in the past, as states at war generally forbid the music of the enemy. Even during the war of independence in Slovenia in 1991, Slovenian national radio did not broadcast songs in Croatian and Serbian for some time, although it was not publicly banned (Muršič in Lukšič 1999: 186). Since there was no long-lasting war in Slovenia, there was no need for war songs in the 1990s. In his article on the relationship between

---

7. In the Omarska camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Bosnian Serbs captured Bosniaks and Croats, prisoners had to sing Chetnik songs (Pettan 1998: 18).

rock and nationalism in Slovenia in the 1990s, Stanković (2002) states that part of Slovenian popular music after independence, that is, at the time of the greatest rise of Slovenian nationalism, looked nostalgically to the past, to the former common state, by the rejection of which the prevailing Slovenian (non-Balkan) national discourse was just being established (Stanković 2002: 233).

Čvoro, in his thorough investigation of the significance of turbo-folk in former Yugoslavia beyond the music (2014), positions this music genre quite close to DeNora's view of music as a political and cultural mediator of national identity. Like some other genres of popular music, turbo-folk as a political mediator does not just formally reflect or symbolise politics in the region but rather becomes entangled in it (e.g., turbo-folk as the antithesis to progressive modern state or/ and to the cold and rational European Union/neoliberal global world, that is, as the domain of the uncultured, uneducated, rural, traditional and generally backward, nationalist people). On the other hand, music as a cultural mediator of national identity is understood in terms of cultural attitudes that were attached to a particular genre (i.e., cultural responses to turbo-folk through art, public sculpture, architecture, and film) (Čvoro 2014: 10, 21). While we are more interested in the political aspect of music as a mediator of national identity, the important distinction between turbo-folk in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the one hand and in Slovenia (as well as Croatia) on the other should be pointed out. According to Čvoro (2014: 24–25), stylistic or lyrical differences between the mentioned nation-states are virtually nonexistent,[8] however, there is an ironic distance towards symbols associated with national identity in Slovenia and Croatia, which does not exist in turbo-folk performers from Serbia. Although it is not entirely clear where the author recognizes this irony in Slovenian turbo-folk, there is undoubtedly a large degree of influence of Serbian performers on their Slovenian counterparts. But despite this influence, Čvoro believes (2014: 89) that the origins of turbo-folk in Slovenia can also be traced to folk-pop performers such as the Avsenik Brothers ensemble, who mixed Slovenian polka with elements of pop in the 1980s to achieve great commercial success. Stanković (2021: 24) defines Slovenian turbo-folk as "the first major stylistic transformation of Slovenian folk-pop music" in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, which, under the obvious influence of Serbian turbo-folk, revitalizes Slovenian folk-pop genre and popularizes it also among the urban population. However,

---

8.   The performers follow the same basic formula of fusing elements of folk sound – usually through an instrument that functions as a signifier of folklore and national identity – with a base of electronic dance pop.

in both the classical (Avsenik and Slak) and contemporary[9] (Modrijani) forms of Slovenian folk-pop music, the key structural contradiction of Slovenian identity remains recognisable, namely the dichotomy between the Germanic and South (Yugo)Slavic cultural spaces and identities. "On the one hand, Slovenia was always perceived as a culturally advanced and distinctive space in Yugoslavia. It was the most economically developed and liberal republic. Yet, on the other hand, despite being perceived as 'the Europe of the Balkans', Slovenia retains its view of Europe – Germanic Europe in particular – as being cold, boring and soulless" (Čvoro 2014: 89). Among the more recent research is the article *What is the Affect of a Merry Genre? The Sonic Organization of Slovenian Folk Pop as a (Non)Balkan Sound* (Bobnič, Majsova, Šepetavc 2022), in which the authors reflect the Slovenian folk-pop – the opposite of Čvoro – as a "merry" music genre. This dichotomy, the symbolic division of Slovenia and at least part of popular music – especially folk music – between Europe and the Balkans will be discussed in more detail when discussing the third topic or strategy of everyday nationalism in music, that is, nationalist (patriotic) sentiments.

3 Strategies of Banal Nationalism in Slovenian Folk-Pop Music

As previously mentioned, reminding people daily of their national identity is so familiar, so continual, so routine that it does not register consciously as a reminder. National identity embraces all forgotten reminders and consequently, it can be found in the embodied habits of social life. "Having a national identity also involves being situated physically, legally, socially, as well as emotionally" (Billig 1995: 8). All these aspects of national identity, however, are historically constructed in accordance with the assertion that the existence of nations "is not a truth that human beings have discovered but a conceptualisation of the world that we have created" (Jackson in Praprotnik 1999: 153). In the heyday of nation-making in the 18th and 19th centuries, many seemingly ancient traditions, artifacts and poems were invented or created out of some older loyalties and artifacts but presented as age-old traditions and through the invention of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1993). National identities were being created as if they were "natural", even eternal features of human existence (Gellner 1983). Since

---

9. In the text, we follow the division introduced by Stanković (2021: 28–29) into classical and contemporary Slovenian folk-pop music. The first was directly related to the stylistic innovations of the Avsenik brothers and prevailed until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, when Slovenian turbo-folk appeared for a short time and revitalised and popularised later contemporary folk-pop music in Slovenia.

nationalism is the ideology by which the world of nations has come to seem the natural world, national identity is not only something thought to be natural to possess, but also something natural to remember because it is embedded in the routines of life, which constantly reminds – Billig (1995: 38) would say "flags" – nationhood. This remembering, nevertheless, involves a forgetting (Hall 1997), and the dialectic of remembering and forgetting (the violence, for example) is important in the banal reproduction of nationalism. But if banal nationalism should not be confined to particular social movements but rather to nation-states, who, in the name of the latter (besides the obvious state institutions and symbols), is its bearer or messenger, and what are its main topics?

Billig examines his thesis of banal nationalism, which suggests that nationhood is "near the surface of contemporary life" and not confined to "the florid language of blood-myths" (Billig 1995: 93), but operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted and, in doing so, inhabits them, in the field of politics, mass media (e.g. political speeches in which politicians, regardless of political orientation, represent, stand for and speak for – but also to – the nation; election campaigns and the tabloid press) as well as in academic discourse.[10] According to the author, in classical rhetorical theory, the *topos*, or rhetorical place, referred to the topic of argument. However, in the rhetoric of established nationalism, there is a *topos* beyond argument. "The argument is generally placed within a place – a homeland – and the process of argumentation itself rhetorically reaffirms this national *topos*. [...] [T]his rhetorical reaffirmation of the national topography is routinely achieved through little, banal words, flagging the *topos* as the homeland" (Billig 1995: 96). Put simply, the *topos* is the argument itself. The following is a textual analysis of selected compositions of the three most listened-to (according to the Slovenian Public Opinion 2021/1 survey (Hafner--Fink et al. 2021)) Slovenian folk-pop ensembles – the Modrijani ensemble, the Avsenik Brothers ensemble and the Lojze Slak ensemble. The content analysis showed that among the 153 reviewed compositions of the Modrijani ensemble, 15 (9.8%) were suitable for analysis because they relate to topics or strategies of banal nationalism in music. Among the 228 reviewed compositions of the Avsenik Brothers ensemble, 55 (24.0%) were suitable for analysis and of the 339 reviewed compositions of the Lojze Slak ensemble, 78 (23.0%).[11] However, the content analysis, with which we previously examined all the accessible texts of

---

10. Billig illustrates this "philosophical nationalism" with the example of selected publicistic and academic texts by Richard Rorty (Billig 1995: 157–173).
11. Note: Folk songs set and performed by individual ensembles are not included in the analysis.

the three ensembles selected, showed that the most compositions with a national topic were detected in the Avsenik Brothers ensemble (24% of all analysed, i.e. 55 of 228), then in the Lojze Slak ensemble (23% of all analysed, i.e. 78 of 339) and the fewest in the texts of the Modrijani ensemble (9.8%, 15 of 153). The aforementioned national topic is divided into three previously mentioned thematic sections.

3.1 Slovenian Mountains, Places, Home and Mothe as Personifications of the Homeland

The first thematic section derives from Benedict Anderson's idea of nation as an "imagined community" (1983) stretching through time and across space embracing the inhabitants of a particular territory, which, through the creation of national histories, has become synonymous with the homeland. This, however, became a narrative of "our people" with "our" ways of life in "our" territory with "our" culture and "our" identity and about "our" uniqueness (demonstrated in "our" traditions and heritage). In such narratives, a mystical link between the people/nation and its (home)land is detectable. The home is understood as a point of reference from which individuals define their view of the world, where they feel their centre of existence and are offered stability. Because individuals define their home to the same extent that the home defines the individual, there is a constant reciprocal process between them, with which individuals construct their life stories (Fox 2016: 218). In the symbolic imaginary of Slovenian folk-pop music – at least the classical – the most important signifier is certainly connected with everything domestic (homeland, home landscape, homestead, family – primarily mother, etc.), nature (meadows, mountains, flowers, etc.), the countryside (village environment or small towns in contemporary folk-pop music) and tradition (folk costumes, folk customs – drinking customs, for example – old architecture, typical food, etc.) (Stanković 2021: 29).

In our textual analysis of the three ensembles selected, we identified the theme of homeland in the following four sets: home, Slovenian mountains, Slovenian places, and the image of the mother (and the family as the personification of the homeland). The first therefore relates to the concept of home, which prevails particularly in the two classical ensembles – the Avsenik Brothers ensemble (in songs such as *We are at home below Triglav; At our home; In the home circle of swallows; I dream of my homeland; Abandoned homestead*) and the Lojze Slak ensemble (in songs such as *Native house; To my home village; Good bye, America; My home; My home is closed; There is my home; I'm coming home; I am returning to the country again*). Avsenik's composition *I dream of the homeland* includes the lines: *I have been homesick for a long time my thoughts do not*

know where. I want a home full of flowers. It's bad if you're alone abroad. The concept of home can also be found in some songs of the contemporary Slovenian folk-pop ensemble Modrijani (*Home is far away (and homeland is far away); Dear compatriots*).

The rhetoric of chanting the natural and geographical characteristics and beauties of Slovenia is most recognisable in the second set on Slovenian mountains, which is trully comprehensive. If we list only some of the Avsenik Brothers ensemble compositions, which highlight the beauty of the Slovenian mountains already in the title: *Aljaž tower; Wonderful mountain world; Call from the mountains; You are beautiful, the Karawanks; Echo from Triglav; Mountain joy; Regiment on Mount Vogel; Happy in the mountains; Everyone back to the mountain paradise; From the mountains through the lakes to the sea; come with me to the mountain* etc. Among the compositions of the Lojze Slak ensemble, which describe the beauty of the Slovenian mountains, we can expose the following: *Mountain song; Along mountain trails; Happiness in the mountains; Triglav; Triglav waltz; On top of the mountains* etc., and *Mountain love* by the Modrijani ensemble.

The third set of compositions, in which we identified the topic of the homeland, referes to Slovenian places (towns, villages, rivers, regions). Such compositions are, for example: *An island in the middle of the lake; Planica Planica; Greetings from Pohorje; Beautiful Upper Carniola*[12]; *The beautiful Upper Carniolan world* etc. by the Avsenik Brothers ensemble and *Morning on the Mura River; It is nice to live in Dolenjska; Postojna cave; Greetings from Dolenjska; Beloved Dolenjska; I am going to Dolenjska again; Memories of old Ljubljana* etc. by the Lojze Slak ensemble. This is what Slak's song *Along mountain trails* says: *Follow me along the mountain trails stretched from the lowlands, through the mountains to the sea, the real beauty is in the mountains, this is Slovenia.*

The fourth set of patriotic compositions is related to the figure of the mother (and her relationship with her son) who embodies the meaning of family and homeland. The Lojze Slak ensemble sings about the mother in many songs: *Mom; Mom, I'm coming home; For mom; To mommy* etc., the Avsenik Brothers ensemble in the song *Today mom is celebrating* and the Modrijani ensemble in songs such as *Mother's tears; Where did the time go, The call of the heart* etc. In the first mentioned song, *Mother's tears*, the Modrijani ensemble sings: *Mommy, today I would like to say thank you for the hours of care and concern, for those moments when you gave me life, your hand was found by my eyes.*

---

12. Upper Carniola as a translation of the Slovenian word Gorenjska.

3.2 Diligence, Drinking and Absence of the Other
as a Slovenian Autostereotype

The second thematic section includes stereotypes as shared, cultural descriptions of social – in our case national – groups. Because nationalism is an ideology of the first-person plural, which tells "us" who "we" are, then it is also an ideology of the third person. Or, to use a familiar catchphrase, there can be no "us" without "them". The national community/nation can only be imagined by also imagining communities of foreigners, and this imagining cannot take place without the act of stereotyping "them". In doing so, it is important to acknowledge that some "others" are stereotyped as more admirable and more like "us" than others. At this point, it is worth noting another not insignificant aspect, namely, that nations and national identities are not described precisely or in great detail in national mythologies, but rather very broadly and openly, for example, with phrases such as "English culture, Slovenian language, Croatian landscape" and with stereotypical characteristics (Praprotnik 1999: 160). Moreover, "Slovenian" and "Slovenianness" do not mean anything in and of themselves; they are empty signifiers, voids that present themselves as being filled with content, but in fact signify nothing. The term can belong to anyone or to no one, for the "Nation" is merely an ideological subject. The positive characteristics (e.g., diligence, industriousness, honesty) have a specific meaning, while "Slovenianness" and "Slovenian" are self-referential descriptions that mean nothing or are only meaningful to those who recognise them. To paraphrase Žižek, if a Frenchman is diligent, he is simply diligent; if a Slovenian is diligent, this quality becomes proof of his Slovenianness; he is not Slovenian in the true sense because he possesses these qualities—he possesses these qualities, which are attributed to Slovenians, because he is Slovenian (Žižek in Praprotnik 1999: 161). The song *Beekeeper* (1995) by the Lojze Slak ensemble is an example of an outline of the Slovenian national character through the autostereotypical image of a modest, hard-working man who befriends hard-working bees. Among contemporary Slovenian folk-pop music, of course, we cannot miss the Modrijani ensemble and their songs: *Miller; Singer's memory is still alive; Slovenian, Slovenian* and *The new year will come*. The refrain of their latest song *There is no Slovenian who does not scream* highlights three stereotypical national characteristics of a Slovenian: screaming (at parties/out of joy and similar to yodelling), loving and drinking (wine).

Let us stop for a moment at the last-mentioned stereotypical characteristic of Slovenians, that is, the drinking of (particularly) wine and everything related to it. In particular, both classical folk-pop ensembles selected offer plenty of interesting

songs on this subject: *We drink it again; If the wine speak; Never home; I like to drink and eat well; Feast of prosciutto and terran; Night owls; Only the bike is practical; Curious astronaut Franc* etc.by the Avsenik Brothers ensemble, and *St. Martin's day; At the wine fair; Ribolla is not an onion; I built a wine temple; Harvest; Song for the vine; In the village pub; In the wine cellar; Vine; Happy company; Happy cellar, Vipava Valley* etc. by the Lojze Slak ensemble. The following is written in Avsenik's song *Nighttravelers: Hello, innkeeper, open it, if not, we go crazy. Thirst for death, life on the line, save us from the end tonight, this fight is too much.* Lojze Slak's composition *Ribolla is not an onion* goes like this: *Rebula is not an onion, and merlot is a crook, before the hour passes, they turn you behind the fence.*

In his last book about the symbolic imaginary of contemporary Slovenian folk--pop music, where, in relation to both the content of the compositions' texts and the visual image of the ensembles, Stanković (2021: 126−128, 132−133) points out two relevant motives that are important here and that can certainly be recognised in the classical as well as the contemporary version of this genre. The first is general order (the order of the mise-en-scène, costumes, venues, performers, etc.) where everything is in place, clean and transparent, which expresses the established Slovenian value of "nobility". In short, no dirt, messy hairstyles, clutter, worn-out clothes, etc., which would disturb the established physical and symbolic order and express uneasiness about anything different, disordered, deviant. Another predominant and recurring motif, however, is uniformity, which first appears as uniformity of appearance (clothing (formal, semi-formal or casual), hairstyles, etc.) and then as the absence of anything that this uniformity would indicate. According to Stanković (2021: 134−135), all cultural differences (including the cultures of nations other than the former Yugoslavia and even tourists) and other races (except white) are absent. "All narrative elements are in one way or another connected with established markers of Sloveneness or domesticity; foreigners, cultural symbols of other cultures, etc. however, they are not present". In the considered sample of contemporary Slovenian folk-pop songs, the author also notes the absence of any other non-dominant sexual identity except the (young!) heteronormative, any subcultures or unconventional lifestyles, major cities, drugs (except alcohol), or structural antagonisms (i.e. differences between rich and poor or poverty in general, precarious class, intolerance of dissenters, xenophobia, homophobia, cultural struggle, political tensions, etc.). Or, as Stanković (2021: 136) notes:

When listening to contemporary Slovenian folk-pop music (and watching videos), it seems that all people live in the same way, share the same values and habits, dress more or less identically etc. [...] Consequently, no

(economic or cultural) marginals, dissent and the like are seen or heard in the songs, on the basis of which we conclude that one of the central characteristics of contemporary Slovenian folk-pop music, in addition to the above-mentioned absence of any otherness, is the orientation towards painting Slovenian everyday life as distinctly harmonious.

The substantive absence of any cultural, ethnic, racial, worldview, lifestyle, sexual and other differences (i.e. emphasising normativity, monoculturalism, standardisation, uniformity, orderliness) and the emphasis on orderliness together with the principled combination of modern surface (technologies, images, locations) with traditional values are those elements that bring contemporary Slovenian folk-pop music closer to nationalist or even fascist political articulations in terms of content and structure (Stanković 2021: 148). Due to the absence of "everything different" in Slovenian folk-pop music, the absence of stereotypes about the "others" is therefore not unusual. Instead, autostereotypes prevail, that is, introspective stereotypical representations of the nation itself, which maintain a positive self-image of Sloveneness and its national qualities.

Our analysis of the three folk-pop ensembles recognised the presence of a difference in only one composition of all analysed. It is a composition by the Avsenik Brothers ensemble with the title Čevapčiči *and skewers and a good drop of wine*, in which there is a difference between "our dishes", that is, typical Upper Carniolan food (potatoes, porridge, "žganci", "močnik", Kranjska sausage), and the food and drink from the southern ("Balkan") lands of the former common state (grilled food, plum brandy). The song laments the disappearance of the former due to the growing popularity of the latter. However, another song is worth mentioning that highlights the similarity more than the difference, namely the similarity between Slovenia and Europe. It is a song by the Lojze Slak ensemble titled *We are going to Europe now*, which – in contrast to the first mentioned song – emphasises the common European home, including Slovenia:

I will scream out loud, our young Slovenia has entered the European common home. We are now going to Europe with a Slovenian song, as the sea roars, as the wind roars. We are now going to Europe with a Slovenian song, as a bird chirps, as a flower breathes, let the Slovenian song live!

3.3 Praising the nation through patriotic sentiments, nostalgic clichés and (invented) traditions

The third and the last thematic section includes strategies with their own recognisable rhetoric that are conventionally identified as playing upon nationalist or patriotic sentiments. These strategies and rhetorics – Billig (1995: 103) calls

them "nationalist clichés" – highlight, for example, praising the nation and its spirit and urging patriotism for the father-/homeland/home to evoke the past and anger against those who would cause "us" to abandon "our" heritage, country, etc. Heritage, tradition and associated nostalgia are noteworthy examples of celebratory flagging, both of which successfully market the national past within a heritage industry. As Roland Robertson (1992) claims, "wilful nostalgia", especially with a national dimension, is a distinguishing feature of contemporary Western culture. In the case of Slovenian folk-pop music, the accordion is certainly an important artifact of Slovenian tradition that evokes the past and nostalgia for it. There is probably no more illustrative example in Slovenian folk-pop music than the instrumental folk entertainment regiment *Na Golici* (1954, German *Trompeten-Echo*) by Slavko Avsenik and performed by the Upper Carniolan Quintet. The composition, which has as many as 600 arrangements, is considered one of the most recognisable regiments and one of the most played instrumental compositions in the world. There are probably several reasons why *Na Golici* has become the most recognisable and relevant composition in connection with the concept of "Sloveneness", even though it has no lyrics. One reason is its transnational popularity, and another is certainly the accordion, which plays a central role in the composition (next to the trumpet) and is perceived in Slovenia as a representative musical symbol and a "typical" national instrument.[13] The latter is, of course, an "invented" tradition, as the accordion did not become established in the Slovenian region until the end of the 19th century[14] (Stanković 2021: 13). The Avsenik Brothers ensemble also sings about the accordion in their song *Accordion and harmonica,* and about their attachment to Slovenia and Slovenian people in many other songs: *National costume; There are no such people anywhere* and of course in the almost nationalised song *Slovenia, where does your beauty come from: We greet you from the bottom of our hearts and we are happy here at home. Slovenia, let the song sing to you, do not seek happiness elsewhere than at home.* The accordion is also mentioned in quite a few songs of the ensemble Modrijani: *There is no Slovenian who does not scream; We all have something in common; Where there is music, there we are*, in which they sing:

> *When the accordion plays aloud in the village [...] Our Slovenia, wish fulfilled, let it live and rejoice. Our Slovenia is all beautified, together it*

---

13. It should be noted that in the Slovenian national narrative, the diatonic accordion, the so-called "frajtonarca", occupies the most prominent place, while in the aforementioned composition *Na Golici*, the piano accordion is specifically used.
14. Interestingly, at the end of the 19th century this instrument replaced the violin, which had been prevalent in Slovenian folk music until then in the then Slovenian territory, with the exception of Pomurje.

celebrates the holiday of its people. Or in the song An eternal traveller with an accordion: I have a lot of beautiful vibes in the accordion. [...] Our Slovenia is beautiful, all sown with the flower of girls.

And last but not least, the Lojze Slak ensemble, where we find a rich collection of songs about the accordion: *Accordion voice; My musician; I'll take the accordion again; Sing to me, accordion; Regiment of memories* etc., and affection for Slovenia: Paradise under Triglav; Let Slovenia be more beautiful *tomorrow; Good luck, young Slovenia; In this land of dreams; Our homeland,* in which we also find the following verses:

Here will be our homeland, here will be our home forever, here will take root our proud genus; or Slovenia, which states: Slovenia is in my heart, it will be written in it forever, if necessary, I will give everything, except Slovenia.

Like the accordion, this type of music, which has remained one of the most recognisable features of the Slovenian musical landscape since the 1950s, is characterised by a distinct rustic aesthetic, which was maintained by most Slovenian folk-pop ensembles. As a result, this genre of music has gradually become synonymous with introverted traditionalism and cultural backwardness. In this connection, the derogatory term "beef music" (music for Sunday lunch hour, which traditionally began with beef soup) also began to be used (Stanković 2021: 16). This is somewhat paradoxical, given that, as previously indicated, the orientation of Slovenia and part of Slovenian popular music was toward "Europe" – the Alpine states in the north and west of Slovenia being the most convincing incarnation – as an important strategy for distancing the independent Slovenian state from the former Yugoslav space. Since its origins in the 1950s, Slovenian folk-pop music, with its predominant Upper Carniolan iconography and symbolism, has been directed toward this alpine, predominantly Germanic area, and standardisation of Upper Carniolan iconography in Slovenian folk-pop music is undoubtedly connected with the processes of symbolic distancing of Slovenia from other parts of the former common state (Stanković 2004). Upper Carniola, with its recognisable natural and cultural landscape, was the most distant of all Slovenian regions from other parts of the former Yugoslavia and the most closely related to the northern and western Alpine regions (Austria, Switzerland, northern Italy and the Alpine part of France), which in the time of socialism also represented the democratic capitalist West. The next important identification point of Upper Carniola is that it is the most recognisable ski region in Slovenia, where many successful Slovenian alpine skiers came from, with whom the Slovenian national identity in the former common state was most

profiled as a skiing nation (Stanković 2021: 16). Last but not least, mountains play an important role in the Slovenian national imaginary – Triglav is the first of them (Šaver 2005) – and Upper Carniola, as the most mountainous alpine region in Slovenia, represents Slovenia, Sloveneness and Slovenian tradition as a whole. According to Stanković, Slovenian folk-pop music does not represent the Slovenian tradition in general, but focuses on the tradition of only one region, (Upper Carniola), from the standpoint of the music convention used,[15] Upper Carniolan folk costume, idyllic images of Slovenian (that is, Upper Carniolan) landscapes and Upper Carniolan traditions. However, although Slovenian folk-pop music refers to and draws on Slovenian tradition, it is not Slovenian traditional or folk music. It is a modern genre that merely enacts tradition in an idealised and nostalgic way – nostalgia for nature, life in the countryside in the times before modernisation and romantic love. Interestingly, love songs can be associated with national identification. Such music do not contain explicit national connotations, as it contains universalistic values and identifications that evade or transcend narrow national discourses (Stanković 2002: 225). The reason is in the emotionality of the music, to which personal emotional experiences and nostalgic memories are related, which can also be a collective (national) experience. Such an example could be the Slovenian folk song *In the silent valley* in its most famous adaptation by the Lojze Slak ensemble and Fantje s Praprotna (1966). In a qualitative survey with an otherwise unrepresentative sample (Gabrovec 2016), this composition was recognized as one of the eleven songs that illustrate Slovenian national identity to the respondents, even though it does not contain any explicit national connotations. It could be argued that it is a similar (emotional) pattern of reasons for this as in the previously discussed instrumental composition *Na Golici* by the Avsenik Brothers ensemble.

However, regardless of the traditionalism and the alleged cultural backwardness of Slovenian folk-pop music (Stanković 2021: 16), it is not just a matter of symbolic and national positioning of Slovenia in the European space. According to the Slovenian Public Opinion 2021/1 survey (Hafner-Fink et al. 2021), there is a general and extremely high (93% or more in almost all categories except one)[16] consensus among respondents – regardless of nationality, class, place, education, age and gender – that Slovenian folk-pop music is unique and should be included in tourism promotions of the Slovenian nation state.

---

15. Slavko and Vilko Avsenik, as the founders of folk music, who come from the Upper Carniolan region, relied on the Upper Carniolan musical and wider cultural context in their musical creation.
16. In the age group under 30 years, this share is "only" 87%.

4 Conclusion

Can it therefore be argued that the significance of music – folk-pop in particular – is equal to that of politics, media and sport in the reproduction of national identity? If we accept Billig's thesis that these principal indicators are not the sole transmitters of "home-centrism", then we must understand the banality of nationalism as a form of life, in which "we" are constantly invited to relax, at home within the homeland's borders. "This form of life is the national identity, which is being renewed continually, with its dangerous potentials appearing so harmlessly homely" (Billig 1995: 127).

But why even bother to notice such unnoticed signs of nationalism? First, by noticing the flagging of nationhood, we notice something about ourselves and our identity and about the identity of "others" at the same time. Second, identities are forms of social life. They do not float in some sort of free psychological space but are rooted within a powerful social structure that reproduces hegemonic relations of inequity. This power is symbolic, structurally as well as physically. "This needs to be borne in mind when observing the banal symbols of nationhood" (Billig 1995: 176).

At least in the case of Slovenian folk-pop music, we can conclude, based on existing research of analysed music content, that it does not offer different, changed national identifications or new views on "Sloveneness", but it deepens and consolidates existing, conventional, often autostereotypical representations of nation, national values, traditions or national specificities (Gabrovec 2016: 47). These national specifities can be summarized in the following findings, based on the textual analysis of the compositions of the three most listened-to ensembles of Slovenian folk-pop music. The first and most common thematic section refers to Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community or homeland, which is most often represented in the images of the home, Slovenian mountains, Slovenian places (towns, villages, rivers, regions) and in the figure of a loving mother. The second thematic section is related to the stereotypes that an individual nation establishes in the process of building its own national identity. Analyzed compositions more than stereotypes about other nations contain auto-stereotypes, that is, the representation of the Slovenian nation about itself. They portray Slovenians as working, diligent people, who also know how to rejoice, love and drink (wine in particular). And finally, the last, third thematic section, which we have linked to patriotic sentiments. In the compositions examined, they were perceived primarily in the directly expressed affection and loyalty to Slovenia and indirectly through the invented traditional Slovenian artifacts, such as accodion. However, it should be noted that the content analysis has shown that

the proportion of all compositions included in one of the three thematic sections remains relatively low in all the ensembles considered. It is the highest in both classical folk-pop ensembles, namely the Avsenik Brothers ensemble (24%) and the Lojze Slak ensemble (23%), while the lowest is in the contemporary Slovenian folk-pop ensemble Modrijani (9.8%).

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. (1986): Uvod v sociologijo glasbe. Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije.

Anderson, Benedict (1983): Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso.

Aubert, Laurent (2001): The Music of the Other: New Challenges for Ethnomusicology in a Global Age. London: Routledge.

Billig, Michael (1995): Banal Nationalism. London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Billig, Michael (2017): Banal Nationalism and the Imagining of Politics. In M. Skey and M. Antonsich (eds.): Everyday Nationhood: Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism. London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/978-1-137-57098-7_15.

Bobnič, Robert, Natalija Majsova, and Jasmina Šepetavc (2022): What is the Affect of a Merry Genre? The Sonic Organization of Slovenian Folk Pop as a (Non)Balkan Sound. Journal of Sonic Studies, (23). Available from: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1599014/1599015/0/0 (Accessed 26. 3. 2023).

Coles, Robert (1986): The Political Life of Children. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Čvoro, Uroš (2014): Turbo-Folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Debeljak, Aleš (2004a). Evropa brez Evropejcev. Ljubljana: Sophia.

Debeljak, Aleš (2004b). Kozmopolitizem in koncentrični krogi identitet. In J. Drnovšek. (ed.): Pogovori o prihodnosti Slovenije. Pogovor 2, O vrednotah: 135–138. Ljubljana: Urad predsednika Republike Slovenije. Available from: http://www.prihodnost-slovenije.si/uprs/ps.nsf/krf/32761CE488BAA508C1256E940046C557?Open Document (Accessed 28. 8. 2021).

DeNora, Tia (2000): Music in Everyday Life. Cambridge University Press.

Fox, Michael A. (2016). Home: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gabrovec, Ana (2016): Vloga glasbe pri konstrukciji nacionalne identitete: slovenska nacionalna identiteta z glasbene perspektive. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.

Gellner, Ernest (1983): Nations and Nationalism. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hall, Stuart (1997): Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices. London: Sage.

Hield, Fay, and Sarah Price (2018): 'I realized it was the same song': Familiarisation, assimilation and making meaning with new folk music. International Journal of Traditional Arts, (2): 1–23.

Hobsbawm, Eric J., and Terence O. Ranger (1993): The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kramer, Lawrence (1990): Music as Cultural Practice: 1800–1900. University of California Press.

Lomax, Alan (1968): Folk Song Style and Culture. Washington D.C.: Colonial Press Inc.

Lukšič, Andrej (1999): Balkanske refleksije; Prepovedani sadeži glasbe. Časopis za kritiko znanosti, XXVII (195–196), 177–200.

Merriam, Alan (1964): The Anthropology of Music. Northwestern University Press.

Muršič, Rajko (1993): Neubesedljive zvočne igre: od filozofije k antropologiji glasbe. Maribor: Akademska založba Katedra.

Pettan, Svanibor (1998): Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s: An Introduction. In S. Pettan (ed.): Music, Politics, and War: Views from Croatia: 9–27. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research.

Pompe, Gregor (2012): Ideologija v glasbi in ideologija o glasbi. In A. Bjelčevič (ed.): Ideologije v slovenskem jeziku, literaturi in kulturi: 77–82. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.

Praprotnik, Tadej (1999): Nacionalna identiteta ni zapisana v genih, ampak v diskurzu. Časopis za kritiko znanosti, (197): 151–174. Ljubljana: Študentska založba.

Rizman, Rudi (2008). Globalizacija in avtonomija: prispevki za sociologijo globalizacije. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.

Robertson, Roland (1992): Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture. London: Sage.

Shepherd, John and Peter Wicke (1997): Music and Cultural Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge Polity.

Stanković, Peter (2002): Uporabe "balkana": rock in nacionalizem v Sloveniji v devetdesetih letih. Teorija in Praksa, 39 (2), 220–238.

Stanković, Peter (2004): Sport, nationalism and the shifting meanings of soccer in Slovenia. European Journal of Cultural Studies, VII (2): 237–253.

Stanković, Peter (2021): Simbolni imaginarij sodobne slovenske narodnozabavne glasbe. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.

Stefanija, Leon (2010): Sociologija glasbe – zgodovina, teorija in metodologija. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.

Šaver, Boštjan (2005): Nazaj v planinski raj: alpska kultura slovenstva in mitologija Triglava. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.

Sources

Avsenik (n.d.): Available from: https://www.avsenik.com (Accessed 28. 11. 2022).

Besedilo. Available from: https://www.besedilo.si/ (Accessed 2. 12–10. 12. 2021).

Hafner-Fink, Mitja, et al. (2021): Slovensko javno mnenje 2021/1 – Poročilo o izvedbi raziskave in sumarni pregled rezultatov. Ljubljana: Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja in množičnih komunikacij, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede.

Lojze Slak (n.d.): Available from: https://www.lojzeslak.com (Accessed 10. 12. 2022).

Modrijani (n.d.): Available from: https://www.modrijani.eu (Accessed 8. 12. 2022).

Authors' data

Dr. **Ksenija Šabec**, Associate Professor
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences
Kardeljeva pl. 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: ksenija.sabec@fdv.uni-lj.si

RECENZIJE KNJIG

BOOK REVIEWS

Tim Krhlanko

Ulrich Brand in Markus Wissen: Imperialni način življenja: vsakdanje življenje in ekološka kriza kapitalizma. Ljubljana: IČKZ (Inštitut Časopis za kritiko znanosti), 2022. 240 strani (978-961-95820-3-9), 30 EUR

Knjiga *Imperialni način življenja: Vsakdanje življenje in ekološka kriza kapitalizma* je leta 2022 izšla v okviru zbirke OIKOS, ki skrbi za prevajanje relevantnih del s področja politične ekologije. Prevod je aktualen, saj je bilo delo v izvirniku objavljeno leta 2017, angleški prevod pa je dobilo leta 2021. Nastavki za monografijo so produkt večletnega skupnega raziskovanja, projektov in teoretskih premislekov kolektiva I.L.A., ki je koncept razvil in ga še naprej razvija skozi različne delavnice in zbirke (glej ILA Kollektiv 2017). Monografija je zastavljena problemsko in kontekstualno, skozi oblikovanje novih konceptualizacij odgovarja na temeljna vprašanja našega časa in z njimi polemizira. Osrednje vprašanje, na katerega avtorja odgovarjata in ki se kontinuirano postavlja tako teoretikom kot aktivistom, je: »Zakaj so protiukrepi kljub velikemu zavedanju o ekološki krizi še vedno tako neustrezni?« (str. 57). Kot enega od odgovorov na to dilemo postavita koncept imperialnega načina življenja. Gre za koncept, s katerim poskušata misliti povezavo med vsakdanjim življenjem in strukturnimi pogoji. Osvetli način, na katerega so vsakodnevne prakse vpete v globalna izkoriščanja, vse od izkoriščanja naravnih virov in delovne sile do skrbstvenega in neplačanega dela. Kapitalistični centri so namreč odvisni od »načina, na katerega so družbe – in njihov odnos do narave – organizirane drugje, in sicer tako, da je zagotovljen transfer produktov (pogosto poceni) dela in elementov narave z globalnega juga v gospodarstva globalnega severa« (str. 60).

Avtorja svojo argumentacijo umeščata znotraj miselne tradicije Antonia Gramscia in njegovega izpeljevanja hegemonije, s pomočjo katerega pojasnjujeta vpetost razredne forme v zdravorazumsko misel in vsakdanjo prakso. Gramscijevsko teorijo hegemonije in zdravega razuma dodatno razširita tako, da ji dodata imperialno komponento, s katero želita poudariti globalno razsežnost takšnega odnosa. Hkrati pa poudarjata, da je takšen način življenja, kot ga (vsaj na globalnem severu) živimo danes, mogoče vzdrževati samo tako dolgo, dokler je na voljo nekaj »zunaj«, kateremu lahko nalagamo svoje stroške eksternalizacije (str. 29). Takšen način življenja temelji na prostorskem (onesnaževanje podeželja in globalnega juga) ali časovnem (onesnaževanje, ki onemogoča življenjske razmere prihodnjim generacijam) transferju negativnih učinkov.

V drugem poglavju izpeljavo razvijata znotraj kontekstualiziranja večplastnosti kriz, ki nas obdajajo. Čeprav gre, kot izhaja že iz poimenovanja, za večplastnost več odnosov, avtorja poudarek dajeta upoštevanju »dominantne kapitalistične dinamike in z njo povezanih razmerij družbenih sil« (str. 178), ki jih vidita kot glavni vzrok za te večplastne krize. Od leta 2007 dalje opisujeta prepletanje ekološke krize s finančno in gospodarsko krizo, begunsko krizo, krizo strankarstva in reprezentativne demokracije, pa tudi krizo družbene reprodukcije (str. 40). Imperialni način življenja je njun poskus

opisovanja in tudi razreševanja večplastnosti, znotraj katere smo se znašli. Tako koncept kot tudi sledeča argumentacija je zgrajena tako, da preči klasične metodološke registre ter misli vzajemnost več destruktivnih in ne nujno intuitivno vzajemnih relacij in kriz. Imperialni način življenja prav tako ni zamejen na enoznačno zunanjost in notranjost, med globalnim jugom in severom (kot jima recenzenti in kritiki pogosto očitajo), ampak je vedno prisoten hkrati tudi znotraj in zunaj te meje; med mestom in podeželjem, med kapitalističnim in delavskim razredom, med spoli, med družbo in naravo (str. 79). Čeprav obstaja razredno nasprotje znotraj kapitalističnih centrov, je višji standard življenja delavskega razreda na severu povezan s še večjim izkoriščanjem na globalnem jugu. Hkrati pa si frakcije vladajočega razreda na globalnem jugu na podlagi strukturnega položaja znotraj mednarodne delitve dela prilaščajo del sadov imperialnega načina življenja, in sicer skozi nadvlado nad lokalno podrejenim prebivalstvom in naravo.

Skozi četrto in peto poglavje avtorja opisujeta zgodovinsko sosledje oblikovanja različnih stadijev imperialnega načina življenja. Poudarjata različne vidike kolonializma in zgodnjega kapitalizma, neokolonializma in imperializma v 19. stoletju, fordizma (temu dajeta poseben poudarek, saj se takrat imperialni način življenja v zahodnih državah univerzalizira in postane »hegemonska oblika, na kateri se je gradil tudi kompromis med delom in kapitalom« (str. 112)) in krizo kapitalizma od 60. let 20. stoletja dalje. Kot tiste, skozi katere se strukturno materializirajo učinki imperialnega načina življenja, v osmem poglavju navajata migrante. Sledeč Marxu, ki je o proletariatu govoril kot o razredu, ki ima »univerzalni značaj zaradi svojega univerzalnega trpljenja«, saj »krivica, ki jo trpi, ni partikularna krivica, temveč krivica na splošno«, Brand in Wissen na to mesto postavita begunce, ki po njunem »utelešajo univerzalno trpljenje imperialnega načina življenja« (str. 207). Begunci so tisti, ki so zaradi posledic izkoriščevalskih odnosov in okoljskih izčrpavanj prisiljeni zapustiti svoje okolje, pa tudi tisti, ki si, upravičeno, želijo uživati sadove načina življenja, ki jim je bil skozi te izkoriščevalske odnose odvzet. V šestem poglavju kulminacijo protislovij imperialnega načina življenja prikazujeta tudi skozi primer osebnih avtomobilov in mobilnosti nasploh. Pri tem izpostavita protislovnost pojava terenskih vozil (SUV) avtomobilov, ki jih razumeta tudi kot »avtomobilno subjekti-viteto neoliberalnega kapitalizma« (str. 158). Čeprav obstaja vse večja ozaveščenost in upadanje deleža motoriziranega individualnega transporta (str. 155), prodaja SUV-jev vztrajno narašča. In to kljub dejstvu, da ti veljajo za avtomobile z višjo porabo, večjo prostorsko zasedenostjo in večjo nevarnostjo za druge udeležence v prometu. Lastniki avtomobilov SUV svoj način življenja opravičujejo s povečevanjem lastne varnosti v primeru nesreč in prilagajanjem na učinke podnebnih sprememb – upravičenost svojega ravnanja iščejo ravno tam, kjer problem aktivno proizvajajo (str. 158).

V slovensko izdajo knjige je vključeno še dodatno poglavje, ki je namenjeno pre-misleku v času pandemije in postpandemskega okrevanja. Avtorja za izhodišče znova vzameta leto 2008 in opisujeta, kako so države kapitalskih centrov lahko zagotovile ogromna finančna sredstva, da bi rešile takratne banke in finančne trge pred zlomom. Zmožnost reševanja kriz na sistemski ravni primerjata z nedavno zdravstveno krizo (str. 225), med katero smo podobne sistemske ukrepe dodatno usklajevali še s popolnim, čeprav začasnim prestrukturiranjem življenja na vsakodnevni ravni. Poudarjata, da bi

bilo postpandemsko okrevanje treba izkoristiti na podoben način. Danes se soočamo z enako, če ne še bolj nevarnimi krizami, ki nas že obdajajo in ki se bodo v prihodnosti zgolj še drastično zaostrovale. Čeprav podajata nekatere praktične primere afirmativnih praks, pa so njuni odgovori in alternativni zastavki hegemonskemu imperialnemu načinu življenja manj prepričljivi.

V osmem poglavju, naslovljenem »Orisi solidarnega načina življenja«, solidarnostno alternativo opišeta na abstraktni in nedefinirani ravni, predvsem kot protipol konceptu imperialnega načina življenja. Avtorja sta kritična tako do reformno usmerjene in prevladujoče paradigme zelenega kapitalizma (kritiko zelene transformacije kot lažne alternative natančneje razdelata v 7. poglavju) kot tudi do nevarnosti zdrsa v reakcionarne in avtoritarne rešitve, ki gredo v smeri branjenja trenutnih privilegijev, ki izhajajo iz obstoječega globalnega reda (str. 198). Čeprav se želita izogniti zgolj defenzivnemu boju in zavračanju destruktivne dinamike (str. 204), pa njuno delo ne poseže zares v konkretizacijo solidarnega načina življenja. V svojem iskanju takšnega načina življenja iščeta »pravičen, demokratičen, miroljuben in resnično ekološki model prosperitete zunaj kapitalističnih, patriarhalnih in rasističnih impozicij, onstran dominacije in izkoriščanja narave« (str. 207), kar pa nam ne pove prav zares veliko o tem, kakšna naj bi ta transformacija bila. »Zagotavljanje dobrega življenja za vse, ki hkrati ne uničuje lastne biofizične osnove« (str. 209) se tako bolj kot alternativa bere kot prazno in utopično naštevanje emancipatoričnih idealov.

Podnaslov »Vsakdanje življenje in ekološka kriza kapitalizma« v sebi vsebuje ključno relacijo in protislovje, ki se skozi delo razjasnjuje. Koncept imperialnega načina življenja intervenira v tisto jedro problema sodobnih političnih bojev, ki nastanejo v presečišču dileme med strukturo in subjektom. Čeprav je osrednji poudarek na strukturnih relacijah in pogojih kapitalistične politične ekonomije, se ti odnosi nakazujejo skozi vsakdanje prakse in življenja ljudi. Za spremembo na mikroravni je nujno potrebno hkratno reflektirati širše družbene formacije in razumeti, da bo ob širših in solidarnih družbeno-ekoloških transformacijah neizbežno prizadet privilegiran način življenja, kot ga na globalnem severu živimo danes. Čeprav Brand in Wissen ne »odkrijeta« ničesar zares vsebinsko novega, nam njuni koncepti omogočajo povezovanje različnih destruktivnih relacij in emancipatoričnih bojev, ki iz teh relacij izhajajo, ter njihovo razumevanje v novih kompozicijah in relacijah. Skozi združevanje znanja s področij marksističnih, feminističnih, postkolonialnih in ekološko kritičnih misli povezujeta že kulminirano znanje, ki pa ga med seboj uspešno prepletata in absorbirata znotraj konceptualne zastavitve imperialnega načina življenja. Ravno povezovalni politični potencial koncepta pa njunemu delu omogoča, da zasleduje intenco avtorjev in je lahko v pomoč družbenim gibanjem na poti izgradnje solidarnega načina življenja, od katerega je danes odvisna ohranitev življenja nasploh.

Literatura

I.L.A Kollektiv (2017): Auf Kosten Anderer? Wie die imperiale Lebensweise ein gutes Leben für alle verhindert. München: Oekem Verlag.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COVID-19 MANAGEMENT IN A LOCAL CONTEXT: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE VIEWS OF CITIZENS, TOWN COUNCILLORS, AND OFFICIALS IN TUSCANY

Leopoldina Fortunati, Manuela Farinosi, Laura Pagani

ONKRAJ REDUKCIJE RELIGIJE NA VEROVANJE: ZAKAJ KONCEPTUALIZIRATI TELO V PREUČEVANJU RELIGIJE

Igor Jurekovič

"BL" (BOY LOVE), "GL" (GIRL LOVE) AND FEMALE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND AFFECT IN SOUTH KOREA

Aljoša Pužar

FUGITIVE WITNESSING: STORIES OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

Noel Christian A. Moratilla

BETWEEN HOME AND THE WORLD: (BANAL) NATIONALISM AND REPRESENTATIONS OF A NATION IN SLOVENIAN FOLK-POP MUSIC

Ksenija Šabec

16,00 €