

RECENZJE

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Recenzja książki Nauma Trajanovskiego *A History of Macedonian Sociology: In Quest for Identity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024)

A critical approach to scholarly expertise on Macedonia, and even more *in* Macedonia, has always been a difficult and problematic undertaking. The new book by Naum Trajanovski is a rare case of a successful mapping of the disciplinary boundaries and identities of the contemporary Macedonian academic field. Dr Trajanovski is a sociologist and an adjunct faculty member at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Warsaw, after having received degrees in political science, philosophy, and in regional studies in Skopje, MA in Nationalism Studies Program at the Central European University, and PhD at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences. In addition to historical sociology and the history of sociology in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, he has been particularly interested in memory studies: Trajanovski's main research interests include the institutionalization of memory, memory politics and memory conflicts in the Balkans, particularly in the Republic of (North) Macedonia and its surrounding areas. In his previous monograph he brilliantly presented the issue of creating new history museums and new canons of memory in the country (*Operacijata Muzej: Muzejot na makedonskata borba i makedonskata politika na sekavanje*, Skopje: Templum, 2020). He has also researched the memories of the devastating 1963 Skopje earthquake and of the post-earthquake city reconstruction (*Skopskiot zemjotres od 1963 godina i postzemjotresnata obnova*, Skopje: CRNC, 2021; co-edited with Petar Todorov), and the remembrance of the 2001 armed conflict in Macedonia in view of the present interethnic relations in the country (*Conflicting Remembrance: The Memory of the Macedonian 2001 in Context*, Skopje: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2023; co-edited with Lidija Georgieva).

Naum Trajanovski's new book is part of series of monographs published by Palgrave Macmillan company under the heading *Sociology Transformed*: the series seeks to map the historical transformations of the sociological research field around the world, country by country. In addition to lesser-known cases such as the

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sociological schools of Mexico, Serbia or Greece, the series covers major academic traditions such as German, French, and British sociology. On this background, one could feel tempted to ask about the interest of a book dedicated specifically to the Macedonian sociology.

Let me first state that, despite its title, Dr Trajanovski's monograph is not simply „a history of the Macedonian sociology” – or of the sociology produced in Macedonian language. His work offers a true panorama of social sciences in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Macedonia – not only of sociology but also of ethnology, social anthropology, philosophy, economics, and also of historiography to some extent. Being based upon his previous work on cross-national sociological knowledge transfers during the Cold War (in particular in the 1960s), Trajanovski's book is by no means a curious description of a limited and somewhat provincial academic context. Although Macedonian scholars have also tended to share this self-perception and the national complex – especially, with the debates on the „de-provincialization” of a local school of social sciences that started in the 1970s – the book shows quite a different picture. Naum Trajanovski convincingly argues that even a small academic input like the one of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Macedonia was a part of world sociological debates and intellectual exchanges.

Moreover, as the book demonstrates, the participation of the Macedonian academia in the contemporary fields of social sciences cannot be understood simply in terms of a passive reception of knowledge coming from elsewhere – be it Soviet-fashioned Marxism-Leninism or academic traditions in the West. Indeed, being part of Tito's Yugoslavia after its creation in the post-World War II context, the academics of Macedonia were more open to exchanges with Western Europe or even with North America than their counterparts in countries from the „Soviet Bloc” such as Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the map of the relevant intellectual interactions was more complicated in the Macedonian case: as Trajanovski's book demonstrates, apart from fellow Yugoslav traditions, it should not be missed to what extent academic exchanges with a country like Poland were fruitful. In fact, this interaction had started already in the interwar period with the well-known research activity of the anthropologist Józef Obrębski, a disciple and a close collaborator of Bronisław Malinowski, with his fieldwork in the western Macedonian area of Poreče. Yet, the Polish-Macedonian interaction did not go in one direction: it suffices to remind that perhaps the most important school of Macedonian studies outside former Yugoslavia developed exactly within the Polish academia. Thanks to a knowledge transfer operated by another scholar – the linguist Zbigniew Gołąb, who in the 1960s moved to the United States – the Polish school of *makedonistika* influenced considerably North American Slavic Studies.

Among these numerous vectors of academic relations, Naum Trajanovski's book presents not only the institutional history of social sciences in Yugoslav Macedonia

and in the post-Yugoslav Republic of (North) Macedonia. The monograph traces to a large extent the intellectual history of contemporary Macedonia – a topic that is indeed less known internationally as the bulk of the academic literature dedicated to Macedonia has been almost exclusively preoccupied with the twentieth-century (or current) nationalist battles around it. Since, in most cases, scholars have approached Macedonia through the lens of national identity – even through the clichés of one or another Balkan historical narrative – international academic expertise has been traditionally acquainted with a very limited portion of the contemporary intellectual context of Macedonia (and often in a biased way). From this point of view, Naum Trajanovski's work not only fills a serious gap but also offers a new perspective on a context that has been largely ignored and misunderstood.

Therefore, it is already rewarding to read the first book chapter where Dr Trajanovski presents the pre-history of the Macedonian sociology – i.e. its precursors from the interwar period in the area that was officially labeled as „Southern Serbia” in the framework of the royal Yugoslavia. The chapter demonstrates to what extent this historical moment, characterized by the creation of the Faculty of Philosophy and of other academic institutions in Skopje and beyond, was formative for the post-World War II Macedonian sociology in terms of dominant concepts and paradigms, research directions, and related to specific personalities who played certain institutional role also in the socialist Yugoslav context. As intellectual legacy, this period left in Macedonia a certain predilection for the agrarian/rural sociology, sociology of family structures and relations, as well as for the study of ethnic relations and migrations. As a result, social sciences in Macedonia remained to a certain extent marked by a particular blend of human geography (the anthropogeography developed by the influential Serbian academic Jovan Cvijić), Marxism, and also influences of Durkheimian and other sociological traditions.

Not surprisingly, the coexistence of diverse paradigms provoked interesting debates that survived in a different political setting after the Second World War: the moment of the creation of a Macedonian republic in the framework of the socialist Yugoslavia. The second chapter presents the immediate post-war academic institution-building when Macedonian scholars were expected to navigate between Marxist-Leninist ideological imperatives and a certain nation-building mission. In this chapter, Naum Trajanovski focuses on the post-war Skopje University and the epistemological ruptures and continuities in a period when, just like in the Soviet Union and in other Eastern European countries, sociology was officially banned as an unnecessary bourgeois counterpoint of historical materialism. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this period – going roughly from 1945 to the end of the 1950s – was politically shaken by a major upheaval: the Tito-Stalin conflict in 1948 and the development of the socialist self-management in Yugoslavia. Dr Trajanovski

shows how the ensuing ideological shift produced a peculiar mixture of patterns of dogmatism with certain innovative detours. It also paved the way to the institutionalization of sociology in Macedonia in the 1960s.

The third chapter is of central importance in Trajanovski's book as it covers not only the ultimate disciplinary emancipation of the Macedonian sociology but also the moment of a „leap forward” of Macedonian social sciences until the early 1970s. Politically, this was a period of „liberalization” of the Yugoslav socialist regime after Aleksandar Ranković, the powerful leader of the state security apparatus, lost power. An important step towards reformism and decentralization, his removal from power was made possible in particular by Macedonian communist leaders, including sociologist Slavko Milosavljević, whose main theoretical intervention was to reconsider classical Marxism and the conceptualization of socialist democracy. Dr Trajanovski also emphasizes the intensive international contacts and cooperation of Macedonian scholars in this period, in particular with Polish academics, in the context of Skopje's reconstruction following the 1963 earthquake. As a whole, the Yugoslav political opening and the participation in a global context resulted in the „Westernization” of the Yugoslav social scientific theories and methodologies but also in original theoretical innovations as attested by the famous case of the *Praxis* journal of Marxist humanism (1964–1974). On this background, the chapter analyzes the process of professionalization of the Macedonian sociology from the first sociological courses and instances of empirical surveys in the early 1960s to the establishment and the activities of the most important research institution in the field of social sciences – the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in Skopje. A series of debates that took place in two important Macedonian periodicals in political and social sciences – the journals *Pogledi* and *Dijalog* – receive due attention in Dr Trajanovski's book.

Its fourth chapter presents the complex evolution of the Macedonian sociology in the 1970s and 1980s. As a whole, this period is associated with the reaction at the Yugoslav political level against the liberal tendencies of the 1960s, and with the growing economic hardship and inter-ethnic crises in the 1980s after the death of Josip Broz Tito. In the field of social sciences in Yugoslav Macedonia, Naum Trajanovski identifies two general trends: on the one hand, there was a process of completing sociological institutionalization that began in the 1960s. On the other hand, the beginning of the 1970s marked the decline of sociology in the major Yugoslav academic centers. As a result, Macedonian sociologists faced a different reception of their work and expertise compared to the previous decade and struggled to ensure and legitimize the autonomy of their research field. In a certain way, the same struggle continued in the post-Yugoslav period that is covered in the last (fifth) chapter of the book. The proclamation of the independent Republic of Macedonia in 1991 and the new challenges to

its existence – both external (Greek and Bulgarian contestations of its national identity and symbols) and internal (Albanian minority's political activism, the armed conflict of 2001) – imposed new research directions. In addition to traditional topics of predilection, the questions pertaining to multicultural democracy and civil society appeared as the privileged ones. In general, the modalities of academic knowledge production and of university teaching were deeply affected by the political and socio-economic setting of the independent Macedonia – North Macedonia since 2019. They triggered in particular significant institutional changes and the development of new mechanisms of financing of scholarly research that are well known across Southeast and East Central Europe: the growing role of NGOs and of collective projects funded by national and international bodies, etc.

Beside institutional setting, university teaching and research themes, methodologies and exchanges with other academic contexts and traditions, Naum Trajanovski's *History of Macedonian Sociology* analyzes brilliantly the complex relationship between political power and sociological field, particularly during the Yugoslav socialism in Macedonia. Sociology was not necessarily instrumentalized by the communist party elites – by the way, it cannot be regarded as a simple tool of power even in the case of countries from the „Soviet Bloc”. Nevertheless, the ideological fluctuations of the regime and political expediency of the moment certainly predetermined in a variety of ways the research directions and the patterns of institutionalization and professionalization of Macedonian social sciences. What may seem striking in the picture presented by Dr Trajanovski is the exceptionally active involvement of Macedonian sociologists in the construction of the national historical narrative. This is certainly not a unique characteristic of their work: their colleagues in countries like Bulgaria or Romania, both during and after the socialist period, also often explored key issues related to national identity and history. Yet, as Naum Trajanovski's book demonstrates, Macedonian sociology has had a particularly strong nation-(state-)building mission since the very beginning: even the so-called Macedonian „ethnogenesis” in the medieval era or the emergence of a national movement in the nineteenth century turned out to be among the topics discussed by leading sociologists. Thus, the „quest for identity” of the Macedonian sociology, discussed by Trajanovski, was conspicuously entangled with the quest for the Macedonian identity.

At the same time, the Macedonian sociology has been far from a narrowly nationalist undertaking. With its focus on interethnic relations both in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Macedonia – in particular, the Albanian-Macedonian relations – the Macedonian sociology actually went far beyond the assimilationist mission of social sciences in other countries in the Balkans. Questions of interethnic coexistence and multiculturalism provoked academic interest and reached a level

of sociological reflection that is truly remarkable in the Macedonian case. From this point of view as well, Naum Trajanovski's book offers meticulous analyses and both balanced and intriguing conclusions that are certainly relevant to a much broader geographical context – beyond the borders of the Republic of North Macedonia or the symbolic boundaries of the Balkans, Southeastern and Eastern Europe.