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Sociology – Bulgaria

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The key issue facing present-day Bulgarian sociology is the need to develop coherent conceptualizations and explanations of social dynamics. The ensuing task is to elaborate precise descriptions of processes on various structural levels of Bulgarian society in the context of global and regional trends. The major reason why sociologists are preoccupied with the description, explanation, prediction, and management of social development is found in social reality itself. Both everyday life and deep social structures in Bulgarian society are in flux because of the society's overall transformation and the influence of all-embracing global trends. They put the patterns of hierarchical government in question and demand the introduction of flexible forms of governance. The dynamics of governance on various systemic levels of social reality casts doubt on sociology's traditional focus on national society. Organizational structures *in* the societal system, as well as regional and global processes, attract the attention of research in their own right. Last but not least, trends of the destruction of social systems and cases of social disintegration demand that fundamental attitudes, values, norms, and behavior be rethought in terms of the requirements for sustainable development.

This new social and intellectual situation (Genov, 2001) raises intense challenges to the social sciences. What are the implications for sociology? How do Bulgarian sociologists react to them? What are the intellectual and institutional prospects of the Bulgarian sociological community? The answers cannot be well founded without referring to the country's tradition of sociology.

1. Analysis of the pre-1989 situation

The establishment of the Bulgarian Sociological Association in 1959 and the first large-scale sociological surveys carried out during the 1960s mark the belated beginning of the national sociological tradition. These activities paved the way for the decision to hold the 7th World Congress of Sociology in Varna in 1970. The event was the turning point in the institutionalization of sociology in Bulgaria. The Congress signaled the end in Eastern Europe of ideological prejudices against sociology and other modern sciences.

New opportunities for research and teaching in the field of sociological theory and research were recognized and created by dedicated scientists. Živko Ošavkov organized the first national sociological studies on religiosity (1962) and on towns and villages in Bulgaria (1968). The latter study was based on the newly developed concept of the sociological structure of society. It focused on the interchange between four subsystems in the societal system: the production of material goods, the social reproduction of individuals, the production of culture and social management, and communications (Ošavkov, 1970; Ošavkov, 1976). This conceptual innovation was later praised as the mainstay of a Bulgarian school of sociological theory and empirical research. The claim was exaggerated, but the new concept helped to reach the level of intellectual coherence and professional self-identification needed for the institutionalization of the new discipline in the local environment. Consequently, some specific features of the national sociological tradition appeared in the Eastern European context (Dobriyanov, Stavrov, and Genov, 1978; Genov, 1989):

First, the leading Bulgarian sociologists from the first generation made productive efforts to relate empirical studies to theoretical frameworks as consistently as possible.

Second, their research projects showed a clear preference for national representative empirical studies based on the concept of societal system (the concept of the "sociological structure of society", which some sociologists call the "sociological system").

Third, from the very beginning of modern sociology in Bulgaria, attempts were made to make explicit the potential socio-technological implications of sociological studies and to facilitate the practical use of their results.

These were the major orientations in theory and research at the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (established in 1968) and at a number of other research centers active during the 1970s and 1980s. The Institute of Trade Union Problems, the Institute of Youth Studies, the Institute of Culture, and other organizations carried out high-quality sociological and interdisciplinary studies that received international recognition. Sociology was gradually introduced to university curricula. The first Chair of Sociology was established at Sofia University in 1976. Sociological book series appeared at the major publishing houses. Two journals – *Sociologičeski problemi* (Sociological Problems) and *Sociologičeski pregled* (Sociological Review) – played an important role in the rapid institutionalization of sociology. In the mid-1980s, membership in the Bulgarian Sociological Association reached its highest level at about 1,500. Industrial and agricultural enterprises, major state institutions (the Ministries of Culture, of Defense, of Science and Higher Education, etc.), and political organizations maintained research groups of social scientists, primarily sociologists and psychologists.

Reality was certainly more complex and complicated than this brief outline of the institutionalization of sociology in Bulgaria might suggest. Powerful efforts were made to ideologically direct sociological research and to use and abuse results of sociological studies for political purposes. Administrative means were used to promote the official ideology in research establishments and in higher education. However, sociologists managed to adapt to the authoritarian regime by strengthening their professional identity. The regime was also forced and able to develop a certain level of tolerance toward innovations and objectivity in the social sciences. Sociologists were usually involved in the preparation of political decisions on various organizational levels. Outstanding representatives of the professional community were promoted to the top of the party and state hierarchy, where they could influence decision-making on the industrialization and urbanization of Bulgarian society. They were able to shield the discipline politically, but at the same time exposed it to the potential critique of political submissiveness. Large-scale research projects were specially funded to substantiate major state decisions. The follow-up publications (Minkov, 1984; Kyuranov, 1987) showed just the tip of the iceberg. In 1990, the results of more than 700 research projects were recorded in the National Archive of Sociological Studies.

Due to the rapid institutionalization of sociology and the relatively liberal political regime in the country during the 1970s and 1980s, Bulgarian sociologists were quite active on the international scene. They occupied positions in international organizations and helped to open up the country scientifically and culturally well before 1989. National delegations regularly attended the meetings of the International Sociological Association, the International Social Science Council, the International Federation of Social Science Organizations, and other international organizations of social scientists. Bulgarian sociologists were the organizers of the International Varna Sociological School, which facilitated cooperation between sociologists in Eastern Europe.

The legacy of Marxism-Leninism

Bulgarian society has a tradition of influential left-wing intellectual life and politics. It would therefore be inadequate to interpret the ideological domination of Marxism-Leninism in the country as only imposed by force after 1944. Marxism's stress on the role of technological and economic factors in social development was widely regarded as a valid explanatory scheme long before. As an ideology, it was seen as a factor fostering belated modernization. The simplified version of Marxism-Leninism corresponded to traditional statist preferences, while its appeal for social equality and social justice guaranteed its positive resonance in the poor and egalitarian Bulgarian society.

This historical background helps us understand the predominance of Marxism in Bulgarian sociology before 1989. Most of the founding fathers of the national sociological traditions were sincere followers of this ideology. Živko Ošavkov undoubtedly belonged to them, notwithstanding his schooling at the Sorbonne before the Second World War, or because of it. The analysis of his intellectual evolution, however, reveals that his ideas increasingly deviated from the orthodox visions of technological and economic determinism. His conceptual scheme of the sociological structure of society emphasized the interplay of technological, economic, political, cultural, and even personal factors in social processes. So it was not by chance that his efforts to legitimate sociology understood in this way met fierce resistance from orthodox followers of Historical Materialism.

It is difficult to assess the real influence of the Marxist theoretical legacy on present-day Bulgarian sociology, given the quick theoretical re-orientation of large parts of the sociological community. But patterns of this legacy can be identified in various publications. Moreover, trends of social differentiation in present-day Bulgarian society might even increase the use of Marxist ideas as explanatory tools – if not explicitly, then at least implicitly.

Pre-war conditions

The first society of sociology was established in Bulgaria in 1932 and continued its sporadic activities until the outbreak of World War II. Lectures in sociology were also sporadically offered at Sofia University. Most of the heated debates waged in the influential journal *Filosofski pregled* (Philosophical Review) during the 1930s were basically sociological and less philosophical in nature. But there was no systematic research, teaching, and publication guided by an articulated disciplinary vision. Nevertheless, some roots of modern Bulgarian sociology are found in the pre-war conditions. For instance, the unique accomplishments of Ivan Hadžiyski in the 1930s deserve special attention. A lawyer by education, he carried out valuable ethnographic and ethno-psychological studies on the Bulgarian family, craft, peasantry, military, etc. Although his research was not guided by any systematic sociological methodology, after his studies were rediscovered in the 1960s (see Hadžiyski, 1974), they became a continual source of inspiration for sociologists whose research orientation was sociographic or phenomenological.

Although quite different in their intellectual style, the two most influential intellectuals during the 1930s, Dimiter Mihalchev and Todor Pavlov, facilitated debates with strong sociological ingredients. Both were indebted to Historical Materialism for their approaches to social reality. In the Russian edition of his "Theory of Reflection" (1936), Todor Pavlov described sociology as the major science of society. Underdeveloped as it was, this view still became an important reference point for younger scholars during the heated debates on the specifics of sociology that were waged in the 1960s and 1970s.

The impact of Western theories

The influence of Marxism came to Bulgaria via both Russian and German sources. Thus, Bulgarian sociology has firm roots in the European Enlightenment. More directly, the influence of Western (American and Western European) sociological ideas arose in the very process of the emergence of the Bulgarian national sociological tradition. There is no doubt that the famous conceptual scheme Živko Ošavkov developed on the components of the sociological structure of society and their interaction was greatly influenced by the then-fashionable school of structural functionalism. During the 1970s and 1980s, ideas of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Alfred Schütz, and other classical or contemporary thinkers became increasingly known in the expanding Bulgarian sociological community (Genov, 1982). Rare as they were, fellowships at Western European and North American universities facilitated the transfer of sociological ideas. The major libraries in the country were relatively well equipped with sociological books and journals. Participation in international meetings of sociologists was conducive to the flow of professional expertise to the Bulgarian sociological community. Valuable information was

transmitted in university courses. As a result, modern theoretical ideas and methods of empirical research guided studies of social development, social inequality, the family, science, communications, the quality of life, social rationality, etc.

Nevertheless, although dozens of Bulgarian sociologists were pretty well informed about trends in Western theory and research, until 1989 the majority of the national disciplinary community did not have first-hand access to the intellectual resources of world sociology. One important reason for this was the lack of command of Western languages. There were regular translations in the journal *Sociologičeski problemi,* but these could not fill the information gap. For large segments of the national sociological community, the influence of Western ideas came through secondary sources and in some cases in a rather distorted form.

Oppositional activities

In some Eastern European countries, sociology developed as an oppositional force against the dominant ideology and politics after World War II. This was not the case in Bulgaria. The emerging sociology was basically supportive of the regime, despite frictions at the beginning of the discipline's institutionalization. Moreover, Bulgarian sociology seemed to be well domesticated by the ruling elite, which was willing to support it in exchange for political conformity and for the use of sociological expertise. Some limited oppositional activities involving sociologists started as late as the very end of the 1980s in the context of looming environmental debates. Indeed, even at the end of the 1980s, Bulgarian sociologists typically favored change in the framework of the existing social order. The delay of *perestroika* was still the relevant issue for the country's intellectuals. There was practically no organized opposition seeking to change the political and economic system immediately and profoundly. Some sociologists were persecuted at the end of the 1980s, not because of their professional but because of their political activities. The lack of real intellectual or political opposition among sociologists as professionals is indirectly proven by the fact that practically every professional manuscript could be published before 1989 in one way or another.

2. Redefinition of the discipline since 1990

The weakness of the internal opposition notwithstanding, processes in the small Bulgarian society could not help but follow the rapid disintegration of the old regime all over Eastern Europe after 1989. Under the given circumstances, the nation was not prepared for such a dramatic change in the patterns of orientation, decision-making, and action. A decade of political instability, economic crisis, and far-reaching value-normative disorientation followed the euphoria that accompanied the beginning of the new social experience. The man in the street was faced with rapid economic differentiation, a rise in crime, and a general destabilization of everyday life (Genov, 1994a; Vladimirov et al., 1998).

This controversial development deeply affected sociology and sociologists. There are certainly no more political and ideological limitations on sociological studies. There are no topics that can be regarded as taboo, as the topic of inter-ethnic relations was in the 1980s. Sociologists may freely exchange information with colleagues from abroad. Provided there is funding, everybody can publish books and journals or organize any kind of scientific events. Sociology is present in the curricula of all universities. The newly established private universities in Sofia, Varna, Bourgas, and Blagoevgrad are open to the social sciences. Relying on generous funding from abroad, private agencies for the study of marketing, public opinion, and political processes have conquered markets and attracted public attention. They are usually presented as agencies for sociological studies. Seen from this point of view, one can claim that sociology has become a real factor in shaping public opinion and decision-making on various levels.

But the changes have their other side, too. Important research centers from the period before 1989, e.g. the Institute of Youth Studies, no longer exist. Other research centers, like the former Institute of Trade Union Problems, still exist under a different name, but with reduced research capacities. Sociologists in enterprises were among the first to lose their jobs at the start of the reforms. State subsidies for science in general and for social sciences in particular have declined sharply. Only in very exceptional cases can local public money make it possible to conduct a major empirical study or participate in a scientific meeting abroad. The supply of foreign scientific literature has become scarce, and scientists are poorly paid. The prestige of scientific organizations and of the science profession has declined. It is difficult to attract talented young people to the professional career of academic sociology. Thus, new questions have arisen whose theoretical and practical relevance cannot be underestimated: What are the real moving forces behind the current transformation of Bulgarian society? How can sociological knowledge contribute to the rational management of the transformation of society?

If there is any consensus concerning the transformation, it is the shared understanding that evolutionary differentiation was already urgent needed in the 1970s and 1980s. To put the point in Durkheimian terms, the growing complexity of the advanced division of labor could no longer be managed by the mechanical solidarity of political overcentralization. Efforts to achieve this result before 1989 were futile. It was necessary to distribute initiative and responsibilities legally in the way characteristic of modern organic solidarity. The most important feature in the new round of modernization was therefore differentiation between economy, politics, and culture, as well as a change in focus from the satisfaction of collective needs to the satisfaction of specific individual needs. Sociology has to conceptually cope with the emerging institutionalized individualism, which has to resolve the acute problems of individual initiative and responsibility.

This consensus notwithstanding, it became clear during the 1990s that the transformation was much more complicated than Bulgarian sociologists had assumed at the beginning of the reforms. Facing this new challenge, they went through an intense learning process.

The change of paradigms

The understandably naïve vision of a fast and smooth adjustment of Eastern European institutions to Western European institutional patterns soon turned out to be an illusion. The individual and collective actors learned that the concept of clearly defined paths and goals in a basically universal transition from state socialism to a market economy and democratic politics was a simplification, if not merely a metaphor. The technological, economic, political, and cultural starting points of the changes differed from one specific Eastern European society to another. Even more important for the ensuing divergences were decisions that introduced far-reaching changes in deep structures of each of these societies. They developed increasingly differentiated patterns of adjustment to dynamic domestic and international environments. In some national cases, the geostrategic situation was conducive to the reforms; in other cases, this influence was obviously detrimental (Genov, 1996).

Seen from another angle, sociologists learned that the countries of Western Europe and North America exhibited a large number of different national patterns of market economy and democratic political institutions. Therefore, a new conceptual framework had to be formulated in order to reproduce the new experience, which was marked by growing complexity, vagueness, and high risks. This is why it was not the concept of transition, but rather the concept of a multi-dimensional macrosocial transformation that corresponded to this new theoretical and practical situation of multi-faceted and rapid social development. In the theoretical context of the transformation, various ideas and research projects focusing on changes in microsocial structures and processes arose as well.

Systemic and action dimensions of the transformation

The task of elaborating on the transformation concept and of applying it as a heuristic tool was therefore the same all over Eastern Europe. However, Bulgarian sociologists had to be especially perceptive in this respect for two reasons. First, the country's GDP sank to dramatic lows in the mid-1990s and improved only slightly at the end of the decade. This negative experience was closely connected to interruptions in the continuity of political life, which culminated in several abrupt changes of government during the decade. Second, the practical pressure to rethink the concept of transition also stemmed from the need to carry out a precise diagnosis of the ongoing processes, especially in terms of the changing conditions of human achievements and human deprivation (Georgieva, 1997; Nikolov, 1999; Todorova, 1999; Krämer and Stojanov, 1999).

In the course of these social and intellectual developments, it turned out that the old conceptual framework of the *sociological structure of society* was excessively oriented toward system integration. On the other hand, the phenomenological approaches adhered too rigidly to structures of subjective experience. Thus, the task was to establish and maintain a productive conceptual balance between knowledge of objective and subjective structures, between ideas concerning integration and innovation, between system and action, and between structures and actors. There was an urgent need to work on the meta-theoretical foundation, descriptive capacities, and explanatory potential of this balance.

Against the background of accumulated cognitive and practical experience, four major dimensions of the ongoing transformation of Bulgarian society have been distinguished to date. The first is the need to adjust the national complex of production and services to the technological and intellectual trends of the informationalization of all spheres of activity. The second is adjustment to the globalization of markets of goods, services, capital, and labor force. The third type of restructuring is the adjustment of national politics to the worldwide trend toward the rationalization of government and governance by means of democratic decision-making and control. The fourth dimension of the transformation is the cultural adjustment of Bulgarian society to the global universalization of value-normative systems. The decisive point here is the deeper grounding of local values and norms in the principle of the universal rights of individuals. In addition to the concept covering the above systemic aspects of the transformation, other differentiated concepts were introduced to cover the action parameters of the profound changes taking place in Bulgarian society. They included the special focus on the advancement of modern competitiveness, meritocracy, and mechanisms of innovation (Genov, 1999a).

Given the complexity of the transformation and the simultaneous nature of all types of restructuring along systemic and action lines, it is reasonable to assume a high intensity of risks in the course of the profound changes. Whatever their theoretical assumptions, underlying methodology, or practical orientations, empirical studies provide abundant evidence to support this point. That is why it is not surprising to see that the concept of risk became a major pivotal point of theory and empirical research in Bulgarian sociology during the 1990s. Some stimuli came from the Western European debate on the risk society. However, in the Bulgarian context of technological backwardness, economic decline, weakening political institutions, and value-normative disorientations, the debate on risks and the risk society helped introduce theoretical innovations. They aimed at the differentiated cognitive reproduction of dynamic macrosocial problem situations, precise measurement of public perception of various risks, and consistent analyses of strategies and practices of actors developed to cope with risks. The results of the conceptualizations and empirical studies on risks can be systematically turned into socio-technological proposals for dealing with unemployment, poverty, crime, etc. (Genov, 2000). Closely connected with this intellectual development is the special interest in the structure and dynamics of conflict situations (Dimitrov, 1999). On various occasions, changes and conflicts were articulated by means of concepts of modernization theory or in the framework of the idea of post-modernity.

The United Nations Development Program's project preparing annual Human Development Reports for Bulgaria provided a targeted boost for dealing in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary manner with major aspects and risks of transformation. The project mobilized resources mostly of sociologists, but also from many other fields of social science. The crucial conceptual innovation was the emphasis on sustainability – more precisely, on the interplay between environmental, technological, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of sustainable development (Bulgaria 1995). The debate on sustainability focused on two crucial issues. The first was the inherited deviations from the ideal of sustainable development, which had to be streamlined in the course of the current transformation. The second was the potential and actual deviations from the ideal of sustainability caused by the current transformation itself. This focus on strategic issues in national development gave the series of national reports a noticeable impact on political debates. The reports also influenced decision-making on various structural levels of government.

Since the national studies on human development were prepared in the context of the global reports published annually by the UNDP, they fostered the conceptualization of trends in national social development in the framework of global trends (Genov and Krasteva, 2001). Practical incentives for dealing with global trends also came from the discussion on preparing Bulgarian society for accession to the European Union. Thus, after the beginning of the transformation in 1989, the studies on the country's participation in regional and global processes were placed on a stable theoretical and empirical footing. The topics of globalization and regionalization became fashionable in the international scientific community during the 1990s, creating a favorable environment for this development. More important, however, was that this new conceptual and empirical shift concerned basic changes in social reality itself. The results to date are encouraging, since the current situation and future prospects of the small Bulgarian society can hardly be discussed in a meaningful way outside of the context of global and regional processes (Genov, 1997).

Following the outcome of the intense debates on globalization that were conducted in the international social science community, a great deal of attention was paid to some crucial global trends. Because of the specific need to deal with the local transformation, these selected trends included upgrading the rationality of social structures and processes, individualization, the spread of instrumental activism, and the universalization of value-normative systems.

The focus on organizational rationalization

In addition to the differentiation *of* economics, politics, and culture, there is another major aspect of the current push toward modernizing Bulgarian society, i.e., the continuing differentiation *in* each of these three major spheres of social action. Both processes are local manifestations of the universal trend to upgrade the rationality of organizational structures and processes. As is usually the case, the second side of the same process is the search for new patterns of social integration.

Both aspects of the ongoing rationalization are most obvious in the field of politics. The formalized politics of the one-party state dominated the social and economic system before 1989. This is why the major outcome of the rationalization of government and governance is the withdrawal of the state from its previous massive involvement in the economy and culture. No doubt this is a step toward the modernization of Bulgarian society. Each sphere of action is expected to develop and maintain its own mechanisms of innovation and control, thus contributing to continuous innovation and to the need to constantly re-integrate society.

Studies carried out during the 1990s revealed substantial deviations from the abovementioned optimal path of modernization through organizational rationalization. The key issue is the role of the state. Due to the predominant neo-liberal ideology of reforms at the beginning of the 1990s, strong opinions were voiced advocating the rapid and complete withdrawal of the state from the economy, culture, education, health care, research and development, social protection, etc. There were some beliefs that the emerging civil society would take the lead in managing the profound

changes (Dimitrov, 1998; Fotev, 1998). In the meantime, state institutions were weakened for many domestic and international reasons. The results were the protracted inefficiency of the economy, the criminalization of social life, and the loosening of social safety nets in times of high unemployment and mass poverty (Atanasov et al., 1994; Genov, 1999b).

The theoretical implication of this conclusion was the re-evaluation of the role of the state in the process of privatization, in the establishment of competitive politics, and in the pluralization of culture. The outcome is the understanding that rational management of the complex and complicated transformation calls for intense involvement by a "small" but efficient state. The state is the only actor possessing the organizational capacity to manage the process by taking account of the needs of other actors as well as of the requirement to maintain and enrich the common good. Since the weakened state was unable to meet these requirements, the result was the flourishing of social pathologies during the 1990s. In various ways, individuals and groups neglected or looted the common good of the inherited state-owned property. "Pyramidal" economic structures and cleverly designed crimes in the banking system robbed people of their savings. Politicians dealt irresponsibly with national security. New patterns of organizational alienation flourished and undermined social solidarity and organizational integration (Bulgaria, 1997).

The conclusion sociologists drew from the above analysis is that, without stabilizing the state, society could not be successfully transformed. In practical terms, the introduction of the Currency Board in 1997 was precisely public recognition of the Bulgarian state's failure to manage the transformation. It was also an expression of the need to strengthen the ties between political decisions and the management of economic processes. In this way, politicians took account of recommendations from international financial institutions and, implicitly, of the results of numerous studies carried out by sociologists and other social scientists. According to these studies, the market by itself is unable to create discipline, transparency, and efficiency in economic processes (Čavdarova, 2000).

The studies of the internal differentiation, structures, and functioning of the new democratic political system arrived at similar sobering results. On the one hand, the establishment and regular functioning of competitive political institutions mark very important steps toward the rationalization of political decision-making and control. Bulgarian society has basically resolved this task. It passed through critical points in its political development during the 1990s by overcoming ideological, ethnic, and economic tensions and conflicts. On the other hand, the social costs of the serious political confrontations and the inefficient functioning of political parties, parliament, and other political bodies are very high. The quality of political life in Bulgaria still deviates from the desirable rationalized standards of modern politics. Clientelism and nepotism are strong, and corruption is part of everyday life (Minev, 2000).

The problems connected with the efficiency of the political system are all the more important and acute in the context of Bulgaria's increasing association with the European Union. Another critical dimension of the processes is the need to politically manage a rather unstable regional situation. The 1990s saw some intense ethnic and religious tensions and conflicts in Southeastern Europe, which developed into domestic and international military clashes. The rationalization of Bulgarian foreign policy in this complicated regional context has been the subject of careful examinations by sociologists (Yanakiev, 2000).

Thus, the controversial path of reforms involves two key parameters of the current rationalization of organizational structures and processes. First, it has to cope with unfavorable objective and subjective, domestic and international conditions for the transformation. On the other hand, it is now clear that rationalization itself is marked by severe internal tensions, which often lead to conflicts and social pathologies. Current conceptualizations refer to this trend in the form of evolving dilemmas of upgrading social rationality. The debates address the range of potential choices that may or may not materialize and whose impact on social systems and patterns of action may be constructive or destructive.

This issue has a number of dimensions, since the ongoing democratization of decisions and control involves all spheres of social life. During the 1990s, there were numerous opportunities to foster democratic participation in the privatization and management of enterprises, in local government, and in the life of political parties. On the other hand, sociologists identified a large number of practices that, intentionally or unintentionally, preclude democratic decision-making, abuse it, or undermine the mechanisms of democratic legal control (Naumova, 2000).

Individualization as evolutionary achievement and source of tensions

One major dilemma in the current transformation concerns the complex and dynamic relationships between *individual* and *collective* rationality. No doubt the state socialist economic and political system put too much emphasis on the rationality of collective actors. It neglected the need to tolerate and remunerate the rationality of individuals. On the other hand, the expansion of individualization during the 1990s all too often came at the expense of collective rationality. All efforts to reveal the causes, reasons, and effects of the looting of state property in Bulgaria lead to the conclusion that unrestricted adherence to individualistic rationality has destructive consequences. How can it be balanced by revalorization of collective rationality? This is both a theoretical and a practical challenge and will certainly guide theory and research in the social sciences in Bulgaria in the decades to come. The topic is existentially relevant for the societal community, since no stable social order can be established and maintained by the interaction of actors adhering to the value-normative orientations of extreme individualism.

The high tide of crime in Bulgaria during the 1990s is a clear illustration of this point (Mantarova, 2000). It accompanied rapidly rising expectations of new opportunities for personal development and realization. Expectations that personal abilities would make these new opportunities bear fruit were also high. In reality, the rise in expectations met declining material resources as per capita GDP plunged dramatically in Bulgaria during the 1990s. Lower GDP was also distributed more and more unevenly than at the beginning of the decade. Thus, the discrepancy between the rise in expectations and the shrinking pool of resources to realize them became a major factor in the criminalization of social life. Another crucial factor was the weakening of state institutions, exemplified in the inefficient functioning of courts. Public opinion polls provide abundant evidence of the critical assessment that the courts failed to protect basic human rights.

The weakening of state institutions and the general criminalization of the economy paved the way for sophisticated intellectual crimes motivated by greed rather than need. In the vast majority of cases, however, crime is closely linked to unemployment and poverty. Indeed, the development of Bulgarian society during the 1990s confronted sociologists with an entirely new and vitally important topic, namely unemployment. It is new because there was practically no unemployment in the country before 1989. It is vitally important because the appearance of mass unemployment and especially widespread long-term unemployment is a clear indication of dysfunctions in the social system. These are due to depressive trends in the Bulgarian economy. Seen from another perspective, unemployment is a heavy blow to fundamental human rights. Studies reveal its destructive impact on individuals' professional qualification, living standards, habits, respect for the law, self-esteem, etc. There is also a specific ethnic dimension of unemployment, for the Roma ethnic group is the most affected by unemployment and the ensuing poverty (Genov, 1999b).

At the beginning of the transformation, the prospects for successful individual economic, political, and educational development were envisioned mostly in close connection with the development of a numerous, stable, and influential middle class. Subsequent developments refuted this vision. Contrary to expectations, no distinct macrosocial group of thriving small-scale proprietors and entrepreneurs has established itself in Bulgaria. Small producers and merchants in towns and cities suffer from the stagnation of domestic markets and heavy taxation. After the administrative dissolution of agricultural cooperatives, small farmers developed a kind of survival economy that has no chance against international competition (Kožuharova, 1998). Some groups

whose possession of educational or cultural capital enabled them to satisfy their needs quite well during the 1980s lost their relative advantage. They joined the approximately 80% of the Bulgarian population who experienced a decline in their living standard during the last decade. Whatever the reasons in particular cases, the result was a reduction in this part of Bulgarian society's capacities for personal development and self-realization. This is a process clearly contradicting the global trend of individualization. Of equal theoretical and practical importance is that the weakness of the middle class in Bulgaria poses serious questions about the long-run stability of democratic political institutions (Tilkidzhiev, 1998).

Given the relevance of the above issues, studies of the global trend to individualization and its local manifestations will play an increasingly important role in the conceptual development of Bulgarian social sciences, as well as in science-based socio-technological projects. One of the main reasons for researchers' interest in this subject is the strong statist tradition that still hinders personal initiative and responsibility in institutional and value-normative terms. Unemployment and mass poverty will also remain important stumbling blocks in the path of individualization. The economic plight of large segments of Bulgarian society and the underdevelopment of civil society restrict the scope for implementing the constitutionally guaranteed rights of individuals. The result is the spread of anomic tendencies closely connected to extremes in the ongoing individualization.

Controversial value changes

The profound cultural changes include a shift in the balance between *ultimate* and *instrumental* values in the ongoing rationalization. Ideologically, state socialism was very much oriented toward the ultimate values of equality and solidarity. Everyday reality was certainly different from the ideological clichés, since it focused on the satisfaction of basic needs (Mihailov, 2000). Both in ideology and in practice, the current transformation is mainly concerned with the stabilization of market rules in all aspects of social life. However, market transactions are instrumental in principle. Profit can be interpreted as an ultimate value only in very exceptional cases. The tradition of the social sciences provides abundant evidence supporting the thesis that no stable social order can be established and maintained on the basis of instrumental values alone.

It can therefore be taken for granted that the balancing of ultimate and instrumental values in social action will remain one of the major issues attracting sociological research in Bulgaria in the long run. The empirical findings are unmistakeably clear in this respect. The changes in the 1990s resulted in a strong instrumentalization of social action due to the commercialization of basic social norms. The result is an undermining of the social relevance of such ultimate values as social solidarity, justice, and beauty and an increase in various forms of alienation (*Socialnite nauki*, 1998).

This issue is closely related to tensions in the relationships between the *short-term* and *long-term* rationality of action. In value-normative terms, at least in the first decades after World War II, state socialism was preoccupied with the long-term (strategic) aims of human action. These aims included visions of the economic well-being of society and strong collectivist solidarity. They turned out to be unattainable under the historical conditions of the time. The irony of the following development lies in the well-established fact that introducing market mechanisms after 1989 did not broaden the time perspective of everyday activity. On the contrary, the transformation increased the general insecurity of life, leading to a greater reduction of the orientations and actions of large groups in Bulgarian society. This metamorphosis of social time and the concomitant social pathologies provide a broad field for intriguing theory constructions and informative empirical research.

The rapid instrumentalization of social life by means of market mechanisms raises one more issue connected with *Weltbeherrschung* in Weberian terms. There is no doubt that the *spread of instrumental activism* represents a key dimension of the current transformation of Bulgarian society. It is also clear, however, that the exploitation and pollution of the environment cannot continue without jeopardizing the country's life support systems. This is why the concept and

various practices of sustainable development offer promising ways to cope with extremes of instrumental activism. Given this context, sociology has to play an important role in supporting sustainability, since the phenomena of social isolation and marginalization as well as social solidarity and integration have a very strong impact on the materialization of sustainable development.

A special field of research in this context is the appearance of an entirely new group of social actors during the 1990s, namely private entrepreneurs. Prior to 1989, private entrepreneurship was only marginally possible within the framework of the exclusive predominance of state ownership of productive assets. Like the whole societal system, private entrepreneurship developed its own patterns of orientation, decision-making, and activity by moving through contradictions and extremes in the 1990s. The major issues here were the lack of clear legal standards and the lack of domestic capital. For both reasons, private entrepreneurship was often equal to criminal or quasi-criminal structures and activities during the first half of the decade. In many specific cases, it still operates in the gray zone between what is legally acceptable and what is economically necessary or desirable (Manolov, 1995; Rakadžiyska, 2000).

No doubt the problems and prospects of private economic activity will increasingly occupy a central position in sociological theory and research. They are closely connected with other fundamental problems in Bulgarian society, e.g. the de-industrialization and tertiarization of the economy, economic and political integration in the European Union, changing demographic and educational structures, etc.

As was the case all over Eastern Europe, the disappearance of isolationist barriers has strengthened the local manifestations of another global trend, i.e., the *universalization of value-normative systems.* This trend is strongly anchored in the new Constitution of Bulgaria (1991). Its core is the importance attached to the universal rights of the individual. This vision is expected to lead to increasing integration of the country's various communities. But even the most sophisticated legal regulations cannot resolve the social, political, and cultural problems evolving together with the economic isolation and marginalization of important social groups. In the long run, the processes of social disintegration due to ethnic differences will be highly relevant, since social distances along ethnic lines are well-established and deeply rooted in the country.

In more general terms, the new patterns of social and economic differentiation offer questionable prospects of value-normative universalization and integration. Given this condition, it is entirely realistic to debate scenarios in which various divisions foster the stabilization of particularistic values. If facilitated by social isolation and marginalization, these processes might become critical for the integration of Bulgarian society. The precarious situation of the Romany population notwithstanding, there is currently no other clear trend in this respect. However, the potential for destructive developments is already present in the effects of the deepening divisions along educational lines (Zakharieva, 1996). It is still difficult to precisely interpret trends that may lead to increasing gender inequalities. But the issue is quite intriguing for sociologists, since these inequalities were neglected in previous decades (Dimitrova, 1998).

Change of elites

The change of elites is a major research field in conditions of societal transformation (Pachkova, 1996). In spite of the reasonable expectation that the profound changes in the economy, politics, and culture would immediately be reflected in changes in intellectual elites, this did not happen in the Bulgarian sociological community. Continuity is predominant in its intellectual as well as organizational leadership. Elites from research institutions that were closed or that suffered personnel cuts found their way to other research or educational institutions in the public or private sector and usually developed leadership positions there.

New institutional structures

The major institutional change was the establishment of private agencies for public opinion and marketing research. For instance, most of the personnel of the dissolved Institute of Youth Studies moved to this field of activity. In only a few years, Gallup International, Sova-Harris, MBMD, GfK, Vitosha Research, Alpha Research, ASSA-M, Market Test, and other private research agencies were established. Some of them are branches of international networks. Competition between these agencies for the small Bulgarian market and to acquire clients from abroad is fierce. Most probably, only some of them will survive in the long run. Political forces usually have strong preferences for "their own" agencies for polling purposes. It is difficult to judge the extent to which political links play a conducive or detrimental role in the development of the actors involved in this business. One thing is sure: there have been obvious cases of political distortion of data. This created an attitude of general suspicion toward sociology and sociologists, since broad circles do not distinguish between sociology and public opinion polls.

The National Center for Study of Public Opinion was established at the beginning of the 1990s to serve the information needs of the democratically elected Parliament. Since the Center is underfunded, it cannot compete with the dynamic private agencies working in the same field.

In academic sociology, the new institutional structures include the establishment of new Chairs of Sociology, initially shared with other disciplines.

3. Core theoretical and methodological orientations

The highly praised paradigm of the sociological structure of society has practically disappeared from public debate. This is often regarded as evidence of its ideological and political bias. No doubt the explicit intention underlying this theoretical paradigm was to serve the needs of central planning. The major reason for the disappearance of the paradigm is not just the collapse of the centralized economic and political system, however. The background assumptions of the concept of sociological structure of society were connected with the social system of the nation-state, which has been the major point of reference for sociology both in the East and in the West. Now we can see the demise of this linkage in world sociology. In the local context, the process is controversial. In spite of its deficiencies, the concept of the sociological structure of society provided the Bulgarian sociological community with an integrating theoretical and methodological orientation. This strong point turned out to be a weakness because of the rapid pluralization of Bulgarian society and of the national sociological community. Consequently, issues of conceptual incoherence and eclecticism mark the country's present state of sociological theorizing and research.

New approaches

The solution to the problem could not be sought in the revival of pre-war sociological tradition, since Bulgaria had none. There were no influential Bulgarian sociologists abroad to return after 1989 and become a major reference point under the new conditions. The remaining option was the hasty import of influential ideas from abroad and efforts to apply them to local processes. However, this could be done in a more or less coherent manner in only a few cases. The widely predominating pattern is either the theoretical and methodological inconsistency of explanatory schemes or explicit eclecticism.

At the beginning of the changes, the idea of civil society seemed to be a promising candidate for the theoretical focus of studies on transition. But the influence of this idea turned out to be short-lived, since social processes have not supported it. The revival of the modernization theory also raised a series of questions, because in crucial sectors (agriculture), things moved toward de-modernization in terms of technology and organizational rationality. Given this cognitive and practical experience, the idea of a risk society and the concept of risk seem to be an appropriate

guiding framework for descriptive and explanatory purposes (Genov, 1994). Another candidate is the Durkheimian idea of anomy, since Bulgarian society clearly went through a period of normative instability (Vladimirov et al., 1998). It is difficult to draw the conclusion from these and similar cases that any specific theoretical and methodological approach has established itself as a long-term research program in Bulgarian sociology attracting broader attention in the professional community and in the public at large.

New East-West asymmetries

The newly emerging East-West asymmetries do not necessarily have to do with the issues of theoretical and methodological coherence. Currently, sociology in Western Europe and North America is also going through a period of excessive pluralization. Some exceptions of theoretical integration seem to be the ideas of social capital and rational choice; these will probably find stronger footing in Bulgarian sociology. The major East-West divide concerns funding and organized skepticism as a control mechanism in the scientific community.

While the issue of funding is a long-term one and can be resolved only step by step and with the involvement of Western European and North American resources, the issue of organized skepticism is mostly a domestic matter. Experience so far teaches that the Bulgarian sociological community still lacks control mechanisms able to prevent extremes of mood and behavior of the "everything goes" type. This situation cannot last for long, since the geostrategic trend is toward the country's accession to the European Union. The process will undoubtedly lead to efforts to increase the quality of scientific research by strengthening the professional community's control mechanisms. As a result, the East-West asymmetry in this area will probably be reduced step by step. The opposite scenario of deepening disparities within the emerging common European research area would be counterproductive to the very idea and practice of European integration.

Quantitative and qualitative empirical research approaches

Quantitative research strongly predominated in Bulgarian sociology both before and after 1989. The specific sociological contribution to social science knowledge is typically understood in the country as consisting in carrying out public opinion polls and presenting aggregated results. This type of activity is widely interpreted as "sociology". Consequently, the agencies for public opinion polls are widely regarded as the outstanding representatives of the discipline, since they regularly publish quantified findings about political attitudes, the level of satisfaction with incomes, education, health care, transportation, housing, etc.

Debates on methods of quantitative research focus mostly on issues of sampling and on the reliability of primary data. The statistical sophistication of data analysis usually remains at the level of frequency distribution or significance analysis. This is, in fact, the level of understanding of potential consumers interested in the results of public opinion polls. Systematic cluster analysis and regression analysis are carried out for purposes of academic publications. If published in Bulgarian, they have rather limited circulation and impact. This makes sophisticated statistical analysis less attractive even for sociologists who have the knowledge and skills to carry it out (Atanasov et al., 2001).

Some types of qualitative research, like in-depth interviews, the analysis of biographies, and participant observations were often applied in Bulgarian sociology before 1989, but the flourishing of methodological pluralism thereafter gave them a strong impetus. Together with various phenomenological approaches and interviews with focus groups, they are currently used in studies of multiple and changing identities and in defining status and roles in the fields of education, management, ethnic differences, etc. (Grekova, 1996). Some new developments in this field are connected with sociologists' broader use of methods typical for anthropological studies and with the latter's application in interdisciplinary research projects.

4. Thematic orientation and funding

At first glance, thematic orientations became much broader and free of administrative restrictions after 1989 than before. This is only partly true, given the sources and procedures of funding. During the 1970s and the 1980s, there were generalized thematic orientations for research; these were incorporated in the annual and five-year centralized plans. These orientations were broad enough to accommodate a wide range of studies. Their funding was never sufficient, but there was funding, especially for research on youth, trade unions, and cultural issues. Currently, state planning imposes no restrictions, but the state budget also provides no funding for sociological research. Universities' research funding is in an especially precarious situation. The major national agency for financing science is the National Fund for Scientific Research. It started at the beginning of the 1990s with a high level of organizational and financial autonomy and an acceptable level of financial coverage of selected projects, which made the Fund attractive. Currently it finances three to four sociological studies per year at a level of funding that is completely inadequate.

This makes the thematic orientation of sociological studies very dependent on occasional funding by extra-budgetary sources and on commercial considerations. The result is that sociologists are too preoccupied with studying election campaigns. These studies are mostly funded by domestic political parties, but also by foreign sources. For all other serious studies, Bulgarian sociologists are basically dependent on funding from abroad, which means on the thematic orientation and political and commercial preferences of foreign funding agencies.

Choices of themes

In this situation, the range of thematic choices is broad enough. But the selection of themes for research is often not determined in the country or with the clear intention of serving the interests of the national sociological community. Moreover, the guiding idea of the studies is rarely the cumulative development of scientific knowledge. The themes for research are typically determined by international funding organizations, for instance UNESCO, UNDP, ILO, the World Bank, the European Union, or others like USAID, the Open Society Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, etc. This funding situation explains why the issues of civil society development and ethnic issues, together with studies on political institutions and the dynamics of political preferences, are clearly over-represented on the research agenda.

The impact of thematic orientations on institutional structures

In fact, it is more relevant to speak about the impact of institutional structures on thematic orientations. The major divide in this respect is between academic sociology and sociological research carried out by institutions outside of academia. The academic institutions orient their research more and more toward such European Union educational and research programs as Tempus, Copernicus, Socrates, or the IVth and Vth Framework Programmes for scientific research. By contrast, private research agencies are mostly interested in serving specific needs of international customers who are guided by commercial or political interests.

Private vs. public funding

Thus, it is difficult to distinguish private from public funding with a view to the funding from abroad. A large proportion of it is taxpayers' money. With negligible exceptions, academic institutions receive this type of funding, although there are projects supported by foreign private foundations as well. The private agencies are typically unwilling to disclose their sources of funding, and there is no legislation obliging them to do so. But unofficially, one gets the information that they receive foreign funding, both public and private, in proportions varying substantially from agency to agency and from year to year.

Funding from domestic sources is also difficult to calculate. Funding that serves political campaigns is usually not made public. Here, too, there is a wide variety of patterns of funding that change from agency to agency and from year to year.

5. Public space and academic debates

Sociologists and sociology are well represented in the public space, mostly because of public opinion polls. Sociologists regularly conduct exit polls and count votes in parallel during local, parliamentary, and presidential elections. Massive public interest and debates focus on the success and failure of sociologists in their prediction of election outcomes.

True academic debates among professional sociologists are rare, however. Also, few academic discussions organized by sociologists have attracted public attention. The preparation and presentation of the annual Human Development Reports is one important exception to this rule. Although the teams preparing the Reports are multidisciplinary, in most cases sociologists are leading figures.

Debated themes, problems, methods

Only the presentation of research results covering electoral attitudes, electoral behavior, or the functioning of major political institutions draws tangible public interest. These topics and related substantive, methodological, and organizational problems attract broader interest from professionals. Occasionally, some studies on education, health care, employment and unemployment, public participation in decision-making and control, etc., meet public interest as well.

Few publications provoke internal debates on thematic orientations, conceptual backgrounds, operationalizations, and methods of sociological research in the sociological professional community itself (Genov, 2001). However, the trend is clearly toward a more intensive self-reflection on sociological research work.

Principal academic journals

During the 1990s, only one academic sociological journal survived, namely *Sociologičeski problemi* (Sociological Problems). The journal has a small circulation and is published irregularly and with substantial delay. Publication of the second journal, *Sociologičeski pregled* (Sociological Review), which was the subject of intense interest in the professional community during the 1980s, was put on ice because of lack of funding.

Selection of publications in world languages

Representative selections of texts by outstanding Bulgarian sociologists were published on the occasions of the World Congresses of Sociology held in Bielefeld in 1994 and in Montreal in 1998 (Genov, 1994b; Mitev, 1998). Some other publications in English also seem to be representative enough of the thematic orientations of sociological studies in Bulgaria during the 1990s (Fotev, 1998; Genov, 1999a; Genov, 1999b; Genov, 2000; Genov and Krasteva, 2001). There are occasional publications in German and in French (Krämer and Stojanov, 1999; Boucher, Fotev and Koleva, 2001).

New manuals. Databases

There have been substantial changes in the content and organization of university teaching since 1989. New manuals serve the needs of the reformed educational system (Fotev, 1993; Mihailov and Tilkidzhiev, 1996; Genov, 1998; Dimitrov, 2001). Translations of classical and modern sociological texts serve the same purpose of fostering the cognitive integration of sociological education.

The situation with databases is rather different. The Bulgarian sociological community is a long way from the very desirable development of commonly accessible data banks. So far, institutional and commercial interests have been quite efficient in preventing the materialization of this widely debated idea.

6. Views on further development

As the above brief outline of achievements and problems shows, the professional community of Bulgarian sociologists is mature enough to cope with the conceptual and practical challenges of the continuing transformation of Bulgarian society. The researchers have to cope with them under conditions of institutional instability, rather limited state subsidies for science, and a lack of interest in science on the part of the emerging domestic private sector. Nevertheless, one can note the innovative pluralization of paradigms in sociology coupled with the introduction of a number of new topics and methods of research. Seen from another point of view, the clear orientation of studies along commercial lines makes sociology eclectic and too prone to control through market forces.

In the light of this controversial situation, three requirements seem especially relevant for sociology at present.

First, the thematic orientation of research work in sociology should continue to be enhanced by studies that try, in conceptual and methodical terms, to link the transformation of Bulgarian society to the changes in its regional context and to global trends. In broader terms, this means that the cross-national and cross-cultural comparative orientation of sociology should continue to be encouraged.

Second, this result can be achieved if current theoretical deficiencies are reduced step by step. The most pressing need is for systematic conceptualizations of the continuing transformation. There is also an urgent need to consistently operationalize and test the theoretical schemes already available.

Third, to facilitate more efficient comparative, interdisciplinary, and practically relevant studies in the field of sociology, it is essential to reach a new level of reflexive accumulation of theoretical ideas, methodological instruments, empirical data, and socio-technological expertise.

Under these conditions, one can expect a rapid increase in the cognitive achievements, practical relevance, and social prestige of sociology in Bulgaria. Recent experience with the cognitive and practical flexibility of sociologists under precarious conditions indicates it can be assumed that the sociological community has the intellectual and organizational potential to cope with the challenge.

International cooperation

The following international comparative research projects seem to have been the academically most productive in the 1990s:

- "Personal and Institutional Strategies for Coping with Transformation Risks in Central and Eastern Europe" (UNESCO-MOST, Nikolai Genov);
- "Justice and Economic Rationality"(SOCO, Duhomir Minev);
- "Poverty and Ethnicity" (Ilona Tomova).

The impact of accession

The impact of EU accession is most visible in the teaching in higher education. Some projects in the field are outstanding, like "Transformations in a Comparative European Perspective" in the framework of the Socrates Programme. As the statistics of the European Union show, no coordinators of EU-funded sociological research projects are from Eastern Europe. This situation will probably change in the foreseeable future.

The impact of research in the public sphere

The thematic orientation of risk research and the efforts to manage social risks have moved sociology into the tension-ridden field of relationships between the rationality of *cognition* and the rationality of *action.* In fact, sociologists became more practically oriented during the 1990s. Funding from foreign agencies requires practical results, greatly contributing to this change. However, the special focus on market research and public opinion research has not necessarily expanded and consolidated the theoretical substance of sociology. In addition, the obvious political bias of results from public opinion polls carried out by private research agencies has undermined the prestige of sociology. In the most general terms, however, the boom in market research and public opinion polls also increased cognitive value. They contributed to the methodological sophistication of sociological research and to the transparency of social structures and processes. This became obvious in the course of preparing the annual *Human Development Reports*.

The direct political involvement of sociologists in Bulgaria has not been as extensive as in other Eastern European countries. In some specific cases, it cast doubt on the objectivity of the discipline. In other cases, this involvement strengthened the scientific basis of politics and provided sociologists with valuable practical experience.

The major field in which the practical relevance of sociology became apparent was social policy. In fact, this was the field in which substantial institutional innovations had to be introduced in dealing with the entirely new issue of unemployment, the new schemes of health protection, pension funds, and many other issues. These far-reaching institutional changes had to be introduced under conditions of economic crisis, mass poverty, and political instability, which were undermining social solidarity. Scientific expertise was urgently needed in this context. But the unique opportunity to carry out practically relevant research did not always materialize.

The experience from this institutional transition is controversial. The same holds true for the policies themselves, whose basic aim was to encourage economic initiative and responsibility. In reality, under the given economic and cultural conditions, they mostly provided financial support to underprivileged groups (Georgieva, 1997).

The problem of the "brain drain"

With few exceptions, well-established Bulgarian researchers and university teachers of sociology remained in the country, despite the temptation to migrate to Western Europe and North America. Few of the junior staff left the country, as well. However, personal observations indicate that the younger sociologists who received their education during the 1990s are much more mobile. There are no statistics that confirm or refute this assumption.

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