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Short scientific article

## THE FAMILY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA – POST-WAR AND TRANSITIONAL CHANGES<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* The family in the Republic of Srpska has been under the influence of immense social macro processes, especially in the period from 1990 until today. This paper analyses the basic processes and tendencies of the transitional and the post-war changes in the sphere of the family through empirical research carried out in the area of the city of East Sarajevo. The family was brought back to some earlier forms of family life due to the severe effects of the war, the pauperization, the destruction of reproduction and the general vulnerability of the family members. On the other side, the family has been exposed to certain processes typical of the developed Western countries: decreased birth rate and fertility, increased extramarital birth rate and different kinds of cohabitation, etc. Taking into consideration all of the above-mentioned, we can talk about certain transformational mixture: the adoption of some trends from the West and the simultaneous process of re-traditionalization. In this paper we would analyse some of the main post-war and transitional changes that the family in the Republic of Srpska has undergone: exile, negative demographic trends, decreased number of extended families, abrupt pauperization, overall insecurity, and numerous risks typical for a damaged public sphere of the society, along with changes in socio-economic strategies.

*Keywords:* family, post-war and transitional changes, exile, pauperization, social and cultural capital, socio-economic strategies.

### 1. Introduction

The family belongs to those social phenomena whose changes have been taking place unnoticeably throughout a longer period of time, while it is usually brought to focus by the community only during more immense social changes. The contemporary changes in the family tend to suggest the processes of „decomposition” (Milić 2001) of marriage, family, kinship and family life. The consequences of the process are reflected in the separation between marriage and

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partners' relationship, parenthood and marriage, the family life of older and younger members and the creation of less numerous families. Consequently, what is being created in that way are many new forms of communities such as cohabitation, premarital, postmarital and extramarital communities, alternative forms of marriage and family etc. (Gidens 2003).

From both the social and the individual point of view, the family is evaluated as being the capital asset and one of the highest values. "The family life provides the members with various resources and energies that can be used with the purpose of realizing their strategic ideas and aims, just as, on the other side, families and households, being collective members, can, through their interrelations in social systems, influence and alleviate the changes initiated and carried out in other social subsystems. What is particularly emphasised in that sense is the potential role of the family as a social capital necessary for economic reforms in transitional and post-transitional societies." (Milić 2004:318)

The entire 20<sup>th</sup> century in the former Yugoslavia and, consequently, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was the period of intensive family changes that led to the modernization of family life. That was particularly evident after World War II, under the influence of industrialization and modernization of the Yugoslav society, the de-agrarization, the urbanization, the mass education and the mass employment of women. Due to these processes traditional forms of family life were abandoned. When it comes to the size, form and structure of the family, by the end of the 1980s in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the larger part of former Yugoslavia, it acquired characteristics of a modern family. The nuclear family type grew dominant. The family was centralized around the institution of marriage and that kind of relationship was primarily oriented towards posterity. However, the family still projected some of the traditional forms of a husband and father authority. These trends of family modernization were abruptly aborted in the 1990s, when the socialist reproduction mode collapsed in the ex-Yugoslav society and warfare broke out .

## **2. The family in the Republic of Srpska**

The process of radical changes in the ex-Yugoslav society commenced at the beginning of 1990s. In sociological literature those changes are known under the notion of "transition." Post-socialist transition represents a new transitional period, in which some of the crucial features of the ex-Yugoslav, together with the other socialist societies in East and Central Europe, changed both through a planned or an unplanned process. The radical social changes that happened in 1990s were signaled by animosities among the castes, social inequalities and other problems that were present in the previous socialist society. Namely, certain changes within the political and economic systems opened the way to a particular form of transition, i.e. the transitional transformation of the society. The process in the ex-Yugoslav society was followed by characteristic events that were uncharacteristic for most of the ex-socialist countries: the disintegration

of Yugoslavia during the warfare and the creation of new countries from the former republics. The war that lasted from 1992 to 1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina led to the creation of the Republic of Srpska as a separate entity within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was internationally recognized as a sovereign country in 1992. The global industry collapse and the mass pauperization during the war marked the complete deconstruction of the erstwhile socialist social system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Social changes during transition by rule afflict all society structures and castes. The establishment of new market mechanisms without any social control, the warfare destruction and the mass exile destroyed many companies, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless and jobless in many different ways: either as being redundant in the company, or becoming a refugee, or having their companies physically destroyed etc.

On the basis of the research carried out for the purposes of this paper, the transitional period in the Republic of Srpska is divided into several periods:

- From 1989 to 1991 – the country abandoned the socialist mode of production, by abolishing the main category of its regulation – command and plan regulation;
- From 1992 to 1995 – the period of the Civil War and the creation of the Republic of Srpska;
- From 1995 onwards – the creation of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity of the Republic of Srpska, the establishment of institutions, privatization and transition to market business. The main characteristic of this period is a significant and direct influence of the International Community through its institutions on the main processes of society transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When it comes to the context of global society, what can be stated is that the Republic of Srpska has been marginalized, being featured by emphasised inequalities and the big role of the international factors in creating both political and economic developmental perspectives that are very often to the detriment of the population of Republic of Srpska.

### *2.1 Some demographic features of the families in the Republic of Srpska*

In the middle of the collapse of socialism and the Civil War in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most families underwent personal and social pauperization, exile and human losses due to war. They focused on strategies of daily survival and returned to traditional modes of family life, in that way triggering the process of "re-traditionalization of family." (Milić 2004: 319) Economic fluctuations, warfare destruction and exile brought many families a the state of mass pauperization and misery, the consequences of which can be widely felt even nowadays.

Moreover, the families were struck by some processes characteristic of the developed Western societies, such as sexual emancipation, a decrease of birth rate and fertility, an increase of extramarital children, postponement of marriage, etc. Therefore, it is possible to talk about a kind of transformational mixture in the newly formed society, implying adoption of certain Western trends along with the processes of re-traditionalization and re-patriarchalization (Milić 2004).

Various researches have shown that the family in the Republic of Srpska was under the influence of highly stressful and dramatic events that caused many negative and destructive changes on the levels of both individual and family life. Those negative consequences have been reflected through abrupt pauperization, human losses due to the war, and increase of mortality caused by the postponement of the process of reproduction through marriage and giving birth.

**Table 1: Natural birth rate in the Republic of Srpska for the period between 2010 to 2013**

year	number of population	born	deceased	natural birth rate
2010	1,433,038	10,147	13,602	-2.4
2011	1,429,668	9,561	13,731	-2.9
2012	1,429,290	9,978	13,871	-2.7
2013	1,425,549	9,510	14,048	-3.1

*\*The table offers an estimate on the number of inhabitants in the Republic of Srpska. The first census after 1991 was carried out in 2013, but due to the protests of the politicians in both entities of BiH, the results have not been published yet. The number of registered inhabitants in the Republic of Srpska is 1,326,991, which is approximately 100,000 fewer than previously estimated.*

The figures in the table 1 show that the decrease of birth rate and fertility below the level of regeneration of the population is connected to the changes in family relations causing transformation of family structures, which further causes decrease of birth rate and fertility. This happens due to biological factors (sterility), demographic factors (the approximate age of population), and, most importantly, socio-cultural factors. According to the State Bureau of Statistics data, the total amount of children born in 2013 is divided into 50% of firstborn, 30% of second child, and only 20% of third, fourth or fifth child. Therefore, every second liveborn child is firstborn child, while every eighth child is the third child in the family.

Another significant factor influencing the social status of the family are the migrations, i.e. the negative migration balance. Forced migrations were specially relevant for the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, together with the processes of returning of the displaced people. According to some estimates from 1996, a third of the total number of the population of Republic of Srpska was afflicted by the process of migrations. The process was particularly directed towards the densely populated industrial areas of Banja Luka and Bijeljina

(approximately 60% of the inhabitants). At the time, migration processes were also taking place from rural to urban areas and towards the developed Western countries, which conditioned the decrease of the population and a change in its age structure.

According to the relevant data from 1991, Republic of Srpska had a population of 1,623,842, as much as 37% of Bosnia and Herzegovina total population at the time. The total number of households in that period was 463,954, each household approximately consisting of 3 members, whereas in 1953 each household in Bosnia and Herzegovina consisted of over 5 members.

Table 2 offers the survey of the number and the structure of the Republic of Srpska household estimate for the years 2008 and 2012 (the survey on households is carried out every four years).

The figures show that the approximate number of household members decreased from 3.11 to 2.95 between the period of two consecutive surveys. As a direct consequence of those negative demographic trends, there was also an increase from 17.9% to 20.1% of old age households. The share of marital couples having one, two, three or more children (nuclear family) for the year 2008 is 32.2%, while the same share for 2012 is 29.2%. Among other types of households (Table 2), vertically extended households are classified (marital couple living with their children and parents, marital couple living with their children, parents and other relatives, then, single parents living with their children and parents, single parents living with their children, parents and other relatives), holding the share of 17.1% for 2008 and 16.5% for 2012.

**Table 2: Number and structure of households in the Republic of Srpska**

total number of households (approx.)	2008	2012
	374,715 (surveyed 2,622)	359,567 (surveyed 2,437)
urban (%)	34.5	38.3
rural (%)	65.5	61.7
approximate number of household members	3.11	2.95
singles < 65 years (%)	6.8	7.7
Singles over 65 years (%)	11.1	13.8
childless marital couple < 65 year-old (%)	8.0	9.3
childless marital couple 65+ year-old (%)	11.1	10.8
marital couple having 1 child (%)	12.1	11.8
marital couple having 2 children (%)	15.9	13.3
marital couple having 3 or more children (%)	4.2	4.1
single parents (%)	6.6	6.3
other types (%)	24.2	22.8
single parents + other relatives (%)	3.8	4.3
marital couple having children + other relatives (%)	8.3	7.4
marital couple having children + parents (%)	5.0	4.8
other (%)	7.1	6.4

The figures show the occurrence of bipolar tendencies in the family formation: on the one hand, there is an increase in the number of households having small number of members (singles, childless marriages, single parents), while on the other hand there are households having a significant number of members (extended families). Vertically extended families represent a specific mixture of potential and risk, representing one way of family survival in the context of deep social crisis and collapse of the civic society sphere. Such families “comprise of at least two families of three generations: parental family (prevalingly of a husband), family orientation of a grown child (prevalingly of a son but of a single parent as well), mostly having children but childless as well. Those are traditionally oriented communities, created during the process of re-traditionalization.” (Miletić-Stepanović 2004:411) This modified household distribution represents a discontinuity in comparison to the changes that took place in the 1980s. Instead of continuing the further modernization of the family



and the household by means of a decrease of the family members and the introduction of new alternative family types, the trend acquired a negative flow. The basic family type carrying the foundations of the modernization of society is the nuclear family, the number of which is constantly decreasing. The decrease negatively influences not only the reproduction of the population, but also the subsequent industrial and social restoration processes in the Republic of Srpska. The expansion of vertically extended families is conditioned by both subjective and objective factors. The objective factors refer to the difficult economic and social crisis, the abrupt pauperization, the exile and the impossibility for young couples to establish their marital life due to the lack of material and financial resources. Alongside, there is a total impossibility for the elderly to have any kind of security in the society that almost completely lost its social policy. Nevertheless, the creation of vertically extended families is also conditioned by particular subjective factors, such as voluntarism and manipulation of the parental family. The acceptance of living in a vertically extended family is often not voluntary, but is rather a consequence of either overt or covert voluntarism of parental family, which in many different ways avoids giving up the part of material resources and yield them to the family of their children. Presumably, the reasons for such attitudes of parental families are for the purpose of realization of traditionalistic goals such as domination, the raise of capital, self-promotion in the society, ensuring security for the old age, etc. These are all the means for preventing the new family to leave the parental family and to move out of such household, thus preventing the emancipation and the individualization of the new family. This is also the case even when the parental family possesses enough material resources to prompt the new family into their individual life (Miletić-Stepanović 2004). In that case, the parental family uses a manipulation strategy, when, in the devastated society, family resources may achieve a relatively manyfold multiplication. Moreover, in the context of a completely inefficient social policy marginalizing the elderly, the parental family possesses certain rare resources prone to be manipulated with. "A young family, i.e. a young spouse or mother, takes over the care for the elderly father-in-law and mother-in-law, thus serving as a factor of stability in the global system in terms of alleviating the risk of the old age and various diseases. The old parents' strategy is usually to stay at any cost in the vertically extended family, first and foremost with their son, until death comes." (Miletić-Stepanović 2004: 411) What can be argued is that the vertically extended family is contradictory in its nature: on one hand, it offers the possibility for putting the resources together thus providing the survival in the period of social crisis, whereas on the other hand it multiplies the risks regarding the successful emancipation of the young family, especially a young spouse or mother. However, we argue that neither the vertical extension of the family necessarily has to imply traditional patriarchal relations among the members, nor the nuclear families necessarily implies democratic relations among theirs.

The basic demographic data show the Republic of Srpska to be within the unfavourable tendencies of demographic development, which is reflected in the following: an intensification of the process of aging, a decrease in birth rate, an unfavourable age structure of the population (the greatest share falling to the

elderly), a decrease in fertility and a decrease in the elderly and the single households to the detriment of nuclear family households. All these processes indicate the need for a more serious institutional engagement in the implementation of a pro-birthrate policy in the society. In order to be successful, such a policy would have to battle the real causes of the birth rate decrease.

## 2.2 *Employment strategies of the families in the Republic of Srpska*

The transformation of the social reproduction during the post-socialist and post-war period in the Republic of Srpska preconditioned the occurrence of some new modes in terms of the family and the relations in the field of employment. These modes enabled the families to develop a whole system of completely new employment strategies providing social reproduction. Formal long-term employment, which for most of the working age population had been the basis for reproduction performed by them and their families, ceased to serve as the dominant type of work (Babović 2009). This type of work for most people grows almost unattainable in the period of after-war transition and crisis, and, consequently, some new alternative employment strategies have been created. However, in the period of global social and economic crisis, even those who managed to retain their position in the formal labour market are actually trying to find various additional working activities, so as to alleviate the decrease of their living standard. The empirical analysis of the employment strategies of the families in East Sarajevo shows various ways of their adjusting to the new situation. Table 3 offers the results of the employment strategies research related to the families in East Sarajevo.

**Table 3: Families classified according to the type of strategy**

employment strategy of family	frequency	percentage	
strategy of substitution	23	7.7	7.8
formal employment	187	63.0	63.8
additional work	20	6.7	6.8
agricultural work	15	5.1	5.1
formal employment and additional work	23	7.7	7.8
formal employment and agricultural work	17	5.7	5.8
entrepreneurial	8	2.7	2.7
total	293	98.7	100.0
missing values	4	1.3	
total	297	100.0	

Evidently, the greatest number of families (63.8%) relies on the labour market and is focused on the formal employment, then there are those who combine formal employment and additional work (7.8%), then formal employment and agricultural work (5.8%), and agricultural work (5.1%). The substitution strategy falls into 23 families (7.8%), while there are 2.7% of



entrepreneurial families. Substitution strategy families do not perform any kind of work on the labour market, i.e. do not earn their living on labour market. Instead, such families perform natural production and services within the family itself, receive social relief, the help of their relatives, friends, etc. In that way, self-production and self-service substitute those services on the labour market. Families in East Sarajevo primarily rely on the formal employment of family members. On the other hand, this trend is decreasing in modern societies, along with the parallel increase of moderate forms of employment, additional work and more powerful inclusion of women in the labour market (Babović, 2009). Around 20 (6.8%) of the families subsist on the additional work. Such work implies occasional or additional activities on a regular basis, being performed in the sphere of free economy (employment without a contract, working in the fields of trade in an unregistered company, various construction works, etc.). These families are by rule faced with the unemployment of their members. As for the elements of various social activities, there are two predominant modes: formal employment combined with additional work and formal employment and agricultural work. The sample of 8 (2.7%) families shows the entrepreneurial families to be the least frequent. The sample is mainly comprised of small and middle-sized entrepreneur families, and only one big entrepreneur family. This figure shows the private sector of the economy in the Republic of Srpska to be still undeveloped and is yet to be fully created, and families rely on the employment in the public/social sector and the institutions of the republic. To sum up, the results of the research show that the main employment strategy of the families in East Sarajevo is formal employment combined with additional or agricultural work. What can further be concluded is that those families have diversified socioeconomic and employment strategies, applied with the purpose of sustaining or creating their social status, or, at least, preventing their fall from the social stratification rank they hold.

Due to the difficult financial situation, many families turned to the almost completely abandoned type of work – the natural production. It implies the production of certain types of goods that can be found on the market by the family. However, in the transitional and post-war society of the Republic of Srpska, this type of work is performed as a part of a substitution strategy or, more precisely, there is a demand for a substitute for labour market. This type of work is still maintained due to family pauperization and the impossibility to find employment on the labour market. Natural production primarily implies food production, making and mending pieces of clothing due to the impossibility to buy them, household appliances repair and the maintaining of the living space (renewing, whitewashing, installation repair). This type of work is existent even in much more developed societies, but in a slightly modified form. Namely, whereas in our society this type of work is of substitutive character, in developed societies it exists in the form of various do-it-yourself activities, as a manifestation of a new consumer society culture and the value system that puts an emphasis on the quality of life and more prominent participation of family members in creating their living space.

The natural production of the families in East Sarajevo has been reflected through several variables: production of food and drink out of their own garden, individual household repairs, whitewashing, household appliance repair, individual mending of pieces of clothing and footwear, childcare and the care for the elderly and the disabled.

A significant number of these families produce food and drink out of their own garden, around 126 of them or (42.4%); 175 or (58.9%) families do individual household repairs, whitewashing and household appliance repair when necessary; 56 or (18.9%) of them perform individual footwear and clothing mending and 49 or (16.5%) perform childcare and the elderly care. Under the influence of pauperization, more and more families are being directed towards the substitution strategy that meets their basic existential needs.

Various household chores are inevitable in every family, but have been widely and entirely considered as forms of work exclusively done by women, either as housewives, or employed women having children, or housewives, who, along with all the household work and having children, have to do agricultural work as well. Modern societies tend to make household chores easier, first and foremost by means of abandoning the difficult physical work, then through the decrease of their number and finally through using various household appliances. Furthermore, there is a prominent tendency in modern societies of including other members of the family in doing household chores as well. However, our society does not manifest such a tendency. Due to the mass pauperization, the unemployment of family members, especially of women, the families are mostly unequipped with technical appliances, or do not have enough money to buy household appliances, women are expected to cut family expenses through their work in the household. The unemployment of women and the spending of their time at home causes other members of the family to fail to notice the need of occasionally helping their wife or mother in doing household chores. The results of the research clearly show this trend as well. In the families in East Sarajevo, the woman usually cooks in 236 or (79.5%) families, does the washing and the washing up in 221 or (74.4%) families, cleans in 217 or (73.1%) families, irons in 228 or (76.8%) families, takes care after the small children in 80 or (79.2%) families and monitors the school duties of the children in 91 or (85.8%) families. In a smaller percentage, this type of work is done by another female family member (grandmother or adult daughter). A very small number of families can afford some kind of paid aid in the household: 2 or (0.7%) families have such aid in preparing food, 2 or (0.7%) families in washing and washing up, 5 or (1.7%) in cleaning, 2 (0.7%) in ironing, and just 1 family or (0.3%) in childcare. All the results of the research show the families in East Sarajevo to be featured by traditional division of labor, additionally strengthened in the period of crisis when all women became primarily housewives and certain social family functions previously abandoned were brought back to the family again.

### 3. Conclusion

The families and households in the Republic of Srpska have undergone significant changes due to the impact of powerful macro processes that were particularly evident in the period between 1990 and 2000. The most important changes are reflected in the following: a decrease of birth rate and fertility, an increase of mortality, an increase of the elderly share in the percentage of population, postponement of marriage, a high percentage of unemployment among the young and the middle-aged, an abrupt increase of the poor, and, particularly, migrations and exile. All the above-mentioned facts open the question regarding the type of fluctuations and changes that can be further anticipated and expected, taking into account the fact that our society has been in a complex and difficult situation. The results of the research show that the family transformation was not directed towards modernization but regression, so it is completely valid to talk about re-patriarchalization and re-traditionalization of the families (Milić 2010a). The families that underwent significant and constant changes in the socialist system finally resulting in modern nuclear family creation, were forced to get back to certain old, traditional forms of family life in order to sustain life during the period of the disintegration of the ex-Yugoslav society and the Civil War. "Inhibiting family promotion with the purpose of the completion of its modernization process and entering the post-modern family forms have been particularly evident in terms of family relations, both among the relatives and their friends. The lowering of the living standard for the greatest number of population or the pauperization, the prevailing social insecurity and the various types of life hazards that became normal for a great number of families influenced such families to accept even certain traditional ways of earning a living (e.g. agricultural work, natural production, self-employment), keeping the traditional labour division within the household (emphasizing women's role as primarily of a housewife), as well as on the level of earning, maintaining and using of social and cultural capital." (Milić 2010:30)

The research carried out in the paper has shown the social transformation in the Republic of Srpska to be slow, i.e. the modern system of social reproduction not to be fully developed, but that the families rather reach for traditional work activities – formal employment with additional or agricultural work, together with the high percentage of natural reproduction performed by the family.

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## СЕМЕЈСТВОТО ВО РЕПУБЛИКА СРПСКА – ПОСТВОЕНИ И ТРАНСИЦИДСКИ ПРОМЕНИ

Висерка КОШАРАЦ

*Апстракт:* Семејството во Република Српска е под влијание на огромни општествени макропроцеси, особено од периодот од 1990-та до денес. Овој труд ги анализира базичните процеси и тенденции на транзициските и поствоените промени во сферата на семејството преку емпириски истражувања спроведени во областа Источно Сараево. Семејството беше вратено кон некои поранешни форми на семеен живот поради тешките последици од војната, осиромашувањето, уништувањето на репродукцијата и општата ранливост на членовите на семејството. Од друга страна, семејството било изложено на извесни процеси типични за развиените западни земји: намалени стапки на раѓања и фертилитет, пораст на стапката на вонбрачни раѓања и алтернативни видови на кохабитација итн. Земајќи ги предвид сите гореспоменати, можеме да зборуваме за извесна трансформациона мешавина: прифаќање на некои трендови од Западот и симултан процес на ретрадиционализација. Во овој труд ќе анализираме некои од главните поствоени и транзициски промени низ кои минувало семејството во Република Српска: прогон, негативни демографски трендови, намалување на бројот на проширени семејства, нагло осиромашување, општа несигурност и бројни ризици типични за оштетената јавна сфера на општеството, придружени со промени во социо-економските стратегии.

*Клучни зборови:* семејство, поствоени и транзициски промени, прогон, осиромашување, социјален и културен капитал, социо-економски стратегии.