

## POLITICAL EXCLUSIVITY AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Dear colleagues, dear friends from Krakow... I am happy for this opportunity to exchange my ideas with you. The Institute of Sociology to which I have affiliated for almost forty years now, and I, were looking forward impatiently to each consecutive Skopje-Krakow and Krakow-Skopje sociological bi-annual. I can freely say that much of my professional development is indebted to this academic exchange. I hope that it will continue in the future.

With my contribution, entitled 'Political Exclusivity and Political Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia', as work in progress I am drafting the working hypothesis that political exclusion is much broader and sociologically-speaking much more deeply rooted social phenomenon than what it is conventionally understood to be and treated as in Macedonia.

The existing literature and political practice reduce the political exclusion to exclusion from politics of the so-called 'vulnerable groups'- the poor and the marginal categories of citizens. For example, political exclusion is only marginally mentioned in the strategic documents of the State treating the issues of 'societal' or of 'social' exclusion (the two terms are usually used as equivalents and tautologically). In these documents it is treated only as by-product of the material (economic) exclusion, i.e. poverty.

Opposing this approach, I find and intend to prove that political exclusion of the vulnerable groups is a consequence of a deeper ideological and political force which shapes the Macedonian society in transition. That ideological and political force excludes, not only the minorities and the marginal groups, but also marginalizes the majority, directing society as a whole to the margins of the European development process. This ideological and political force is in fact the *political exclusivity*.

Before elaborating this hypothesis, it is necessary to clarify two conceptual and terminological issues. The first one is about the meaning of the term 'societal exclusion'. In connection to it, two questions arise. The first is what we, in

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Macedonia, understand by ‘societal exclusion’ – term present in the title of this year’s edition of our Skopje-Krakow sociological bi-annual seminar and what our Polish colleagues understand by their ‘spoleczne wykluczenia?’ Are we talking about the same thing? The second question is about the relationship between the notions of *societal exclusion* and *social exclusion* (or, in connection to them, the notions of *societal integration/cohesion* and *social integration/cohesion*). Other questions can be raised, but I will stop here.

The second conceptual and terminological problem involves the terms ‘exclusion’ and ‘exclusivity’. The first designates a more or less a *topographical* category. It designates leaving someone or some category of people outside a certain space or given sphere of the society in question (social, cultural, political). For example, our colleague Antonala Petkovska will speak about cultural exclusion, that is, about exclusion of a certain segment of the population from the sphere of culture. Our colleague Marija Drakulevska will talk about exclusion of certain categories of citizens from the media.

Unlike this, the term ‘exclusivity’ connotes something else. For example, following the letters in the title of the presentation of our colleague Zoran Matevski, he is going to speak about religious exclusion and will argue that such a phenomenon exists in Macedonia. Today, with some exceptions, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia do enjoy the right to freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution and the international human rights conventions. This is why we seldom hear about religious exclusion. But, a number of studies, life examples and situations show some religious exclusivity in Macedonia. This is due to the fact that certain religious circles consider themselves as unique and exclusive in comparison to other religious circles.

Such questions are of general theoretical character and as such their clarification is important to establishing the framework of our exchange of opinions here. Their proper framing is an important precondition to understanding the main hypothesis of my contribution – that is the statement that the different phenomena of registered exclusion, such as social cultural, media, political and so on in Macedonia are manifestations, and to certain extent consequences of a much deeper and wider phenomena of *political exclusivity*.

Political exclusivity and exceptionalism lead first to political exclusion of various categories of citizens from the process of decision making and, then to social, religious, cultural or media exclusion. According to my understanding, the various forms of societal exclusion (social, cultural, religious, media etc.) are consequences

of the existing and deep-rooted phenomena of exclusivism of the political class in Macedonia. Political exclusivism is the source of all forms of exclusion in our society.

But, nevertheless, there is no place for this phenomenon in the official documents dealing with the development of policies for reducing or eradicating the societal exclusion. For example, the national *Strategy for Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia 2010-2020* (Стратегија 2010-2020) doesn't say a single word neither on political exclusion, nor on the political exclusivism I intend to talk about here. On the contrary, the strategy itself promotes strong exclusivism of politics against all other spheres of society. The politics are position as a demiurge, as the unique agent who puts in motion the happenings in all the other spheres of the society - today even much more so and as a much stronger demiurge than in the period of communism. Further, while the communist totalitarian politicians were themselves limited by the communist notion of equality, today's neoliberal politics inspired by the idea of freedom and locally empowered by the different ethno-religious fears, seems absolutely free and unlimited – freedom of trade, free market etc.

I wonder how one can think about and plan to reduce the level of poverty of the poor and of other marginalized citizens if they are politically excluded, because of the exclusivity of politics and of the political elites. *The Strategy* for poverty reduction defines fourteen areas of state action with the aim to reduce the level of poverty and social exclusion in general. But, neither of them is politics as such. *The Strategy* mentions different policies that are needed in the specific spheres of society to be undertaken with the view of reducing various forms of exclusion. But, the politics itself is absent from the policy horizon, not only as a sphere in which exclusionist practices happen all the time, but also as a sphere which generates such practices and policies.

For example, *the Strategy* envisages measures for inclusion of poor and socially excluded in all spheres of societal life except in the sphere of politics. Measures are planned for the reduction of unemployment and non-formal economy, for changes in the labour market, improving national health care and social security, transport and communications, housing and child protection and many other measures and policies. Yet, there is nothing about improving the state of affairs in the sphere of politics. Who would want to see the homeless into the house of representative democracy or a beggar in the Ministry of Finance!

I do not want to say that political exclusion of this or that category of citizens does not deserve policy approach. On the contrary. I would like to argue that the exclusion of deprived people and other vulnerable categories is a consequence of the wider phenomenon of political exclusivity. By that I am not referring only to the exclusion of the opposition political parties from the decision-making processes but also to the exclusion of the independent and the non-partisans. I would say that political exclusivity of vulnerable groups is a consequence of this phenomena of political exclusivity. Politics here, today is exclusionist and exclusive. Exclusivity of the Macedonian politics and of the Macedonian political elites today is the generator of all the forms of exclusion present in the society.

Politics today, not only here, but in all modernized societies, is not simply a reflection of these or other socio-economic, cultural and other sociological factors. Thought from a Weberian perspective, politics itself is an autonomous factor shaping the social processes of exclusion in the different spheres of societal life. It was not only Max Weber. Friedrich Engels also writes exactly on the issue of political exclusivity and “autonomy of politics” in relations to other societal spheres. Let me remind us here on what Engels is saying on this subject matter in *Introduction to Karl Marx' Civil War in France* on the occasion of the publication of this book 20 years after the *Paris Commune* (that is in 1891):

“What had been the characteristic attribute of the ... state? Society had created its own organs to look after its common interests, originally through simple division of labour. But these organs, at whose head was the state power, had in the course of time, in pursuance of their own special interests, transformed themselves from the servants of society into the masters of society, as can be seen, for example, not only in the hereditary monarchy, but equally also in the democratic republic. Nowhere do ‘politicians’ form a more separate, powerful [and I would say exclusionist and exclusive), I.T] section of the nation than in North America. There, each of the two great parties, which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies ..., or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions” (Engels 1891) and who afterwards exclude non-partisans. They exclude them not only from their access to public resources, but also frequently deprive them from their private resources. And this all is done in the name of free competition and representative democracy.

The quoted text speaks about the representative democracy in the United States of America from the distant times of the nineteenth century. Such things and affairs are taking place nowadays here in Macedonia in the twenty-first century. But,

with one big difference: here and today political exclusion is not simply a matter of political practice and political struggle, but a feature of the existing institutional arrangements. It is not only that here politicians are de facto established as the most powerful 'section' of the society, but are de jure established as exclusive 'clique.' With a number of mutual agreements and deals and based on them on the grounds of a number of legal solutions and other normative regulations (Договор од Пржино 2015, Закон за Влада 2015), politicians have promoted themselves as exclusionist and exclusive. Based on such normative and institutional arrangements political exclusivity has been established as societal exclusivity of political parties.

I thank you

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