

FATIGUE

Comparative Analysis Workshops

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SLOBODANKA DEKIĆ– ESR 13



Negotiating Family in Populist Times: Family Politics and LGBT organizations in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Research aim: To analyse how local LGBT organizations define and promote LGBT family rights (i.e. Legalization of same-sex partnerships ; birth and adoption rights) in the context of populist, pro-natalist family narratives and policies.

Research questions: What are the dominant and alternative narratives about family in these societies? What is the relation between these two? What is the impact of anti-gender movements in creating dominant discourses on family?

Research methodology:

comparative analysis of family policies and populism in Serbia, Croatia and B&H;

gathering data through semi-opened interviews with representatives of local LGBT organizations, expert interviews; usage of relevant documents, reports, analysis, etc.;

interpretation of gathered data through discourse analysis

Key concepts of the research: „Gender Ideology“

Anti-gender forces:

Protection of traditional family against LGBT and women's „hidden agenda“ of re-defining natural understanding of man and woman.

VS

Progressive forces:

Traditional, backwarded initiatives for restricting LGBT and women's rights (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017)

Part of the global, well organized neo-conservative networks, emerging in USA at the end of 70s against sexual rights, part of neoliberal agenda (Duggan 2003; Korolczuk and Graff 2018)

Reaction against imposed Western liberal values, popular among „transitional losers“ (Grzebalska, Kovats and Peto 2017; Korolczuk and Graff 2018)

Necessary critical self-reflection of „New Left“ and its „obsession“ with identity politics, instead of focusing on social and economic issues relevant for CEE societies (Kovats, 2018)

Three aspects of „Gender Ideology“ Debate (Dekić, 2021)

Ambiguous relation between gender, LGBT and populism (Puar, 2017; Pietruchova, 2011; Grzebalska and Kovats, 2018; Bruster, 2015)

Conflicted understandings of „sex“ and „gender“ (Kovats, 2018; Grzebalska, Kovats and Peto, 2017; Mesaros, 2017)

Anti-gender narrative as new/old neo-conservative, neoliberal narrative on family as key actor in replacing social welfare (Butler, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Cooper 2017)

Key concepts of the research: LGBT Family

Puar (2017), Butler (2002), Duggan (2003), Warner (2000), Cooper (2017):

Legalization of same-sex partnerships as corner-stone of „normalization“ of LGBT community;

Lacking critique of social and economical aspects of „marriage“ and withdrawal of social welfare;

Is marriage a human right, or class issue?

LGBT Family in post-Yu context (Dekić, 2021)

Professionalization of local LGBT organizations, focusing on lobbying and advocacy for LGBT rights exclusively, avoiding confrontation over „sensitive issues“ related to the legacy of 1990s (Bilić, 2016; Blagojević and Dimitrijević, 2014)

Partnerships legalized in Croatia, initiated in Serbia and B&H; fierce debate over adoption in Croatia

Legalization of same-sex partnerships is framed as *human right* and matter of equality of gays and lesbians (trans persons are excluded), lacking class perspective

Reluctance (fear) of being included in sensitive issues over medicaly assisted reproduction methods (surrogacy and IVF) in Serbia

Lacking criticism toward the dominant state pro-natalist policies (reducing social assistance to women and families; misogynist, nationalistic and xenophobic insistence on increasing the natality rate; creating an exclusionary image of “ideal“ traditional family, etc.)

Alternative family narrative: LGBT organizations are failing to provide one?

Why? Looking into the wider context of populism in post-Yugoslav states, critically examining following approaches:

Populism as a consequence of late modernization and political traditions in liberal democracy (Dawson and Hanley, 2016; Stojanović, 2017; Popov, 1998; Berend, 2001)

Disagree:

Populism is a political strategy used by political and economic elites emerged from transition, for legitimization of neoliberal system (not liberal democracy) since 1989 onwards. The strategy is based on „common sense“ which *“is constructed out of long standing practices of cultural socialization often rooted deep in regional or national traditions”* (Harvey, 2005: 39).

Social and economic factors do not have any influence on populist politics in the Balkans

(Stojarova, 2013; Kotorchevikj, 2018)

Disagree:

Social and economic issues are the key field of merging populism and neo-conservatism, presenting family and women as „traditional“ and „more natural“ caregivers, instead of the state.

Nationalism as key aspect of populism in the Balkans and CEE

(Minkenbergh, 2015; Stojanović, 2017)

Disagree:

Nationalism in these states is not „generic“, but a result of modernization processes and adjustment to the liberal democracy. It is not more radical in the Balkans comparing to the rest of Europe; like everywhere else, it is a fluid construction of *us* and *them*. In the research I am referring to the nationhood based in official narratives about the past, embedded in politics of memory and forgetting. How certain actors relate to these narratives, whether they negate or sustain them; what is being remembered and what is being forgotten; can provide us with the better insight into the ideology of these actors.

Civil society sector as key opposition to the populism (Stubbs, 2007; Ramet and Dulić, 2011; Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al. 2013; Ramet and Matic, 2007)

Disagree:

By silent acceptance of the new social and economic order and not reacting to the rise of economic inequality and social deprivation, CSOs contributed to the process of legitimization of the new class orders and establishment of neoliberal system as inevitable, and without alternative.