

PROBLEMS OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN TRANSITION SOCIETIES – CASE STUDY OF BULGARIA

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Key words: cultural integration, gypsy minority, social capital study

Acknowledgments. I wish to express my thanks to Hristina Kitanova from Social Aids Department of Svoge municipality for her devoted assistance in organizing and collecting of all primary data. Many thanks also to my friends from Fatih University, whose critical remarks helped me not only to improve my English, but also to conceptualize better the paper.

Abstract. The paper studies the opportunities of integrating minorities with the rest of the population, turning them into an indivisible part of the society. To realize better this integration many conditions are needed including change in the social attitude to minorities, a rise in their standard of living, overcoming the prejudices existing in society toward them, etc. Creating new jobs and proper investment in the regions populated with minorities would facilitate their cultural integration as the first step in this process. Its efficient realization depends strongly on social capital generated in these communities as a precondition for formal and informal associating with the rest of population. Social capital is expected to play the role of feedback, which would steer the adequacy of the process of integration. Its study is of paramount importance to reveal the mechanism of integration of minorities with the rest of society. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis based on collected primary data are presented for detailed study of the mechanisms of social capital and the way the minorities could be integrated. Among the measures, which could help to cope with the situation are: rise in the access to education, increasing opportunities to find a suitable job, more adequate participation in the political and economic life of the country, etc. In conclusion recommendations are formulated to change the policy toward minorities and to improve the overall economic conditions allowing better social realization and integration.

Lying as an old gypsy.
Popular Bulgarian saying

*When you see an ass threshing and
a gypsy working then I'll hire a gypsy in my firm.*
Local employer

The realization of the aims of sustainable development includes a complex of technological, economic and social measures. The social dimensions of this process are not only difficult to identify, but also to realize in concrete actions as most of the social structures are as a rule very complicated systems not easy to understand and explain.

The starting point in our analysis is an approach which distinguishes between two faces of the social structures: one, formal, legally defined, which ensures the functioning of the social units according to the legal structure and other, hidden, not yet well known, but sufficiently powerful with its feedback and thus important for any policy aims. This second one we defined as a soft social infrastructure, in which social capital is the main moving power.

With this background we start to discuss the problems of sustainability in one society, which at present tries to restore its normal state interrupted for about half a century with illusions it has to pay very heavy toll now. Although the analysis concentrates on the Bulgarian case, no doubt there is a similarity with the situation in many other post-communist countries. And while the other industrial societies are moving ahead in many directions, the restoration of the normal norms of social communication in Bulgaria and related countries is still painful and slow. The polarization of society in income distributional terms, inevitable effect of strengthening the market economy, is accompanied by a class polarization as a result of the negative social externalities emerging during the transitional process. Especially badly affected are minorities.

The aim of the paper is to outline the opportunities of integrating minorities with the rest of population turning them into an indivisible part of society. As a case study we use the Bulgarian gypsies. According to the UN classification since the 1990s they are called Roma to avoid the discriminative and neglecting elements from the past attitude to this ethnic group (Kertikov, 2006). We however do not find any “discriminative and neglecting elements” in a name referred to this community for centuries and prefer to call it with its normal traditional name.

In the first part we present the social and economic position of gypsies, next we construct a model of cultural integration. Our interest is concentrated on the role of social capital in this integration. To reveal this problem we study empirically the quality of social capital and its influence on cultural integration. This is the last part of the paper followed by conclusions for policy makers.

Although the paper may sound too ambitious we concentrate mainly on the cultural integration and the quality of social capital as a prerequisite for its success trying to find another proof of our assumption of the feedback role of social capital. Naturally we try to outline the two-way stream of social capital generating and cultural integration. We assume that if such integration is realized successfully it would foster development into sustainable path.

1. Introduction

The Balkan area gives a very good milieu to test the role of cultural integration of minorities in realizing the aims of sustainable development. During its historic development this area brought together a lot of nations part of which were transformed to what at present are minorities. This created a unique cultural diversity in the Balkans. The structure of ethnic diversity in Bulgaria according to the last census is presented in table 1. The share of gypsies in the other Balkan countries is indicated in the Report of the International Commission for investigating the reasons and the course of the Balkan wars by the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace (Carnegie, 2006).

There are no exact statistics of the real numbers of the gypsy population in Bulgaria and there is no way the official statistics could detect it precisely because part of the gypsies are identifying themselves as Bulgarians or ethnic Turks. According to Tomova’s representative study (Tomova, 1998) about 46% of the Gypsies identify themselves as Turks, while the others are identifying themselves either as Bulgarians or Romas. Nevertheless according to some studies the share of gypsy population is dynamically increasing from 2.2% from the total population in the beginning of 1980s to 4.6% at the beginning of XXI century (Kertikov, 2006, from NSI).

At present the minorities are a big demographic, economic and social problem for the country. Most of them belong to the poorest part of the population and as a rule they have the highest birth rates. The biggest and demographically most dynamic part of this population is the gypsies. According to the Bulgarian sociologist K. Kertikov the number of children in the gypsy families is: 1 child – 11.5%, 23,8% with two children, 26.8% with three children, 13% with 4 children, 6.8% with 5 children and 3-4% with more than 6 children. (Kertikov, 2006). Although there is not official information about the administrative distribution of gypsy population using the census data of 2001 the gypsy population is distributed in the territory of Republic of Bulgaria as follows: Montata (9.2%) of total gypsy population, Dobrich – 7.4%, Sliven – 7.3%, Shumen – 7.1%, Pazardjik – 6.8%, Stara Zagora – 5.6%, Iambol – 4.8%, Turgovishte – 4.3%, Haskovo – 4.1%, and Vidin 4.0%. In all other regions of Bulgaria the share of gypsy population in the whole gypsy population is less than 4.0%. (Kertikov, 2006).

Table 1

Ethnic structure of the Bulgarian population

Ethnic group	number	Share of total
Bulgarian	6655210	84.32%
Turks	746664	9.46%
Gypsies	370908	4.70%
Russians	15595	0.20%
Armenians	10566	0.13%
Macedonians	5071	0.06%
Greeks	3408	0.04%
Ukrainians	2489	0.03%
Jews	1363	0.02%
Romanians	1088	0.01%
Others	18792	0.24%
Not-identified	62108	0.79%
Total	7893262	100.00%

Calculated from British council Bulgaria (2006), Minorities in Bulgaria, <http://www.diversitybulgaria.org/en/mib.php>, based on the National Statistical Institute (NSI), Republic of Bulgaria, http://www.nsi.bg/index_e.htm, More detailed social structure of minorities: gender, employment and age including the detailed presentation of the social status of the Roma minority is presented in the Reports of human rights by states for 2001 presented by the Bureau of Democracy, Human rights and Labor, March 4, 2002. <http://www.usembassy.bg/documents/hrbulgariabul.html>

The social status of gypsies deteriorated during the transition of the country from totalitarian to democratic society. Despite the attempts to integrate them with the rest of society, there is a rise of poverty among minorities, growth of their population and the crimes connected with it. The increasing share of minorities in the total population resulting in further rise of poverty and drop of cultural and human capital is of increasing economic and social concern impeding the country from reaching sustainable development. The rising discrepancy between the social statuses of minorities with the rest of population is a source of serious social tension, which gives birth to various nationalist reactions. This reduces the movement to the creation of a democratic society, vital for the country's policy to integrate with the European and world economy.

At the same time we must note that the problem of integration of gypsies with the rest of population is not new and it has its deep historic roots. This can be seen from many writings in Bulgaria related to it. The famous Bulgarian writer Yordan Radichkov describes the gypsy as “interesting people” (Radichkov, 2006). D. Bojilov thinks that “the behavior of the predominant part of the gypsies is such that if it is used by the rest of population, the state will simply collapse” (Bojilov, 2006). He thinks that they are not integrateable for many reasons. Commenting on the called “gypsy terror”, promoted by the Bulgarian nationalists, K. Kanev (2006) indicates that “There are not more neglected, isolated and discriminated people in Bulgaria than Roma...They are object of selective choice by the legal system, a state bureaucracy, which in Bulgaria as elsewhere moves on the line of least resistance. Due to it its repression is focused not on the organized crimes and the crimes of the rich and power possessing, but to those who are helpless, who have no money, links and access to qualified lawyer’s defense”. We cite such extreme opinions to show that the attitude to the gypsies is not unambiguous and the explanations of the cultural integration of this minority can not be an easy task.

2. Model of cultural integration

Culture plays an important role in the realization of the aims of economic and social development (UNESCO, 2006), Fukuyama, (2001), Tabellini (2005). In some of our previous works we tried to outline the place of cultural capital in the implementation of sustainable development policy (Danchev, 2006) indicating its role in the formation of social capital and thus sustainable behavior of the social systems. Outside our attention remained however the problem of cultural coherence and integration in society, which was decisive for sustainability, when society included several different cultures.

There is a vast amount of literature devoted to cultural integration. Kuran (2002) presents a model of cultural homogenization realized by two mechanisms: behavioral adaptations motivated by coordination and preference changes shape by socialization and the need for self-consistency. Although this model gives very good ideas about cultural integration, we do not find it suitable for the Bulgarian setting – as a matter of fact in our case we do not try to reach cultural homogenization, rather to preserve the identity of each culture although as Kuran indicates “the efforts to keep existing cultures unchanged are in direct conflict with policies that facilitate social integration” (Kuran, 2002). Our basic hypothesis of cultural integration is based on conservation of the local cultures and enrichment of individual culture of the members of community, so that they reach some sufficient level of self-consistency. More attractive for our aims seem the ideas formulated by some psychologists on self-consistency as a fundamental human drive (Cialdini, 2001, Aronson, 1988). We base our preference adaptation hypothesis on this presumption.

Next, taking into account the features of gypsy population in Bulgaria we use the considerations of Akerlof and Kranton (2002), which lead us to the presently observed social insecurity among the Bulgarian gypsies. Here however we apply the two basic sources of preference change proposed by Kuran: socialization and the need for self-consistency (Kuran, 2002).

Extending the previous visions and for better analysis of the role of cultural integration of minorities we construct a model, which includes three aggregations of culture:

- Global culture – culture universe for all countries: classical literature, art and music, the modern pop culture, etc.

- Majority culture – the culture of the prevailing ethnos (Bulgarian in our case) and
- Minority culture – the culture of local minorities groups of population.

These three cultural aggregations do not present completely isolated entities from one another; rather there is overlap among them. The problem of cultural integration can be formulated as a transfer of cultural goods to other individuals' cultures (minority) so that the culture of the minorities is conserved and further developed, but the individual culture is increasing accepting good or bad elements of the other cultures. The effect of such assumption depends on many circumstances determining how the minorities' cultures will interact with the other cultures. The effect of this interaction may be various depending on the level of openness of the minority culture. We may observe a rise in cultural integration if this interaction is positive and a rise in hostility if there is cultural disintegration. There are a lot of historic examples which show that the process of cultural integration can move in various directions and produce various effects. As Landmark Education indicates "Like gravity, culture is made tangible by its effects; it can be seen in the behaviors and practices of an organization's management and employees. When two different cultures are required to work together, the effects, while often catalytic, can sometimes be disruptive and can undermine morale, productivity, and profits" (Landmark Education, 2006).

Cultural integration is not an instant process. It starts and passes through several levels:

✓ Cultural coexistence. In the beginning the minority culture exists together with the global and majority cultures, they do not interact, and actually the minorities are isolated from the society and the rest of the world.

✓ Cultural exchange. The minority starts to accept some of the cultural values (goods) of the global and majority cultures as for example celebrating basic national and religious holidays, participating in national social and cultural initiatives, etc. This exchange is normally selective in a sense that a minority may accept or reject some values (goods) of the majority and global cultures. Normally there is a combination of both.

✓ Cultural integration. The minority accepts a sufficient number of values (goods) from the other cultures and becomes an integrated part of society. Although there may be some loss of cultural identity of the minority, we try to construct a model in which there is not such a loss, but a conservation of the minority's culture and enrichment of the individual culture of its members.

Various authors come to different explanations of the case. Most of the studies assume the creation of hybrid culture (as for example in US situation), which is not suitable for our case; we analyze the case when the minorities preserve their own cultures adding to it the consumption of goods from other cultures. In our model we do not reach hybrid culture that is - joint culture for majority and minority, rather both cultures are preserved. Speaking in Economics language, both majority and minority consumers improve their utility functions by increasing the number of consumer goods from the other cultures. We however clearly understand that in some cases there can be a loss of minority identity when the individual changes the consumption structure by increasing the share of global and majority culture goods beyond some critical level.

The enrichment of the individuals by consuming cultural goods from other cultures results in change of their habits. Such a behavior of the consumer can be explained better by means of so called endogenous preferences defined as such "preferences that

cannot be taken as given, but are affected by individual internal responses to the external state of affairs. They are interdependent, in part determined by social institutions, marketed advertisement, and subject to learning (experience and observation) and habit formation (past-experience)” (Wikipedia, 2006).

Thus we will define some utility function of the representative consumer from the minority group, which utility function is:

$$u_B = f(cg_{G1}, cg_{G2}, cg_{G3} \dots cg_{Gj} \dots cg_{M1}, cg_{M2}, cg_{M3} \dots cg_{Mm} \dots cg_{N1}, cg_{N2}, cg_{N3} \dots cg_{Nn})$$

All cultures are presented by the corresponding group of cultural goods: cultural

goods of the global culture $cg_G = \sum_{i=1}^{i=j} cg_{Gj}$, cultural goods of the majority culture

$$cg_M = \sum_{i=1}^{i=m} cg_{Mi} \text{ and cultural goods of the minority culture } cg_N = \sum_{i=1}^{i=n} cg_{Ni} .$$

The sum of cultural goods in a given group, which consumption has in long run endogenous character typical for a given community, defines the cultural identity of this group.

Despite our globalizing and highly informed world cultural identity is limited within some boundary of consumption of cultural goods. If the number of cultural goods of the global culture accounts for G, the majority culture M and the minority culture N, we can say that the minority is keeping its cultural identity intact if the representative consumer consumes goods n close to N, but much less than G and M. The loss of cultural identity is observed when the structure of our consumer includes n close to G and M and much less than N. Although the loss of cultural identity is undesirable for our model we need to confess that the process of cultural integration is as a rule difficult to manage and there are many cases when this identity is lost. The case of our gypsies is not an exception. The fact that most of them identify themselves as Bulgarians or Turks is just such an evidence of the gradual loss of their cultural identity during a long historic period. Thus, we come to a situation of cultural integration of implicit, not explicit minority, which is another feature of our model.

Let us note that the consumption of cultural goods indicated above is different from the consumption of the other traditional goods, which makes the utility function endogenous to the preferences of cultural goods. These goods are carriers of the long run preferences of a given community and describe its vision about the world in the most general sense reflected in habits, taste, material and spiritual goods, etc. These goods may be private or public; there are many ways the consumption of these goods is influencing consumers.

The process of cultural integration can be described by the following mechanism: The minority normally consumes cg_N , but at a given point of time it starts to consume cg_G and cg_M . This start is possible due to various reasons: the rise of income, educational level, the improvement of communication, better access to various media, etc. Cultural coexistence passes the stage of cultural exchange, when the consumption of cg_G and cg_M becomes a habit for the representative consumer of minority and at some moment it starts to accept these goods as its own cultural goods. The process ends with cultural integration, when the representative consumer starts to consume an amount of cultural goods very close to the amount consumed by the representative consumer of the majority.

Actually there is a big variety of cases observed in real life. The communication with the global and other cultures may result in a loss of part of cultural identity at the

expense of enriching local cultures with elements of global or other cultures. Cultural integration is the process of interaction of local cultures with other cultures, which is expected to result in enriching of local culture due to increased consumption of new cultural goods.

All preferences concerning the consumption of cultural goods are endogenous to the community these goods belong to and are exogenous to the other cultures. So the integration can be regarded as a process of endogenizing preferences to cultural goods from other cultures. Important precondition of this integration is the adaptability of local cultures to other cultures, which is indicated by the amount of consumption of cultural goods of other cultures. In this aspect *ceteris paribus* the cultural integration of conservative cultures with other cultures will be more difficult than the integration with more open cultures.

3. Social capital in the model of cultural integration

An important precondition for successful cultural integration is the improvement of interpersonal coordination. It means that the consumption of cultural goods from other cultures is expected to result in improvement not deterioration of the individual characteristics of the members of the minority community. It is a well know fact that such a process is the next precondition for improvement of individual qualities necessary for generating social capital of a good quality.

Before we analyze this process we would like to mention that there is a vast literature on what social capital is and the interpretation of this category is often polar (Dasgupta, 2002, Grootaert 1997). As in our previous discussions we use the term social capital as figuratively speaking “the spirit of the soft infrastructure, which produces positive social externalities”. Thus in our vision the institutions do not belong to social capital as we may have institutions reflecting mainly the formal social structure, but not to have social capital, the core of the soft infrastructure.

Now the problem is to see how the quality of social capital helps cultural integration or vice versa - how cultural integration makes easier to improve social capital. In both cases we expect it to result in improving the quality of social capital and thus to help sustainable behavior of the communities as an indirect effect, which remains outside our study. As a result of the improvement in the interpersonal coordination we expect least-cost solutions. Note that we assume our model resulting in increased consumption of shared cultural goods instead of creating hybrid culture, which may have high social and economic cost – the interacting communities sharing cultural goods instead of creating new hybrid cultural goods.

There are probably many ways cultural integration of minorities can be explained. In our study we construct a model, which analyzes the role of social capital in this process. While cultural integration is desirable for all the society, this process is facing controversial response by the minorities as far as they may loose part of their cultural identity. Most of them do not understand that it is not only a local problem but an unavoidable effect of globalization.

The difficulties in studying this process come also from the fact that social capital is community, not individual quality. The individuals however need to have some personal qualities to be inclined to generate social capital with other people. Depending on the level of openness of its own culture the consumption of cultural goods of other cultures may result in improvement or deterioration of the two basic qualities of the individuals necessary to generate social capital: marginal propensity to help each other

and marginal propensity to recognize the leader. In many cases the global culture publicizes violence, selfishness and other qualities, which may result in the deterioration of the individuals' qualities generating social capital. There is almost unproved proportion – the more aggregate a given culture, the more detrimental for social capital qualities it generates. As a result global culture may have the effect of deterioration of social capital and thus the movement of development away from sustainability.

Although there are a lot of factors influencing the quality of social capital, we restrict ourselves in two basic factors – moral and cultural capitals. By moral capital of a community we will understand the set of values defining for its members the criteria of what is good and bad. Cultural capital following Bourdieu definition is “the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources, etc., which influence academic success” (Bourdieu, 1986). Together with the whole variety of other socio-economic and other factors, moral and cultural capitals are assumed to be the most fundamental factors defining the quality of social capital. We completely understand how much additional work is needed to reveal the whole complex of other factors influencing the process of formation of social capital in a given community.

4. Results of empirical study

The considerations presented above were tested by a study based on interviewing gypsy population in the capital Sofia and in a small town near Sofia – Svoge, where there is an area populated by gypsies. This area was accepted as a representative community. The questionnaire was constructed by the author and tested several times until it started to work well. The training of the enumerators was carried out by the author who made partial control over the interviewing. The interviewees participated actively in the collection of data understanding its importance but not believing that it can contribute somehow to solving their problems.

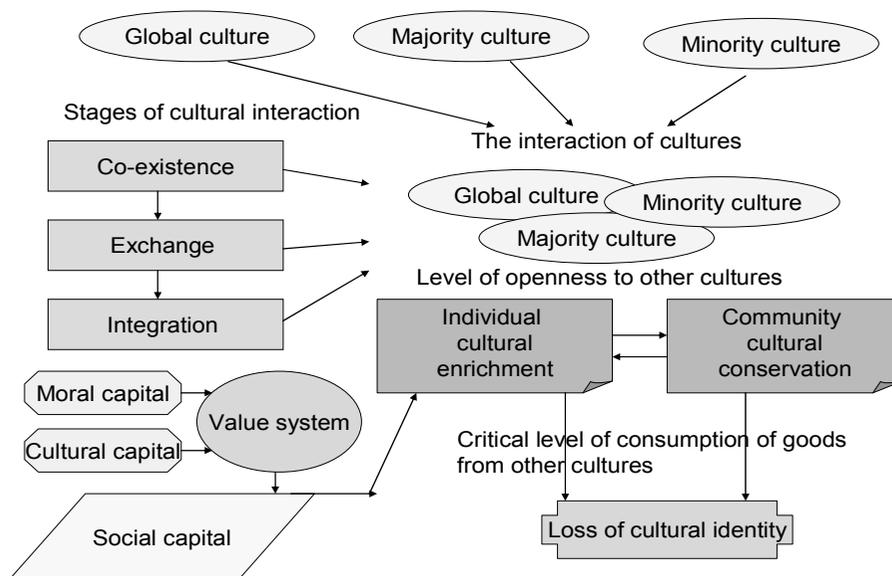


Figure 1. Model of cultural integration of the gypsy population

The study followed the basic logic of the model presented in figure 1. It shed light on various details of the model, but its comprehensive completion requires much more efforts than we could mobilize with our modest academic capacities. Due to the technical restrictions we completely avoid any mathematical consideration and present only the basic results of the finding. The sample includes interviewing 25 households, randomly selected, which does not allow us to generalize conclusions for the whole population. Nevertheless, the results are indicative in many aspects as it is demonstrated below.

5. Value system. Way of living

The first necessary condition for cultural integration is the availability of a value system, which creates predispositions to have an interest in other cultures. The study of the very value system is difficult for many reasons, the basic of which is how sincerely the respondents would share their basic cultural and moral visions with the others. There is some popular saying among Bulgarians that gypsies like to lie very much, which means that if this is true, big biases can be expected in the estimations.

Contrary to the common impressions however, we found gypsies very open-minded, sincere people, who despite the poverty like fun, music and all kinds of entertainments. This is a good precondition to integrate with other cultures. Living traditionally in poor conditions they are accustomed to be beyond the material things of the rich and try to enjoy life as it is. As a rule they do not feel hatred to other groups and on our question which groups do you like or dislike most the interviewees responded that it depended on the individual person.

The present way of living of gypsy population reminds much of the way of living of the other poor population in Bulgaria than the traditional gypsy way of moving from one place to another. A predominant part of the gypsies has a settled way of life living in small houses with very low hygiene conditions, although finding rich and prosperous gypsy families is not unusual. Such families remained outside our study.

The most general attitude to the value system was presented in the answers of three relatively polar situations:

(a) I do not want to be OK, I want Vute's affairs (popular folk hero) to be bad. This popular saying is used sometimes to characterize the bad side of the Bulgarians' character. This attitude is supported only by 4% of the respondents.

(b) Less extreme but sufficiently negative is also the statements that "Everybody tries to make dirty things against you". This is already supported by 44% of the respondents.

(c) The altruistic alternative "Everybody helps often in need" is supported by 52%.

Of course with such a small sample it is difficult to say how representative are such results, but what can be said for sure is that they reflect truly the real life, in which good and bad are normally distributed fifty-fifty. We could conclude that the answers are rather sincere and the stereotype of the "lying gypsies" is not supported at least in this case. This is also our visual impression during the interviewing.

Although a lot of factors form the value system of the individuals following our model we studied the effect of the moral and cultural capitals. As indicators of moral capital we use the sources of learning what is good and bad in life assuming that the family, school and religion give good moral capital, while the street provides bad values. The role of a media is controversial as it depends which kind of media is used.

Not all respondents gave answers to this question; some indicated more than one source. Summarizing the results we can see that such traditional sources of values as

family, school and religion have the lowest shares in the formation of the value system of the gypsies, correspondingly 3.7%, 7.44 and 11.1%, while the street and real life are indicated with the highest shares (14.8%). Surprisingly the highest share is indicated for the media – TV and radio - 22,2%. The quality of media in the present transitional society is something very debatable, but it is unlikely to accept it as a good source of values. To avoid any racist interpretation of this fact we could say that such a distribution of the sources of value seems quite realistic and there is nothing bad in it. A minority deprived of normal conditions of living and access to quality education can not be expected to have other sources of values. It does not mean at all that the system of values is not good as these preconditions do not necessarily mean they turn into real negative effects.

The gypsy culture, if we assume that it exists, can be classified into the group of open cultures, which predetermines the behavior of the gypsies leading to open-minded and sincere performance. As a matter of fact they are consuming main stream of the culture, which they declare they belong to, but at the same time they do not forget their native culture.

Cultural capital – another factor influencing the value system of the individuals does not show principally different results. We drew more attention on this factor as it is the most essential for cultural integration. Several indicators were used to outline the cultural capital of the gypsies: using media, interest in other cultures in terms of joint celebration of holidays, etc.

At the cultural level all the interviewees of course watch TV, listen to the radio and read newspapers. The main source of cultural values is the TV, normally the Bulgarian gypsies watch Bulgarian TV programs namely BTV channel. This active interest in TV media is explained by the content of the programs, which are closer to their mentality. Although they would like to listen to their own problems the media very rarely discuss them. According to the respondents 43% think their problems are completely neglected, 28.6% are listening from time to time about their problems and 10.7% find often the discussions of their problems in the media they watch or listen to. It makes sense to indicate that there is real boom of gypsies' periodicals at present. According to the observations of the Bulgarian sociologist K. Kertikov seven gypsy media are published, namely Andral (Inside), Gypsy paradise, Drom Dromedar, Jitan, Zaedno (Together), Gypsies' rights in FOCUS, Obektiv (Objective) between May 1999 and April 2000, while during the same period only two media are published for the Bulgarian Turks (Rights and Freedom, Kaynak), 2 for Armenians, 2 for Jewish, 2 for Romanians, etc. (Kertikov, 2006) Quite different of course is the question how these publications are made accessible to the minorities and how long they could withstand the competition.

Another indicator of the cultural capital of the gypsies is the celebration of the same holidays (national, religious, etc.) as the local population, emphasizing on what some regarded as a bit more “gypsy” holiday, as for example Saint Vasil holiday. Principally the gypsies celebrate those holidays to which identity they normally define themselves.

6. Discrimination and level of protection

Almost all of the interviewees indicate that there is no one who protects them. Among the institutions mentioned in the questionnaire were: the parliament, the government, the president, the mayor of the town, NGO as for example Euroroma, etc. 99% of the interviewees state that no one protects them. What is worse is that most of

the respondents do not indicate any interest in participating in an NGO, which could protect their interest pointing out as a main reason – “a lot is said but nothing is done”.

The level of protection of gypsies should be regarded in the context of the protection of the whole Bulgarian population, which as a whole is badly protected against theft, robbery and other crimes. We do not comment here on the problem of so called “gypsy terror” as it is a result of the same conditions as the other crimes. The gypsies are not an exception; they are object of the same crimes as the rest of population. About half of the respondents declared they were robbed, mainly by the other gypsies. One third states they have been beaten for various reasons.

Concerning the level of discrimination it is high and most of them feel they are discriminated against in many aspects. Gypsies were among the first to be fired when the economy started to deteriorate during the transition period. Among the basic reasons for this discrimination is the lack of qualification and necessary skill to find any job. What is worse is that according to the study of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy carried out in January 2003 and called “From Social Aid to Employment” the main part of gypsies are not professionally oriented and have not clear idea of the profession they would like to work in and usually choose jobs which require low or no qualification and are connected to the gypsy’s traditions. Nevertheless about 30% of the interviewees declare the acquisition of a profession as the first and the most important condition to find a job (MOL, 2006).

The social impact of this fact is interesting to comment as in our survey about 60% of the respondents think that despite the discrimination in time of need everybody helps. A high level of alienation and discrimination is indicated by 14% of the respondents, the same is the share of those declaring that we all are brothers and sisters and should help each other.

We report these facts to illustrate how complicated and the same time interrelated are the problems of employment, discrimination and cultural integration. At first glance gypsies are really the most discriminated part of the population, on the other hand however a lot is done to integrate them with the rest of population and they appreciate it. This complication affects the quality of social capital.

7. Quality of social capital

The quality of social capital is regarded in our model as an important precondition for cultural integration. The moral and cultural capitals in society directly and indirectly affect social capital creating such a personality in the individuals, which can facilitate or on the contrary impede the social capital generating.

The collected information about the quality of social capital is very controversial which indicates that the gypsies’ social capital provides various preconditions for its generation. As was indicated in our previous work (Danchev, 2006) we assume as basic characteristics of social capital two qualities of the individuals: the marginal propensity to help each other and the marginal propensity to recognize the leader. Several questions were formulated to the respondents to pin down the various aspects of these characteristics. The situation reflecting these qualities is rather picturesque.

We started with understanding how the respondents are prone to ask for help, when they are in a difficult situation (which we sincerely did not want to happen). Not all the respondents answered this question (only 23). The prevailing opinion is that probably somebody will help (39.1%), while 17.4% hope friends will help and 13.0% believe that their friends would help if they could. The extreme answers (nobody will help or

everybody will help) are supported by few respondents. This expression of social trust is a good precondition for horizontal association in the community although according to Samers, “trust is not generalized throughout informal economies” (Samers, 2005).

The propensity to social engagements is another reflection of the preconditions to generate social capital. Another way to test the marginal propensity to social integration was to ask the respondents if they have some common problem as for example fallen tree on the street how they expect to solve it. With all respondents answering this question only 3.5% declare they do not care about it, 34.5% do not react as they think they cannot do anything, 34.5% wonder what should they do and 13.8% consult firstly with their family and friends and no one move and try to do it together with the others.

Complement to this question is the query of whom the problems are discussed with. The respondents are discussing their problems in the following way: 20.7% with friends, 71.4% with their husband/wife and 7.1% with anybody.

The general indicator of social capital is the level of trust. The marginal propensity of trust reflects normal reaction to the expectations from the others and the obligations coming from it. Only 3.4% of the respondents do not believe in anybody, 34.5% have doubts in everybody, 10.3% are prone to believe sometimes, 37.9% believe in people in most of the cases and no one believes in everybody.

Marginal propensity to associate with the others is reflected by the willingness of the respondents to participate in civil society for protection of their interests. Civil society is some new phenomenon for Bulgarians and there are a lot of abuses with various NGOs so that there is strong skepticism in society toward them, often regarding NGOs as some mafia and money-washing structures. This is the reason why only 17.2% of the respondent definitely do not want to participate in any NGO, while 13.8% would participate if they find any sense in it. On the other hand 20.7% of the respondents would participate from time to time and 31.0% would participate definitely.

There are several reasons why the respondents would participate or not in NGOs. As a rule few respondents specify the reasons for their reaction to NGOs. Among those who would participate in civil society 2/3 think that's the way they could protect each other together and 1/3 trust that NGOs will protect them well. The skepticism in NGOs is reflected by the several reasons. The preference to protect themselves alone is expressed by 1/4 of the respondents, while 3/4 think that too much is spoken and nothing is done.

Despite the relatively small number of observations, the collected information in our view gives sufficient background to formulate a hypothesis of the social capital quality of gypsy population. We think it is of a rather good quality that creates good predisposition of cultural integration.

8. Socio-economic profile

The collection of data related to the socio-economic characteristics of the sample is normally traditional part of such kind of studies. As a result several basic features were outlined.

Evidence of the level of poverty in the gypsy minority is the fact that they spend on food in average 129 BGN per week. If we assume average number of households of 4 persons it accounts for per day 4.6 BGN or equivalent to 2.4€ (exchange rate 1.95BGN = 1€ by 28.07.2006, Source: UBB). For comparison the price of ticket in the city transport in Bulgaria is about 36 cents, the price of one kg of bread is in average about 50 cents and one kg of meat about 4€. This shows that the gypsies live near the poverty line.

Their monthly income is also very low. Most of them are unemployed and the social aid is the only source of their income. Others are working in some temporary jobs and have irregular source of income. The average income is in the region of 100 – 200 BGN (50 – 100€).

This picture defines the general setting of the gypsy's life as very difficult. They were the first to be fired with the start of the transition to the market economy. 62.1% think life is going bad, 17.2% think the life is not as good as it was, 3.5% think that there are no change in the quality of life and the same is the share of those who think life is becoming definitely better.

The basic reason for the drop of the standard of living of gypsy minority is explained by a lot of Bulgarian researchers as the lack of necessary level of education, which would allow them to find a suitable job. The average level of education of the respondents is low – the years of schooling are in average 7 – 8 years, which means primary and secondary school – mandatory according to the Bulgarian legislation. Bulgarian researcher Vladislav Georgiev (Georgiev, 2006) indicates that only 0.2 % of the Roma graduate with higher education, 4.6 % secondary schools, 32 % primary schools and the rest are illiterate. “The inability of socially excluded families to access crucial social goods such as education on the same terms as others” (Warrington, 2005) is a phenomenon observed even in the industrial countries. The problem with gypsy minority is that it is a matter of fact due to the rising poverty they are losing even this access to such public goods as education, which was quite accessible for them in the past.

This creates preconditions of change in the number of children in the households – a problem so broadly discussed in Bulgaria recently in connection with so called “disappearance” of the Bulgarian nation due to the strong drop of natural growth rate of Bulgarian population. Our survey indicated that already the number of children in the gypsy households was not as big as it was before. The average number of household is 4 -5 people with no more than 3 children. The very gypsies confess that the number of children is going down due to the difficulties of life. Really 61.1% of the respondents confess the difficulties are not confusing them – they have as many children as they want, while 16.7% of the respondents think they have no more children because of the difficulties of life. Only 5.6% think that the difficulties are stimulating them to have more children to help the family to survive. As a matter of fact the drop in the numbers of children in the gypsy households is an evident reality.

On the question how would you prefer to plan your future life few answers were provided. Most the respondents prefer to find a good job, to work a lot and to live normally “as a white man” – popular saying in Bulgaria. Only 10% prefer to stay as they are and the same is the share of those, who prefer to receive social benefits and to live with them as at present - just to make ends meet.

9. Conclusions

The analysis of cultural integration of the gypsy minority in Bulgaria indicates that it is a process strongly dependent on the standard of living. Many reasons are impeding this process at present. Among them we can single out discrimination, the need to overcome the prejudices existing in society toward gypsies and of course their poor education. Creating new jobs and proper investment in the areas and regions populated by gypsies would facilitate not only their cultural integration, but also the integration of the other minorities as the first step in this process at the national level.

Social capital plays a very important role as our study indicates. Assuming that social capital is the feedback supporting the informal sides of the cultural integration we can conclude that together with the official decisions stimulating this process, it is also supported by the soft social infrastructure of the gypsy minority. Its study is of a paramount importance to reveal the mechanism of integration of minorities with the other social groups.

The results of the social capital study in gypsy communities around Sofia city indicates that they understand their social state and are ready to contribute as they can to find adequate solutions. Such important elements of social capital as the propensity to associate among them and with other communities are evidences of a good precondition for social communication. The study indicates that these communities have very specific social capital, which as a whole is favorable for integration and, provided economic conditions change, it would facilitate minorities to overcome the negative elements in their behavior and to turn them into integral part of the rest of population in building democratic and sustainable society.

The very urgent problem is to create conditions for the rise of the educational level of minorities, which would increase the opportunities to find a suitable job, and more adequate participation in the political and economic life of the country. Regrettably the present political system does not provide adequate opportunities for the poor part of population to qualified education. The very educational system is suffering serious drawbacks during the transitional period. The rise of poverty and polarization in society stimulates the rise of nationalist and racist movements, which draw the process of cultural integration back to cultural isolation. As a result minorities feel as neglected and discriminated part of society they naturally belong to.

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