

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. DSc. Maria Jeliaskova (IPS-BAS)
for the materials presented by Ch. Assistant Dr. Georgi Medarov
for participation in a competition for the academic position "associate professor"
by professional direction 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences for
the needs of "Communities and Identities" department of IPS-BAS,
announced in SG No. 58, 09/07/2024

By Order No. RD 09-253.4 of 09.09.2024 of the Director of IPS - BAS, I am a member of the Scientific Jury for the competition for "associate professor", professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences for the needs of "Communities and Identities" department of the IPS - BAS, announced in SG, no. 58 of 09/07/2024 and Protocol No. 16 of 3.09.2024 of the Scientific Council at IPS - BAS. According to the decision at the first meeting of the Scientific Jury held on 19.09.2024, in accordance with the Order of the Director of the IPS, No. RD 09-262 of 11.09.2024, I am appointed to write an opinion.

1. General description of the presented materials

A single candidate – Assistant Prof. Dr. Georgi Medarov, submitted documents for participation in the competition for “associate professor”.

Georgi Medarov defended his doctoral thesis in 2017 on the topic "From liberalism to authoritarianism: the Bulgarian case after 1989", in the Department of "Sociology", Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

From the presented tables with individual scientometric indicators for "doctor" and "associate professor", it can be seen that the publications for the already acquired scientific and educational degree and those with which Dr. G. Medarov applied in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" are different.

The attached reference for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" clearly demonstrates that he meets and exceeds the minimum national scientometric requirements of the Law, the Rules for it, the NACID and the Rules of the IPS-BAS.

More specifically, the applicant participates in the competition with:

- Basic habilitation thesis (monograph): Medarov, G. (2024), Race and class in classical and non-classical sociology, Sofia: Orionpress
- Two articles published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information - one of which is co-authored;
- Nineteen articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes – three of them co-authored;
- Two published chapters in collective monographs;
- Four citations of his works in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes;

2. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, scientific-applied and pedagogical activities

From the attached CV of Dr. G. Medarov, it can be seen that his main activity is scientific research. The total number of publications so far is 40, of which 24 have been submitted for the "associate professor" competition. Of those presented for associate professor, 6 are in English.

Along with publications, his scientific activity includes participation in four research and expert projects. One of them is individual linked to a program of the Centre for Academic Studies and is related to the topic of the habilitation work; another is financed by the "Scientific Research" Fund; the other two are funded by CL "Podkrepa".

Dr. Medarov has also made numerous presentations with reports (32 are listed) at various national and international forums.

He is also a member of the board of BSA, as well as a member of the associations "Collective for Public Interventions" and "For the Earth", as well as of the Institute for Critical Theories of Hypermodernity. These participations certainly contribute also to his expert and scientific-applied activity.

3. Academic activity of the candidate since the beginning of his career

In addition to his research activities, the candidate has been teaching since 2014 until now at the Department of "Sociology and Human Sciences" of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Teaching experience is in: Biopolitics and Security, Historical Sociology of Economy and Ecology and Historical Sociology of Symbolic Forms

4. Content analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements

In the self-assessment of Dr. Medarov, the contributions of his publications are correctly presented. They focus on different subject areas. A major focus is the naturalization of social inequalities, especially through their racialization and ethnicization. This focus is most complete in the habilitation work, but can also be traced back to earlier publications. Racialization is understood as "processes of attributing essential and immutable characteristics to supposedly clearly defined groups based on an ethnic, cultural, biological, or other non-historical and pre-social principle." The naturalization of inequalities is also traced through the 'culture wars' and 'identity politics', the stimulated shift of public debates from the future to the past, and others that individually and collectively shift the concerns of economics and politics. Tendencies towards de-democratization, authoritarianism and populism are also analysed. Other publications discuss festivals in Bulgaria, outlining intersections between politics, economics and culture. And third are empirical case studies linked to labour relations, water supply and coronavirus.

Dr. Medarov's publications represent interesting and in-depth analyses, enrich existing knowledge, follow a common research paradigm, and demonstrate a distinct and competent interest in theoretical perspectives of general sociology.

The habilitation monograph aims to elaborate "an interpretive model that is sensitive to the socio-historical context, capable of explaining the historical change of race and class relations in the transition from modernity to late modernity through the mirror of the history of sociology" (p. 21 -22). The aim is specified in research tasks, which are consistently realized

through "systematic consideration of the issue of racialization within the framework of changes in sociological knowledge on this topic." The work discusses the race-class relationship, starting from the high and growing inequalities after 1989 and the tendency to transform them into cultural and ethnic ones. The attempt to explain this process is based on a competent analysis of the views of classics in sociology, a discussion of intersections in the understandings of Marx, Weber, Hannah Arendt, the Chicago School of Sociology and others, as well as by appealing to the ideas of the "liquefied modernity" of Sigmund Baumann, the theories of reflexive modernity of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, the transformation of classes of Richard Sennett and the social acceleration of Hartmut Rosa in clearly distinguishing a main direction between classical and non-classical approaches in sociology. From this theoretical perspective, the historical changes of the regimes of ethnicization/racialization of inequalities in Bulgaria are discussed, with a focus on the Roma minority. The idea is that without being reduced to them, the Bulgarian case can fit into the broader historical context of sociological thinking about the relationship of race and class, although it is important to problematize "the limits of importing concepts from incommensurable contexts".

The monograph presents a comprehensive and interesting discussion of how false notions based on simplifications and broad generalizations are activated (even when empirical facts oppose them), resulting in filtered political ideas that can resonate in people's minds (and in scientific research). Stabilizing the social order by turning natural differences into socially constructed inequalities is an established practice in developmental failures. Rampant inequalities, hierarchization, political changes to desolidarize basic subsystems of societies need legitimization, and the attribution of inevitable developments as a result of invented human and community characteristics is part of this process, as the author depicts. Basically, the power interest in fragmenting societies so that conflicts are extended between groups, subgroups and small groups in order to reduce their intensity (George & Wilding, 1984), together with blaming the victims for their poverty, widespread today, as much as during the 19th century UK Poor Laws (Amartya Sen) is a classic and with similar results. In this sense, ethnicization turns out to be one of the necessary pillars of the specific institutional social structuring of societies, not because of history, but because of current political practices.

5. In case of collective publications

For collective publications, separation protocols are presented with a differentiated contribution of the candidate.

6. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature

As mentioned, four citations are presented that cite his publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes. All four citations are in English-language editions.

In addition, the CV indicates 2 published reviews of collective publications with the participation of G. Medarov.

7. Reviewer's critical notes, questions and comments

I have no critical comments on the content of the presented by assistant professor G. Medarov works. I think that the publications, and especially the habilitation monograph, represent a complete, rich and complete scientific analysis, fully in accordance with both the tasks that the author has set for himself and the announced competition. I also think that not only is a high level of literary awareness evident in the researched topic, but it is also at such a level that the candidate competently enters into discussions with established classical and non-classical sociological authors.

I also think that the richness of the habilitation monograph contains potential, albeit sketchy, directions of possible foci of his future scientific activity. In addition, since these directions are diverse, based on the presented work, I will make two recommendations for further focus of the candidate's work:

The first one is aimed at the relationship knowledge - power. It is clear that both classical and non-classical sociology individually in their comprehensiveness are not casual intellectual dialogues between like-minded people. As Dr. Medarov points out (on page 102 of the habilitation monograph), the positivist project was assimilated for the most diverse purposes. However, of course, this does not apply only to the positivist one. The same is true of many other, usually mainstream, paradigms in the social sciences. Even quite often they are not simply "assimilated", but even generated by frequent and strong attachments between knowledge and power. Wilkinson and Pickett's impressive work, *The Spirit Level. Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (in East-West Publishing's preferred translation: *The Pathology of Inequality. Why Equality Makes Societies Stronger*) met, for example, with hysterical scientific resistance. Scholars with angry headlines: "Beware of False Prophets..." (Saunders, 2010), "The Delusion of the 'Spirit Level..." (Snowdon, 2010), have issued furious criticism. Saunders found out that there are differences between different states in the US, but they are not due to inequalities, they are due to the ethnic division between African Americans and whites and the higher proportion of African Americans in some states, because they, of course, "don't like to work". And together with Snowden, they proposed an "analysis" that there is a difference in life expectancy, but not because it is related to inequalities, but because e.g. "Japanese people live longer because they are Japanese". One is a professor of sociology and the other a researcher, PhD in economics. Nobel laureate in economics, Angus Deaton pointed out that for scientists to support the simultaneous growth of inequality and poverty is "tantamount to issuing a license to rob" (Deaton, 2024). Deaton is mainly referring to academic economists, as he is an economist himself. The activation incl. by scientists of long-denied 'scientific' ideas (R. Evans' "zombies" - Barer, Evans et al., 1998) and the refusal to use adequate knowledge for power purposes do not seem to be an exception. Racialization has to do with this problem. R. Mast's (1971) review of the Congress in Varna cited (on p. 179 of the monograph) is also informative, differentiating sociologists engaged in "structural analysis of race relations" from those focused on "problems of communication, cultural relativism and psychology" (Mast, 1971).

My second recommendation for future work is related to further careful dissection of the so-called 'formal equality', not in the sense of the dichotomy formal equality - empirical inequality. It is true e.g. that in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 'equality' is written, but it is not enshrined in subsequent laws and normative frameworks.

Conversely, an analysis of normative frameworks (laws and by-laws) could show that, as David Grewal and Jedidiah Purdy point out, “The advance of neoliberalism over the past few decades has reshaped the most important areas of public and private life, and law has been no exception ... This process uses political power to restructure areas of law and social life along market lines, from labour relations through universities to the professions' (Grewal & Purdy, 2014: 1 - 5). The trend towards disciplinary, sanctioning and punitive measures in social policy indicated by Dr. Medarov, for example, is not empirical, it is normative in laws and regulations for deserving and undeserving, conditions for inequality, etc. The intensive production of inequalities is a social construct that could turn ('solidify') any natural difference (and eye colour for the Aryan race) into social inequality. The social structuring of societies with very high inequalities (such as the Bulgarian one) always finds or "invents", but at the same time normativize weak groups with some, e.g. "cultural", distinctions. This also quite objectively blocks the progressive line of classical sociology and adjusts views to reality.

8. Personal impressions of the reviewer about the candidate

I know some of the applicant's scientific activity from before he became an assistant professor until now and I follow his publications. I am also aware of and appreciate his joint work with other colleagues at the Institute, in particular from the department I work in: "Public Policies and Social Change". My impression is that he works actively and carries out intensive scientific activity.

9. Reasoned and clearly formulated conclusion

I believe that all the works and activities with which the candidate participates in the competition fully meet the procedural requirements laid down in the ZRASRB, the Regulations to it, as well as in the Regulations of the IPS - BAS for the academic position of "associate professor". I will definitely vote "FOR" the election of Dr. Georgi Medarov at the academic position of "associate professor" in professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences for the needs of the "Communities and Identities" department of the IPS-BAS. In my opinion, there is every reason for all members of the Scientific Jury to vote in the affirmative.

21.10.2024 г.
Sofia

Signature:
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