Snežana Milivojević[1]

University of Kosovska Mitrovica

Faculty of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

Quality of family life in the north of Kosovo and Metohija

Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of family and everyday life of two nuclear Serbian families living in the territory of the municipality of Severna Kosovska Mitrovica. The families in question belong to the working class and low-middle class respectively, the former being urban, the latter rural. The paper aims at viewing, by means of the method of qualitative analysis – case study and problem-centred interview, mutual interdependence between the quality of family relations, living space standard, and the overall quality of life in the area concerned.

Introduction

The family determines our everyday life and its contents to a great extent. Family happiness and harmony, on the one hand, or, family conflicts and intolerance, on the other hand, play a significant role in the way we behave at work, among friends and colleagues, in the way we spend our leisure time, and they often affect our entire mental and physical health.

For a long period of time, the phenomenon of family drew no attention of scholars, sociologists in particular, with the first studies into the matter emerging in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is, in effect, related to the period when there occurs the transformation and modernisation of the family. 'The epoch of modernism is the breeding ground from which the notion of family

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[1] Full Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Sociology, University of Kosovska Mitrovica. Email: snezanatmn@gmail.com

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emerges. Along with the emergence of modern family, there have been, since the 18th century, attempts to study it in scholarly terms, with regard to the discipline of sociology at its earliest stage.[2]

The paper primarily deals with complex corelations between the family and everyday life featuring two concrete families, utilising the qualitative method of a case study and the problem-centred interview as adequate instruments with regard to this research. The aim of the research is viewing the causativity between the quality of family relations and quality of everyday life. Thus stated, it implies a series of determinants that serve as a point of departure for the research. Three basic family relations are observed: sex-gender relations (partnership), parents-children relations, and a relation towards the family of origin. Among key determinants, there are material circumstances in which a family lives, as well as their influence on the affirmation of values of family members and satisfying their needs, ultimately resulting in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's own family and everyday life.

1. Theoretical framework

Everyday family life

The concept of everyday life is often related to the family, and even more so due to the fact that a number of productive and reproductive functions emanate from it. This concept, however, cannot be solely reduced to the family, but it must account for all aspects of daily and micro production of life, that is, social totality, taking into consideration the fact that everyday life may represent an objective, indirect criticism of society and social relations. In its entirety, everyday life is a mediator between the family and a society.

There has been an increase of interest in the subject of everyday life over the past decades,[3] with no less interest shown for the trends of the contempo-

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[2] Andjelka Milić, *Sociologija porodice*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2001. str. 16.

[3] Arthur B. Shostak, *Sociology and Student Life: Toward a New Campus: Selected Readings for Introductory Sociology*, New York: David McKay, 1971.; Elaine Hatfield, Susan Sprecher, *Mirror, Mirror: The Importance of Looks in Everyday Life*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1986.; Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, Oxford, England: Berg, 2000.; Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life*, New York: Routledge, 1994.; Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, "Sociology of everyday life", *Current Sociology Review 61(5-6), 2013.;* Patricia A. Adler, Peter Adler and Andrea Fontana, "Everyday life sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology,* Vol. 13 (1987), pp. 217-235.; Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2002.; Choi Chatterjee, David L. Ransel, Mary Cavender, Karen Petrone, *Everyday Life in Russia Past and Present*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014.

rary family.[4] Furthermore, there are more and more people living out of the confines of what is understood by the modern term of 'family'. In the geographic area that is the subject of our research, there is an increased number of people living on their own.[5] Still, the notions of family and family relations and contacts are inseparable from the lives of single individuals as well, since they have attained that status either by having their family members move to other places of living or forming their own families. Unless they have started a family on their own, they remain in touch with their parents, siblings, cousins, relatives, and in-laws.

Family and socio-economic relations

In economic terms, most contemporary families are without their own means of production. Accordingly, such a family is not a community of both production and consumption, only of the latter. This results in its ideals being knowledge and professional skills and education rather than owning material goods, properties, and businesses.[6] It is a complete opposite to the pre-modern era, when the family represented 'a multifunctional production unit (intense labour group that both produced and consumed)'.[7] Today, every family member (wife, mother in particular) must work and achieve greater economic independence, both in terms of their family and themselves. The contemporary family is in constant struggle to keep the balance between its income and expenditure. It is a vicious circle, since the increase in income resulting in a new family member finding employment is followed by the respective increase in expenditure.

By all means, the socio-economic status of a family (amount of income, profession, employment, level of education, structure of needs, conditions of living etc.) affects its structure, education of children, social security, emotional relations, and its protective function.[8] In order for an economic stabil-

[4] John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth:Family Life in Plymouth Colony*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.; Jaber F. Gubrium, James A. Holstein, *Couples, Kids, and Family Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.; Maria Elisa Christie, *Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, and Everyday Life in Central Mexico*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008.; Franz-Xaver Kaufmann - Editor, *Family Life and Family Policies in Europe*. Volume: 1, Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1997. Michael W. Pratt - (Ed.), Barbara H. Fiese - (Ed.), *Family Stories and the Life Course: Across Time and Generations*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.
[5] In the country, these single individuals are referred to as 'single-person household', while in urban areas they are 'singles'.
[6] Jovan Vukoje, "Osnovne funkcije savremene porodice", Banja Luka: *SVAROG, naučno-stručni časopis*, br. 4. 2012. str. 137-144.
[7] Dragana Vilić, "Transformacija (i/ili redukcija) funkcija moderne porodice", Banja Luka: *Sociološki diskurs,* br. 6, decembar 2013. str. 57.
[8] Milan Počuča, "Porodica i nezaposlenost-stanje i perspektiva u AP Vojvodina", Novi Sad: *Pravo-teorija i praksa,* br. 10-12/2014. str. 30-42.

ity of a family to be achieved, it is necessary that both parents are employed and that they spend more time and energy at work, which then may result in numerous dififculties regarding children's development and education, as well as in disorders in other aspects of family life.[9]

In such circumstances, the woman (wife, mother) is being given an increased influence and role in the socio-economic status of the contemporary family. More and more women are getting educated with a view to having better chances of finding employment or a better paid job. Educated and employed women improve their own position and, at the same time, significantly affect the economic position of their families as well. Therefore, in the contemporary family, which usually depends on the male spouse as the breadwinner, there occurs now a specific phenomenon of 'the employed female spouse playing a significant role in determining the class position of the household, which is contrary to the established practices from the past. Even in cases of the wife earning less than the husband, it is her profession that can determine the position of the whole family'.[10] Consequently, the spouses may belong to a different class and hold a different status within the family and household. Thus, an educated wife with a solid position and high income may belong to the middle class, while an unemployed husband of lower education may belong to a lower class and vice versa.

Family and gender roles

Throughout the bulk of human history, men occupied positions of power and prestige, with women being excluded from public, business, and economic circles. It led to their economic dependence, which is considered one of the major obstacles in the path of women's emancipation and independence. After WWII, women started getting jobs outside their households on a larger scale, and these trends have been on the increase ever since, affecting the breach of established patterns of labour division and distribution of roles and power within a family.[11]

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[9] Željko Bjelajac, Jasna Matijašević i Milan Počuča, "Značaj edukacije mladih o zloupotrebama opojnih droga",Novi Sad: *Pedagoška stvarnost*, časopis za školska i kulturnoprosvetna pitanja, Br. 3, 2012. str. 401–414.

[10] Dragana Vilić, "Transformacija (i/ili redukcija) funkcija moderne porodice", Banja Luka: *Sociološki diskurs,* br. 6, decembar 2013. str. 57-58.

[11] Rosemary Crompton (Ed.), Restructuring *Gender Relations and Employment:The Decline of the Male Breadwinner,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. ; Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender:Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do about It*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Bourdieau sees gender relations[12] through two forms of violence: physical and symbolic. The latter is 'spiritual', mild, subtle and invisible in particular, expressed through petty physical contact, grabbing by the shoulder and waist, patting on the cheek, combined with a language dominance. The gender division is encoded in speech. The efficacy of words, especially insults, is based upon it. 'It all makes men's dominance so deeply rooted into our unconscious that we no longer perceive it, it is so given that we have trouble discussing it.'[13] He claims that the 'symbolic revolution', that is, deconstruction of principles and collective representations upon which men's dominance is built is not sufficient enough for abolishing genders if there is no radical change of social structures and mechanisms that support them.

As Sarah Damaske[14] points, gender and working (professional) relations are constantly intertwined in terms of women. First, there is a care about the family and children, neglecting the financial effects of being employed or, secondly, taking miscellaneous jobs just to contribute to the financial stability of the family, neglecting the children in this case. In terms of the former, these are women coming from well-to-do families (middle class) that can exercise their gender role of a mother easily, whereas the latter women coming from lower classes are in constant conflict between the role of a mother and a severely underpaid worker.

Furthermore, gender differences are also affected by cultural values, in particular those concerning the issues of power and status differences, with most cultures favourising men. These are related to gender differences in terms of motifs and social roles, contributing altogether to gender differences

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[12] Here we present the attitudes of two authors that will help us clarify the notions of gender and gender relations. In the words of Abbott, 'sex points to biological differences between men and women and represents (pre-social) basis for gender socialisation, whereas gender represents a socio-cultural construction of roles suitable for men and women respectively and features attributed to 'manhood and womanhood'. A biological sex is an aspect of identity that is innate to a person, while gender is a part of identity acquired through the process of socialisation.' (Pamela Abbott & Clarie. Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives*, London: Routledge, 1997. Citirano prema: Marija Babović, "Rodne nejednakosti na tržištu rada u Srbiji", pdf, dostupno: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294907339).
Marina Blagojević refers to gender regimes as 'relatively structured relations between men and women, manhood and womanhood, in an institutional and non-institutional environment, at a level of both discourse and practices. This structuring is embodied in various gender roles, various gender identities and various gender representations.' (Citirano prema: Marija Babović, "Rodne nejednakosti na tržištu rada u Srbiji", pdf, dostupno: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294907339).
[13] Pjer Burdije, *Vladavina muškaraca,* Podgorica: CID, 2001. str.XV
[14] Sarah Damaske, *For the Family?How Class and Gender Shape Women's Work,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

in emotional expressions as well.[15] As far as motivation of women at work and in other activities is concerned, gender roles have an important place here too, which then affects their way of expressing emotions.[16] As a result, women with better-paid jobs are more motivated than women with poorly paid ones. In the same way, women who have younger children are more concerned about their jobs than those with older children or no children at all.[17]

Transition of the family in Serbia and in Kosovo and Metohija

In the 1990's, both Serbia and the whole region of former Yugoslavia went through a turbulent period of civil wars, UN-imposed sanctions, destruction of society and social institutions that channeled the interest of sociology towards the everyday life of the individual and the family, and their struggle for survival due to great social tumults. With regard to that, the family in Serbia is exposed to numerous effects of the aforementioned phenomena, with the particular impact of a non-functional state, political unrest, poverty, and a collapse of traditional values.

In the words of Počuča, 'various needs of the family have now been long threatened. In scarce times, the energy of family members is rapidly consumed, of female ones in particular, and lately of those elderly and young ones as well, and on mere existence. These impacts lead to negative tendencies in functions, structure, relations, stability, manners, and contents of living of the family.'[18] In the period given, sociological research in Serbia encompassed the issues of economic and stratification structure of society[19], as well as demographic patterns and transition[20], and changes in urban and family life.

According to Mirjani Bobić[21], Serbia at the turn of the century is characterised by the 'blocked transformation of partnership', caused by severely impeded modernisation, that is, transformation of the existing social system

[15] Leslie Brody, *Gender, Emotion, and the Family*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. pp. 281-283.

[16] Lewis T. Davis, "Gender differences in masking negative emotions: Ability or motivation?" *Developmental Psychology,* 1995. No.31, 660-667

[17] Friedman, A., Tzukerman, Y., Wienberg, H., and Todd, J. "The shift in power with age: Changes in perception of the power of women and men over the life cycle", *Psychology of Women Quarterly,1992.* No. 16, pp. 513-525.

[18] Milan Počuča, "Porodica i nezaposlenost-stanje i perspektiva u AP Vojvodina", Novi Sad: *Pravo-teorija i praksa*, br. 10-12/2014. str. 35.

[19] Mladen Lazić, *Račiji hod - Srbija u tranziciji*, Beograd: "Filip Višnjić", 2000.;

[20] Anđelka Milić i ostali, *Društvena transformacija i strategija društvenih grupa-svakodnevnica Srbije na početku trećeg milenijuma,* Beograd: Institut za sociološka i filozofka istraživanja, 2004.

[21] Mirjana Bobić, *Tranzicija partnerstva – studija slučaja u Beogradu*, doktorska disertacija, Beograd: Filozofski fakultet univerziteta u Beogradu, 2002.

into the market-driven economy, with all the consequences of the crisis of the welfare state from the previous socialist (communist) period. The main feature of this 'blocked transformation of partnership is still strong dependence of the young on the family of origin, that is, on informal networks.' As Anđelka Milić points out, the process of modernisation of the family and family life has not taken place yet. Instead, there have been inversive trends, so now one can freely claim that there are processes of 'repatriarchialisation and retraditionalisation of the family in Serbia' going on for a while.[22]

Unlike the rest of Serbia, where one can notice significant improvements in marital, family, and fertile behaviour and modernisation trends already after WWII, as was the case in most other federal units of the former country, Kosovo and Metohija experienced these processes much later. With regard to this region, the process of transformation of the extended family into the nuclear one, which prevailed in the rest of the country, took some time in the after-war period. Even with the extended family virtually non-existent today, the impact of the family of orientation (origin) on the family of procreation is still enormous, with the processes of individualisation of family members only at the intial stage. This interweaving of traditional and modern values is shown through the case study of two families in transition (from modified patriarchate to egalitarian family).

2. Methodological approach

Subject of research, goal, and hypotheses

The subject of research in this paper is posed in the form of the following question: In which way does the transformation of the family in Kosovo and Metohija impact family and gender relations, everyday life, the quality of life, as well as family socialisation and communication?

The goal of the paper is to view, by means of the method of qualitative analysis – case study and problem-centred interview, mutual interdependence between the quality of family relations, living space standard, and the overall quality of life in the area concerned.

In accordance with the subject and goal of the research, there are two hypotheses stated:

H1: In nuclear families in Kosovo and Metohija, there still prevail traditional patriarchal values, but with partial acceptance of changes characteristic for contemporary ways of life.

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[22] Anđelka Milić i drugi, *Vreme porodica*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2010.

H2: Rural families show a higher level of solidarity and mutual respect, as
     well as a higher level of respect of family and traditional values than
     urban ones.

Sample characteristics

The sample is made up of two nuclear families from the north of Kosovo
and Metohija (territory of the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica), one of
them an urban, working class family, the other one a rural one, with spous-
es engaged in entrepreneurship and agriculture. The former is composed of
father Marko (25 years of age, bus driver), mother Olivera (22, agricultural
technician, unemployed), daughter Natalija (3), and son Novak (1). The latter
is composed of father Slaviša (45, owner of the local grocery shop), mother
Danica (40, housewife, but holding a university degree), daughter Lana (18,
IV grade of grammar school) and son Lazar (16, II grade of secondary voca-
tional school).

Time, place, and method of research

The research was conducted during April and May 2016 in the territory of
the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica utilising the qualitative method. The
research procedure was adapted to the subject and goal of research, relying
predominantly on biographic research[23], whereas the problem-centred inter-
view was used as the instrument of data collection[24] applied in the course of
interviews with adult, major persons of the families observed. The interviews
were designed in order to provide us with information on three most signif-
icant isuses concerning the subject of our research: 1) gender relations; 2)
family and social contacts; and 3) material standard and quality of life.

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[23] A biographic research method (collecting life stories or histories) aims at providing 'infor-
mation on the subjective experience of the participants in certain situations and understanding
the motivation behind their actions looking from their perspective, their 'definition of situ-
ation.' (Marija Bogdanović, *Metodološke studije*. Beograd: Institut za političke studije. 1993.
str.12.).
[24] Andreas Witzel, "The Problem-Centeredwalbz Interview". *Forum: Qualitative Social Re-
search*. 2000., Vol. 1, No. 1.; Andreas Witzel and Herwig Reiter, *The Problem-Centred Interview*.
London: Sage, 2012.

3. Research results

Gender relations

In both families, one can notice, based on attitudes provided, the presence of traditional patterns of understanding gender roles in terms of labour division in the family and household. The difference is in that Marko (husband in the urban family) understands that 'women have won their egality' in terms of them getting educated, of being entitled to the same jobs as men, of being paid for their work, but he accepts the fact that this victory comes with a downside, since there is no one to replace them in their household, so they are burdened with housework after their working hours. His explanation is that there are few men in their community that are ready to accept this workload as their duty. Marko does not exclude himself from the lot, admitting readily that he was not socialised in that direction, since his mother would not let him assist her in these activities, saying, 'Never mind, I can do it myself' or 'Leave it, it is Marija's (sister) duty'. He adds that he takes care of the children whenever he has free time, and that he goes groceries shopping, so that his wife can look after the children.

On the other hand, Slaviša (husband in the rural family) finds it a lot more difficult to accept the fact that his wife is equal to him concerning the process of making decisions in the family, remarking that 'his wife wants to have everything under her control', but that 'he does not allow her to meddle into his affairs, regarding his business investments and purchases. She has a lot of 'authority' in the house, I have agreed to that, but she knows better than to push the limits. Her only duty is keeping the house clean, cooking, and taking care of the children. If that is too much for her, she should not have got married in the first place'. His wife retorts that 'the only person who wants to assume full control of things is his (Slaviša's) mother, although she does not even live in the same household with them'.[25] Then she says, 'it is understandable that I want to have the grocery money at my disposal. If I did not, I would file for a divorce. If women cannot have that much "authority", they had better live on their own.' Her attitudes reveal the existence of gender inequality in that family. Furthermore, one gets the impression that relations like these encourage Danica to favourise her daughter over her son, in order to point out to her the importance of being more independent in a marriage of

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[25] We would like to point out the fact that the interview with family members was in part done with both spouses at the same time, as is in this case, so they had an opportunity to answer the questions simultaneously or in turns.

her own. I may have paid more attention to my daughter because I think that female children need to be protected, whatever life she experiences is in her parents' home, a married life is always a gamble. My son used to spend more time in the open, he either played football or spent his time at grandmother's or grandfather's or with his father at the shop. Frankly speaking, I find it more important that my daughter should earn a university degree, since men always manage on their own.' Not surprisingly, the children in this family have adopted this role model applied by their parents, their mother in particular. Lara (daughter in the rural family) holds her mother's attitudes in building her own gender image. 'My mother is the person I trust the most. She is my most reliable companion and friend, she is the only person I can confide in. It is my mother I can discuss every subject with, not my father. She has always been full of empathy regarding myself; she has always protected me, and helped me through the rough period of adolescence. We share a similar taste in clothes, so I choose her over my friends when going shopping.' Lazar (son in the rural family) is even more determined concerning the establishing of a role model under his mother's influence. 'My mother has double standards even when her own children are concerned. For her, Lara is always right. The conversation is interrupted by Danica, remarking, 'It is jealousy speaking through you, you have always been more mischievous.' Lazar continues his account. 'Luckily for me, father is different. I trust him much more. I am not going to date a girl that would remind me of my mother even one tiny bit, and I am going to have only one child.'

Slaviša announces his attitude, 'This is what happens when father is away. That is why I am trying to teach him that the looks are to be ignored when he chooses a girl to start his family with. Much more important are the character features of the woman who is going to raise his children.'[26]

Her living environment made a profound impact on Danica forming a specific value system that she would like her children to adopt. 'The virtues of being kind, hard-working, and careful are not welcomed in today's society, although my husband puts them on the pedestal. Not only are they not welcomed, but they are rather unwanted. Such qualities might be acceptable only in the country, although even in such a surrounding they are a mere cover, it is a common misconception that countryfolk are good-natured. In my opinion, they are rather cunning and shrewd. I have taught my children to treat with kindness those who have treated them in the same way, and to stand up to those who are malicious and who talk to them in a condescending way, insulting their intelligence and dignity. Being too kind only attracts predators of all kinds.'

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[26] Note: The family members burst into a fierce row so I asked them to change the subject.

Olivera (wife in the urban family) explains that she discusses all matters with her husband, but that 'she has a final say in the matters regarding the children and the family.' Her attitude, expressed in the words that 'she finds it most important that her husband has zero tolerance towards domestic violence, that he should be cheerful after a hard day's work, and that he has never raised his voice in their discussions' is yet another important indicator of balanced gender relations in their family. In addition, this interview reveals another significant element regarding the assessment of gender relations, that of property relations in the family. She thinks that 'a female child should be provided for, at least with some property, however small.' But, she also feels the pressure imposed by traditional views of their environment, which urges her remark that 'it is understandable that brothers and sisters should be left with equal share of the property inherited, but that sisters always feel "shame" if they actually claim any right to it.'

Relations in the family of origin and contacts with the environment

We were interested to know how our respondents observed the relations in the family of origin and whether that influenced their current families. Marko (the husband in the urban family) says that he grew up in a family where his mother worked the most and always had a decent salary since she was the only one in the family who had a university degree, so thanks to her income, his sister and he had a decent and carefree life. 'I cannot say that my parents' marriage was a good one. My father often expressed jealousy when my mother had to travel somewhere or stay longer in a meeting. However, there was no physical or verbal violence, although he used to be silent for days. My sister and I noticed when the relations between our parents were cold and when they were warm. When they were retired, their relationship suddenly got better and now they live in harmony and support each other, but they also help us.' From Marko's statements, it is visible that in his current family he acts in a completely different way from his father. He wants to help his wife with the children and to participate in raising them whenever he has free time from work. Additionally, he expresses no jealousy towards his wife and tries to arrange pleasant moments for her by going on a vacation, shopping or visiting friends or relatives.

Olivera (the wife in the urban family) says that she grew up in a family where 'one lived modestly and saved a lot. My brothers and I started going to kindergarten ever since nursery age. Our parents worked all day. My mother worked as a cook, and my father as a plumber, though he is skilful in other crafts, as well.' Olivera is satisfied with the way Marko's parents accepted her.

'I am happy that my husband has such a family. I am free to talk to them frankly about everything, just as I do with my own family. I will do everything for them to be satisfied with me as well.' As we can see, Olivera has transferred the modesty, tolerance, and sparing from her family of origin and is trying to develop it in her current family.

Slaviša (the father in the rural family) is grateful and loving towards his family of origin, obviously because he sees in it an example that is opposit to his nuclear family. 'My father is a miner who, after working hard every day in a mine, used his every free moment to work on the farm. His mother is a housewife and has worked her entire life in agriculture industry. I am their only child and they have done everything for me to live better than they did. Everything they earned, they mostly gave to me. They wished to buy me a lot in the city, but I wanted to stay here and live in the countryside. They built a huge house before I got married so I could live with my family there.'

Danica (the wife in the rural family) refuses to discuss her husband's family of origin: '…I would not like to discuss his parents. What are they to me that I am obliged to love them? I will speak about my family of origin.' We notice, however, that her feelings are divided about that as well and that they are combined with a certain degree of bias since her father had been married once before he married her mother. 'I am not really close with my father. He does come to visit and loves my children, especially Lazar. I think he is constantly in a cleft between his older and younger daughter, his first and second wife. Maybe all divorced people have divided personalities like my father does. I have the best possible relationship with my mother. The three of us: Lana, mother and I have a very strong alliance. It is really good when there are female alliances in a family. Otherwise, a family would be left to the mercy of a male dictator'. Here we additionally discover the sources of Danica's gender attitudes we previously described. Starting from the premise that contacts with the environment influence a family and family relations, as a part of our research, we also asked our respondents a few questions about their relations with friends, colleagues at work and acquaintances. Marko (husband in the urban family) says he has 'a huge number of friends and a big family, and some true friends among colleagues. We do not have a lot of time, so we meet our friends and wider family only on the occasion of joyful or sad events. We do not spend time with the "establishment" and important people, and we do not have important social connections, either. I still believe that one can survive in this country without those important connections. What is most important – there is always someone to visit us and we always have someone to visit'. Olivera (Marko's wife) has a very small circle of friends and little ambition to expand it. 'I have my female friends: I see two of them every day and

we manage to find time to have a cup of coffee since I spend most of the time with the children (cooking, laundry, walk). It is important for me to see the people who are dear to me every day (family members and friends).'

Slaviša (the husband in the rural family) finds he has many friends and co-workers, and that 'there are friendships that lasted from his childhood. I have good relations with my neighbours and I am confident to say that my family has never been in the situation of not speaking to someone.' On the other hand, his wife, Danica, expresses discontent with her environment. 'I do not have many friends. One can rarely talk to someone here. There are people who are approximately my age, but everybody hides in their own shell. Everybody seems to be doing something and going somewhere, but few of them have permanent jobs and regular income.' Lana (daughter) presented several important details about the life of youth in a typical Kosovo environment. 'I have one friend I spend time and go out with. Friendships have become fake, there is little true friendship and a lot of envy and jealousy among both girls and boys. Social differences are huge. In schools, children from wealthy families and those who wear branded clothes are grouped into "clans". Teachers are also propitious towards those students who come from higher social layers so they do not have to study, and I have to study really hard to get a good grade.'

Material standard and family life quality

Marko (husband in the urban family) says that his family standard would be worse if their parents were not helping them. 'We do not travel for summer vacation. I believe that we will travel when the children grow a little, because I do not wish for them to miss everything I did in my childhood.' Olivera (Marko's wife) expresses her modesty and tolerance here as well. 'Right now, I do not worry about food or clothes. My mother-in-law and father-in-law visit me every day and bring milk and everything the children need. I buy cheaper clothes and footwear. I have learned to buy something that will last with a small amount of money. When one's residence issue is solved, everything else is somehow easy to solve'. She reminded us of the environment this family lives in and the fear that is constantly present. 'Tenants are a social layer whose life is the hardest. There is a growing number of homeless people and it is very difficult for me even to talk about them. It is not the same for us to live on a territory where many of us who have no property in Serbia can easily become homeless.'

To our question to evaluate life quality as a whole, Marko says he has a high quality of life thanks to the fact that he has such a family and lives with

the woman he loves. 'I am a modest man, I do not ask for much, and it would be unjust to ask for more in the times of crisis and hopelessness in general.' He then refers to the environment he lives in and makes certain comparison. 'I know many people who live in inhuman and difficult conditions'. Then, he finishes his idea on his family's life quality. 'In my family, money and material values are important but they are not vital. What is important to us is health, family happiness and harmony. When it comes to culture, my taste is not refined so I do not miss going to the theatre or opera. I like good music, sports and films. The programmes I like are sufficiently present on TV, and there is also the Internet. If there were more cultural events in the city, we would probably attend them.' Olivera is slightly more specific and precise in assessing their family's life. 'For now, I have no reason to be dissatisfied with my life and I am not asking for a higher life quality. Everybody would like to have more money, a good car, and opportunities to travel. Even in small towns however, within the microcosmos called family, one can find a reservoir of happiness and satisfaction.' She also referred to needs related to culture, thus completing the image of the environment the family lives in. 'I mostly listen to folk music, but there is also rock and pop songs that I like to listen to. I like reading books, but now I do not have time for that. I would really like to go to the theatre, but I do not wish to go to the one we have in the city. I have seen two shows…oh it was just too sad.' She continued to explain the roots of weakness of cultural and theatre life in Kosovska Mitrovica. 'Here, only the children of artists and high officials have an opportunity to enroll in the Academy of Arts. As far as I can notice, this virus is also present in Belgrade. A common mortal is not allowed even to think of taking an entrance exam at the Academy of Arts. Children do not always inherit the talent of their parents. I believe that our children will be able to obtain a better education. I think that culture is not only about culture events, works of art, and artists themselves, but also our upbringing and relationship towards others.'

The members of the rural family express a greater pessimism regarding their material situation and life quality. Slaviša (husband) presents his remarks referring to the female part of his family. 'A village house and a farm are not features of a high standard. In most cases, people leave the countryside. This is one of the rare villages where young people are not leaving as intensely. I work in a shop both in the morning and in the afternoon; my parents still work on the farm despite being elderly; and Lazar now helps both them and me. Danica and Lana are like princesses of the village; they do not do the hard work. We have enough for our basic needs; we are not used to better things so we do not know how to ask for better. What is important is that the children go to school and they will continue their formal education for as long as

they want. Somebody else is the one dealing the cards; nobody knows when something can go wrong'. Slaviša repeated his modest needs and the fact that he is not ambitious. 'I never set up some high life aims for myself when I was young. I was an average student so now my job is appropriate to my education level. I am satisfied with my life, I love the place where I was born and I have never wanted to leave. I have not developed the needs for culture; I listen to folk music and I like sports.'

On the other hand, Danica (the wife) is completely dissatisfied with the total standard both of the environment and her family. She provided us with a short (sociological) image of her environment which is a typical example of the contemporary life of Serbs in Kosovo i Metohija. 'Most people in this country live day by day. Everything is reduced to bare survival. We have a comfortable village house. At least we do not have problems with space. I know how difficult it is for people who live in cities in small flats. I do not believe that things will get better with politicians such as we have. I also do not believe that Kosovo is still a part of Serbia. I hope that we will have the strength and funds to provide for our children so they can continue their education. The education quality here is very low. Degrees obtained at faculties and schools in Serbia are little appreciated and rarely recognised, and as a result of the lack of money, our children, even if they have straight As, have to enrol in the faculties in Kosovska Mitrovica and Leposavić which have a bad reputation due to corruption and a poor quality of teaching. The situation is not better in high schools, either. Very few excellent students manage to enrol in a faculty of medicine or electrical engineering in greater cities, and they say that only these two faculties offer a high possibility of employment. There are so many pedagogues, attorneys, forest engineers who are unemployed. I do not really see a bright perspective for my children or me. Foreign countries seem to be the only solution – this country failed and it is a phenomenon that should be scientifically studied as far as how it still lasts despite so much bureaucracy, corruption and incapable and corrupted politicians.' Lana (the daughter) expresses optimism with a certain glimpse of doubt. 'I still believe that work and studying can help one achieve something and I will try to realise some of my life goals in that way only. However, children from rural and working class families do not advance without difficulties.'

Research results discussion

Olivera and Marko (urban family) made a decision of forming a marital community suddenly. This means no possibility for clear future plans due to their chaotic reality. The authority is divided: Marko is the only one who

makes money and is the breadwinner, whereas Olivera, despite the fact that she is unemployed, manages the home budget and makes important family decisions. Such role division is typical of a modified patriarchate. They do accept their parents' help, but also show significant life vitality and readiness to accept any job, which is not a characteristic of members of their generation. Distrust in institutions and insecurity before numerous challenges is compensated by family support and support of friends and the local community. Marko accepts contemporary values on the equality of male and female children and made his patriarchal parents leave their sister a part of the inheritance, whereas Olivera's attitudes are traditional; she does not wish 'to take a part of the house from her brothers'. She thus confirms the attitude on accepting gender equality. According to their standards, a material standard is not the 'measure' for life quality. Other values are: family and family happiness, primarily harmony, work and sacrifice, moral actions, and a good education as a part of personal culture.

Slaviša (rural family) had a patriarchal upbringing; he is loyal to his family and works hard to provide everything they need, insists on a role division based on gender, but also acknowledges his wife's opinions regarding the issues of 'her department': children and household management. His wife, Danica, carries a heavy burden of bad relations in her family of origin and a misunderstanding and conflict with the community she lives in. She is aware that, for her husband's family, she will always remain a spoiled city child who is not skilful enough to do rural work. There is no full trust between her and her husband: he does not allow her 'to interfere in his business', and she wishes to independently decide on buying things necessary for the household and on the children's roles and status in their family. In this family, spouses express a negative attitude towards gender equality.

One gets the impression that, in this family, there is no main authority; there is dichotomy and an inequality of attitudes on all issues, which even culminated in the 'division of the children' being 'mommy's daughter' and 'daddy's son'. All this may lead to conflict, rivalry between children and disfunction of family socialisation. The good side is that the family does reach a consensus on important family issues, such as their children's education and their leaving home for studies or to a palce where they can provide for themselves better life conditions. Furthermore, children have not accepted consumerist values, but they are pleased with what their parents can offer them without asking for more, and spend their free time doing the activities and enjoying those types of entertainment available to them in the confined frames of rural life. Mother and daughter have developed a taste in culture needs of a higher level (going to the theatre, visiting *Spiritual ceremonies of*

the Principality of Serbia), which is not common for many families who live in this area and rather enjoy themselves listening to turbo-folk music and watching reality shows. Lana and Lazar have no wish to depend on their parents for long, they are ready to work and study, and Lazar also plans to go abroad if he does not manage to find a job.

After the analysis of attitudes and opinions of these two families, one concludes that our first hypothesis from this paper ('In nuclear families in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, there are still traditional patriarchal values with partial acceptance of changes characteristic of a contemporary lifestyle') is confirmed

Our second hypothesis ('Rural families show a higher degree of solidarity and mutual acknowledgement, as well as respect for family and traditional values compared to the urban ones') is not confirmed, bearing in mind that the urban family shows a higher degree of mutual respect and acknowledgement, as well as of other family and traditional values than the rural family.

Conclusion

Both families belong to lower social layers on the class social scale in the conditions of the territory of north Kosovo and Metohija. In the workers' family, what prevails is harmonic family relations, concord and open communication between spouses, a caring and warm parental relationship towards the children. The family cannot provide financial stability so they depend on the help from the family of origin, that is, the husband's parents, which depresses both partners. Modern and traditional values are interwoven, which is a dominant characteristic of families of the modified patriarchate. The husband has 'the final say', but the wife's suggestions are also acknowledged because she participates in adopting important family decisions and manages the household budget.

The rural family (with the addition of small entrepreneurship) also has dominant characteristics related to a modified patriarchate. The wife has a wide spectrum of authorisations; she affects many decisions, manages the household budget, but also knows 'which red lines she is not supposed to cross'. In the family there is a conflict reflected in the division of children as 'mommy's daughter' and 'daddy's son', as well as some elements of family anomie, visible in an unclear family authority and favourisation of one child, which in this case is the favourisation of the daughter by her mother.

A qualitative analysis of family and daily life of these two families points to the existence of a more complex social issue, i.e. deep social differences

that exist among the Serbian population in the territory of north Kosovo and Metohija. The life of these two families boils down to bare survival, children are the only quality motif for living, social connections are weak, life expectations are low, and the fear of an expected development of unfavourable events is huge. They belong to that part of the population that invested all their funds in building a house in this territory and they do not own real estates in the so-called 'safer' territory of central Serbia and Vojvodina. The division between those who provided their security by buying real estates or building houses in the 'safer' territory and the others who were not able to do so or have decided to stay in their own home seems to be deeper than any social class division. This is the population that has always lived in the ethnically homogenous environment, knows no members of other ethnicity or culture (has no experience of joint coexistence like Serbs from the central and southern parts of Kosovo and Metohija) despite not living far away, and expects the possibility of coexistence with fear and insecurity. Our respondents claim that they are calm, diligent family people who can also live with members of other ethnicity and culture since they are not prone to conflicts. Both female respondents say that the state (Serbia) has not cared equally for all its citizens, that higher social layers are favourised (they receive 'double salaries'), which provided them with housing security in 'safer' places, thus giving them the possibility to leave Kosovo and Metohija in the situation of unfavourable events.

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