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Attitudes of the Majority Population towards the Civic and Political Participation of Immigrants in Slovenia

The civic and political participation of immigrants in the receiving country are important dimensions of the integration process. However, immigrants often encounter various barriers in accessing individual forms of participation, either due to legal barriers or due to informal opposition from the majority population. This article aims to examine the attitudes of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants in Slovenia and the factors influencing such attitudes. The survey on a representative sample of Slovene residents revealed predominantly negative attitudes of the majority population towards both civic and political participation of immigrants. Particularly notable is the opposition to granting immigrants active and passive voting rights. Relevant factors influencing such attitudes include gender, age, education, the type of settlement in which the respondents reside, and their ideological orientation.

Keywords: civic participation, political participation, immigrants, attitude of the majority population, Slovenia.

Odnos večinskega prebivalstva do civilnodružbene in politične participacije priseljencev v Sloveniji

Civilnodružbena in politična participacija priseljencev v državi sprejema sta pomembni dimenziji integracijskega procesa. Kljub temu pogosto prihaja do omejevanja dostopa priseljencev do različnih oblik participacije, bodisi zaradi pravnih ovir bodisi zaradi neformalnega nasprotovanja večinskega prebivalstva. Namen članka je preveriti, kakšen je odnos večinskega prebivalstva do civilnodružbene in politične participacije priseljencev v Sloveniji in kateri dejavniki vplivajo na ta odnos. Anketa, izvedena na reprezentativnem vzorcu prebivalcev Slovenije, je pokazala pretežno odklonilen odnos do civilnodružbene in politične participacije priseljencev. Predvsem izstopa nasprotovanje aktivni in pasivni volilni pravici priseljencev. Kot relevantni dejavniki, ki vplivajo na ta odnos, so se pokazali spol, starost, izobrazba, tip naselja, v katerem anketiranci prebivajo, in njihova ideološka usmeritev.

Ključne besede: *civilnodružbena participacija, politična participacija, priseljenci, odnos večinskega prebivalstva, Slovenija.*

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1. Introduction

In many countries of the European Union, the inclusion of immigrants in political processes and decision-making was, for a long time, not a major concern for politicians, political decision-makers, or the academia. Immigrants were viewed primarily as a temporary workforce expected to return to their country of origin rather than as potential citizens staying in the host country. Consequently, the majority population did not expect them to be politically active, nor did they want them to be (Martiniello 2006, 83). This perspective first shifted in those European countries that had experienced significant immigration several decades ago. Here, political mobilisation, participation, and representation of immigrants became topical issues, especially at the local level. Debate on immigrant integration could no longer exclude its political dimension (Martiniello 2006, 83). Several studies show that immigrants have always been active in less conventional forms of participation such as trade unions, associations, etc. Likewise, recent research indicates that immigrants, regardless of their status (documented or undocumented), are increasingly engaging in political activities in various ways (Strijbis 2015; Vintila & Martiniello 2021) and that this activism can lead to effective changes in policies (Kende et al. 2024). Nevertheless, the level of civic and political engagement among immigrant populations remains generally lower than among the majority population (Aleksynska 2008; Doomernik et al. 2010; Pettinicchio & de Vries 2017; Li & Jones 2020; Bešter et al. 2023).

The civic[1] and political participation[2] of immigrants are important dimensions of the integration process. Immigrant involvement in civic and political activities is both a prerequisite for their full integration into the receiving society and an indicator of the success and comprehensiveness of that integration. Without participating in civic and political governance, immigrants cannot achieve equal and full integration into society. In such case, their opinions, needs, and wishes are often unheard and unrepresented. Therefore, civic and political participation are certainly in the interest of immigrants, but it is also important to consider how the majority population perceives such. The survey titled Challenges of Immigrant Integration and Development of Integration Policy in Slovenia (hereinafter: the Challenges of Integration survey) conducted in 2020 (Medvešek et al. 2022a) revealed that among the various measures[3] to enhance immigrant integration in Slovenia, the majority population is least in favour of promoting the inclusion of immigrants in political decision-making. It appears that the majority population expects immigrants to adapt to Slovene society rather than participate in the co-creation of societal norms and values (Medvešek et al. 2022a, 147–155). This raises several questions: which forms of political participation by immigrants are most objectionable to the majority population? Is it more challenging for the majority population to accept immi-

grants exercising passive voting rights, such as running for political office, or their active voting rights in choosing candidates for political office? Additionally, how does the majority population perceive immigrant involvement in political parties or other forms of political participation? Does the majority population oppose only the political participation of immigrants, or do they also object to their broader civic participation? What factors influence the majority population's attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants?

The aim of this paper is to answer these questions and thereby contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of the attitudes of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants, which is a crucial factor in the process of integration of immigrants into the social and political life of the receiving country. The answers to the research questions will be obtained by analysing data from a survey conducted among the Slovene population as part of the project Immigrant Integration through Civic and Political Participation (hereinafter: the Research on Participation).[4]

2. Theoretical Background

Klarenbeek and Weide (2020, 214) note that European integration discourses reflect an ambivalence towards the political participation of immigrants. This ambivalence manifests in what they call a participation paradox, constituted by two conflicting characteristics of discourse. The first one emphasises the need for immigrants to be active to attain a well-integrated society and well-functioning democratic political community. The second one is a call for the protection of liberal democratic institutions against the alleged illiberal threats that immigrants pose to society. On the one hand, immigrant participation is demanded, while on the other hand there are fears that this participation would undermine liberal democratic values and lead to undesirable, illiberal changes in society. This ambivalence towards the political participation of immigrants is also reflected in empirical research, which yields varying conclusions. Some studies (e.g., Verkuyten 2018) suggest that members of the majority population might feel threatened by immigrant political participation if they see it as questioning their dominant position in society. In this case, they exhibit negative attitudes towards the political participation of immigrants. Conversely, the majority population may view immigrant engagement in civil society and politics positively if they see it as a sign of successful integration, as a sign of immigrants' willingness to co-shape and contribute to the common good. For instance, Kende et al. (2024) find that higher levels of immigrant political participation are associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants among the majority population. Their research also found that in countries where immigrants were more active politically, national majority members perceived lower levels of threat (Kende et al. 2024, 11).

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Other authors explored the relationship between immigrant political participation and the attitudes of the majority population from the opposite perspective: examining the level of immigrant political participation in environments where the majority population is either accepting and supportive or opposed. Just and Anderson (2014) found that in environments where the majority population is more open to immigrants and supportive of their engagement in political decision-making, immigrants tend to participate more. Conversely, where the majority population is more reluctant to immigrant participation, immigrants are less involved in various political activities. Structural opportunities for immigrant participation (rights, openness of institutions) also play a significant role. The more these opportunities exist and the more open they are, the more the majority population supports ethnic diversity among political representatives (OSCE/ODIHR 2017, 31). In other words, in environments where there are more legal/formal opportunities for immigrant political participation – where immigrants have more rights and more channels available to them to participate in the political process – the majority population tends to be more favourable to immigrant political participation.

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) (Solano & Huddleston 2020) defines the Slovene approach to integration as "equality on paper". Immigrants in Slovenia enjoy basic rights and long-term security,[5] but do not enjoy equal opportunities. Slovenia's integration policy encourages the public to see immigrants as equals and as potential citizens, but not as their neighbours.[6] Instead, they are viewed as strangers. Conversely, the top ten MIPEX countries treat immigrants as equals, neighbours, and potential citizens, and invest in integration as a two-way process. Policies that treat immigrants as strangers (as Slovenia's do according to MIPEX) lead more people to see immigrants as a general threat and to treat them in ways that harm integration (Solano & Huddleston 2020, 220). Similarly, the Challenges of Integration survey (Medvešek et al. 2022a) finds that a significant proportion of the Slovene population views immigrants as a threat and that perceptions of (cultural, economic, security) threat exacerbate negative public attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. Moreover, individuals who perceive immigrants as a threat tend to have a more negative view of immigrant integration in Slovenia.

Based on these data and in line with the theoretical assumptions mentioned above that people who feel threatened tend to have a more negative attitude towards immigrant participation, it can be assumed that the majority population in Slovenia is not very supportive of the civic and political participation of immigrants. A similar assumption can also be drawn from the finding that in countries where structural opportunities for political participation are greater, the public tends to be more favourable to immigrant political participation, whereas in countries with limited structural opportunities for immigrants, the public tends to be more opposed to their participation. In Slovenia, as indicated

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by MIPEX, structural opportunities for the political participation of immigrants are not well developed. Although all permanent residents have the right to vote in local elections, leading MIPEX to rank Slovenia as a leader in Central Europe on this issue, the overall opportunities for political participation of immigrants are deemed slightly unfavourable. Notably, non-EU citizens residing in Slovenia are not allowed to be members of political parties (aside from being honorary members) or stand as candidates in elections. MIPEX also criticises the limited ability of immigrants or their organisations to influence policymaking (Solano & Huddleston 2020, 221). Furthermore, in terms of access to nationality, which grants immigrants rights equal to other citizens in all areas, including political rights, Slovenia ranks in the bottom five countries according to MIPEX. Two key factors particularly restrict access to Slovene citizenship: the lengthy residence requirement (10 years), one of the longest in Europe, and the requirement to give up the current citizenship (Mirovni inštitut 2020).[7]

In addition to political participation, civic participation of immigrants is another vital component of a democratic society. Immigrant involvement in the civil society organisations of the majority population presents opportunities for intercultural learning, fostering mutual respect, and cultivating a sense of belonging among immigrants. However, it can also evoke discomfort among the majority population, instilling fears of losing traditional values and potentially sparking opposition to immigrant integration. One example of civil society organisation is immigrant organisations,[8] serving as crucial vehicles for preserving immigrants' cultural heritage, presenting their interests to the majority society, and promoting intercultural dialogue (Medvešek et al. 2023). There is disagreement among scholars regarding the effects of immigrant participation in immigrant organisations. Some scholars (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut 1990) argue that their engagement in immigrant organisations and the advocacy of "ethnic" interests represent a transitional phase in which immigrants gain experience and prepare for broader participation in society. On the other hand, Fennema and Tillie (2001) contend that immigrant organisations, akin to any majority organisations, contribute to the development of civic skills and teach members to address problems collectively. In contrast, other authors (e.g., Uslaner & Conley 2003) argue that a stronger attachment to an ethnic community may divert individuals from active civic participation in the receiving country, instead increasing their interest in politics within their country of origin.

The concept of civic participation of immigrants, whether through integration into existing majority civil society organisations or through the activities of immigrant organisations, can elicit a negative response from the majority population, often stemming from feelings of threat, as explained by the cultural threat theory (Hopkins 2010). In contrast, the intergroup contact theory posits that interactions between the majority population and immigrants can, under suitable conditions, diminish prejudice and cultivate positive sentiments

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towards diversity. However, the contact theory, which emerged in the 1940s, is complicated by the paradox that intergroup contact may simultaneously reinforce prejudice and intolerance at both individual and collective levels while also contributing to reducing prejudice and dismantling stereotypes between groups (Durrheim & Dixon 2005, 20). Although recent studies have approached the (intergroup) contact theory cautiously, there remains a substantial body of research in psychological and sociological literature affirming that intergroup contact contributes to reducing prejudice and negative attitudes towards outgroup members (Durrheim & Dixon 2005, 21; Pettigrew & Tropp 2006).

Limited research has been conducted on the attitudes of the majority population towards political and, in particular, civic participation of immigrants. Consequently, there is a scant understanding of this aspect of the integration process. Our research attempts to bridge this gap at least to some extent.

3. Methodology

Data on the perceptions of the majority population regarding the civic and political participation of immigrants were obtained through a survey among the Slovene population. The survey, part of our Research on Participation, covered a wide range of topics, including the population's perceptions regarding the civic and political participation of immigrants. The sample was drawn from the Central Population Register of Slovenia using random systematic sampling and included residents of Slovenia aged 18+, with a sample size at 2,500 persons. As the survey also collected data on the civic and political participation of immigrants and given that the immigrant population is often under-represented even in surveys of a representative sample of the Slovene population, additional purposive sampling was conducted to gather more responses from immigrants. From a supplementary sample of 7,000 individuals, also based on the Central Population Register of Slovenia and including residents aged 18+, we used an onomastic approach to identify a smaller sample (n = 1,682) of residents likely to be immigrants given their first or family names. Subsequent analysis revealed that this group also included a small proportion of individuals who, by our definition, belonged to the majority population. The final sample of respondents analysed in this paper includes all individuals born in Slovenia, defined as the majority population, regardless of whether they were included in the initial or supplementary sampling.

The two samples were interviewed using a combination of postal and online surveys. The survey period ran from October 2022 to January 2023, during which we received 1,303 valid responses. Of these, 976 were provided by residents born in Slovenia, who we define in this paper as majority population. Foreign-born residents of Slovenia are defined as immigrants.

Table 1: Comparison of data on the gender, age, and education structure of respondents included in the Research on Participation with Eurostat and SORS statistics on the gender, age, and education structure of the Slovene population aged 18+

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	Research on Participation – respondents born in Slovenia, 2022/2023		Eurostat, SORS – residents born in Slovenia, 2023	
	No.	%	No.	%
Gender				
Male	399	40.9	702,475	48.4
Female	577	59.1	750,256	51.6
Total	976	100	1,452,731	100
Age				
18–30 years	165	16.9	227,607	16.1
31–45 years	255	26.1	361,815	25.7
46–60 years	293	30.1	378,730	25.7
61+	263	27.0	484,579	32.4
Total	976	100	1,452,731	100
Education				
Primary education (incomplete or completed primary school)	65	6.7	243,355	16.8
Secondary education (vocational school, technical upper secondary school, general upper secondary school)	490	50.2	781,109	53.8
Tertiary education (college, university, master's degree and PhD)	398	40.8	428,267	29.5
No answer	23	2.4	/	/
Total	976	100	1,452,731	100

Source: Eurostat (2024); SORS;[9] data from the Research on Participation.

The comparison of the surveyed population with the demographic structure of the population born in Slovenia in terms of gender, age, and education reveals a higher proportion of women and respondents with higher education in the sample. This difference is in line with the general trend indicating a greater willingness of women and the highly educated to participate in surveys.

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4. Attitudes of the Majority Population towards the Civic and Political Participation of Immigrants

The attitudes of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants were measured through questions relating to various forms of participation. We sought to understand how the majority population feels about immigrants who do not yet have Slovene citizenship but permanently reside in Slovenia having the same rights to vote or stand for election as the majority population. Additionally, we asked about their views on immigrants without Slovene citizenship being able to establish their own civil society organisations co-funded by the State, participate in majority organisations co-funded by the State, join existing political parties, and organise protests. Respondents could answer these questions with Yes, No, or I don't know. In the analysis, the replies were assigned the following values: 1 – Yes, 2 – No, 0 – I don't know.

Table 2: Attitudes of the majority population towards various forms of civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023 (n = 976)

Do you think it is right for immigrants who do not yet have Slovene citizenship ...										
	Yes		No		I don't know		No answer		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a) but permanently reside in Slovenia to have the same right to vote as the majority population?	152	15.6	667	68.3	156	16.0	1	0.1	976	100
b) but permanently reside in Slovenia to have the same right to stand for election as the majority population?	109	11.2	712	73.0	153	15.7	2	0.2	976	100
c) to be able to establish their own civil society organisations co-funded by the State?	191	19.6	577	59.1	201	20.6	7	0.7	976	100
d) to be able to participate in majority organisations co-funded by the State?	316	32.4	470	48.2	187	19.2	3	0.3	976	100
e) to be able to join existing political parties?	257	26.3	521	53.4	195	20.0	3	0.3	976	100
f) to be able to assert their rights by organising protests?	266	27.3	524	53.7	183	18.8	3	0.3	976	100

Source: Data from the Research on Participation; Medvešek et al. (2022b).

Chart 1: Share of the majority population believing that it is right for immigrants who do not yet have Slovene citizenship … 2023, (n = 976)
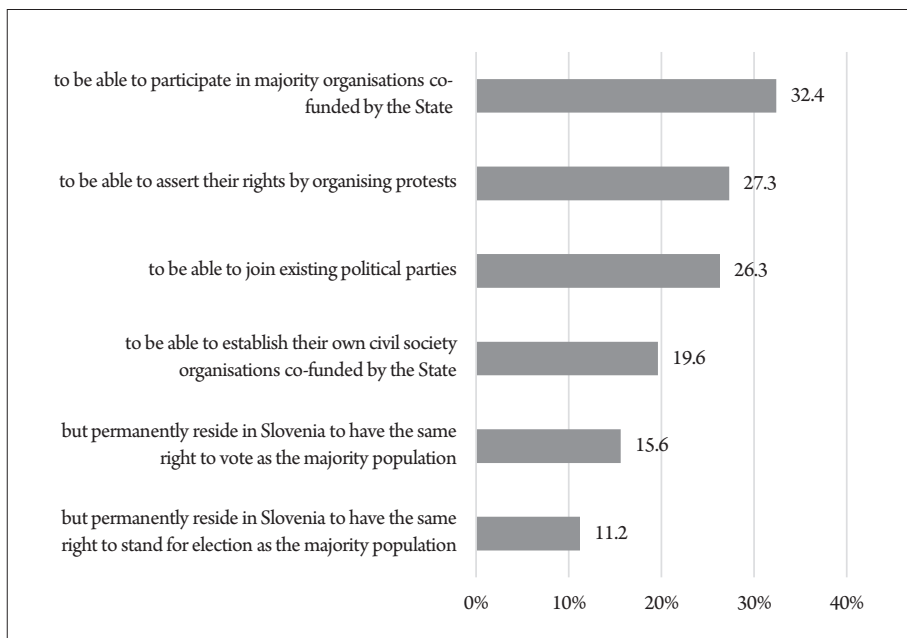
Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

The data indicate that respondents largely hold negative attitudes towards all forms of civic and political participation of immigrants. Specifically, there is strong disagreement with the idea that immigrants (who do not have Slovene citizenship but reside permanently in Slovenia) should have the same voting rights as the majority population. Only 15.6% of respondents supported granting immigrants equal rights to vote as the majority population. Even fewer, 11.2%, supported allowing immigrants equal rights to stand for election. It is also important to note that approximately 15–20% of the respondents are undecided or do not have an opinion on these issues. However, a majority (over 50%, except for question d where the proportion is 48.2%) are explicitly opposed to the forms of political or civic participation of immigrants in question.

Elections are a key pillar of legitimacy and a mechanism through which a general sense of belonging and trust in the political system can be established. The participation of immigrants in elections can indicate their sense of belonging and responsibility for the management of public affairs, which implies their political integration (Doomernik et al. 2010, 15). A prerequisite for this is that immigrants are allowed to participate in the political process and influence political decision-making. Countries usually provide this possibility to immigrants who have been resident in their territory for a long time, either by

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extending the right to vote to permanent residents or by liberalising the right to citizenship, allowing more immigrants to acquire citizenship and thus the right to vote. However, the scope of the right to vote varies according to the political and administrative level of the election, i.e., whether it is a local or a national election. Countries are still trying to ensure that access to political rights, such as the right to vote and to stand as candidates in national elections, remains reserved for their citizens. Such exclusion contradicts the modern democratic idea, which emphasises the equal influence of each individual in political decisions directly affecting them. Over time, access to citizenship and political rights gradually expanded to encompass more individuals, allowing a growing number of people to enjoy such rights. Initially, they were reserved for rich men, then extended to adult men, followed by all adults born in the territory of the country (citizens), regardless of gender. In the modern world, where population mobility is increasing and the proportion of foreign nationals in each country is growing, the political exclusion of immigrants is becoming a topical issue (Jacobs et al. 2009, 220–221).

Regarding the voting rights of foreigners at the local level, Slovenia distinguishes between individuals originating from other EU Member States and third-country nationals. Citizens of other EU Member States holding a permanent residence registration permit and having a registered permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia, or a residence registration permit and a registered temporary residence in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to vote and stand for election to municipal councils, as well as to the councils of local communities, village communities, or parts of municipalities. Third-country nationals only have the right to vote, without the right to stand for election, and even this applies only to those who possess a permanent residence permit and a registered permanent residence in Slovenia. There are also differences in the election of mayors. In addition to citizens of Slovenia, citizens of other EU countries with the above-mentioned status and third-country nationals holding a permanent residence permit and a having a registered permanent residence in Slovenia have the right to vote for mayor. However, only citizens of Slovenia have the right to stand as candidates for mayor. Likewise, only citizens of Slovenia have the right to vote and stand for election in elections for the President of the Republic, the National Assembly, and the National Council, although the latter elections allow for a partial exception, meaning that foreigners can vote in elections to the National Council just like Slovene citizens, provided they are engaged in an activity or are in an employment relationship in Slovenia (Bešter et al. 2023, 23–24).

In the perceptions of the majority population, immigrant access to full voting rights continues to be contingent on acquiring Slovene citizenship. One possible explanation is that immigrants without Slovene citizenship, who would obtain the same voting rights as the majority population, are viewed as competitors for

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power and influence. Due to their cultural differences and divergent values, they may be perceived as seeking to steer society in a direction that the majority population does not endorse, thus leading to the perception of immigrants as a threat.

The idea that immigrants without Slovene citizenship should be able to establish their own civil society organisations co-funded by the State finds support only among 19.6% of the majority population. Under existing legislation, foreign nationals living in Slovenia can set up their own associations or other types of organisations, e.g., institutes. In this respect, their rights are equal to the rights of the majority population. In 2023, 134 immigrant organisations were active in Slovenia (Medvešek et al. 2023). Active organisations are those that submit annual reports to the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Records and Services. In practice, the State provides partial financial support for various cultural programmes and projects aimed at immigrant communities, in accordance with its legislative obligations.[10] The Ministry of Culture and the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities regularly publish calls for tenders that offer the possibility of funding cultural projects of immigrant communities or organisations targeting immigrants.

A favourable attitude from the receiving society towards immigrant organisations can have a positive impact on the integration of immigrants into the wider society. Conversely, opposition to such immigrant organising can foster ethnic segregation and radicalisation of immigrant communities (Pilati 2012; Herman & Jacobs 2015). Our previous research (Medvešek et al. 2022a, 164–167) has shown that the majority society perceives considerable positive effects from immigrant integration and mobilisation within immigrant organisations, though a much smaller proportion supports state funding of these organisations. The small proportion of respondents supporting the establishment of immigrant organisations in this survey may be due to the inclusion of the question regarding state funding.

The majority population of Slovenia favours the possibility for immigrants to participate in majority organisations funded by the State more than the establishment of immigrant civil society organisations. This option was supported by 32.4% of respondents, while opposition to this form of immigrant participation was the lowest at 48.2%. Notably, this is the only form of immigrant participation where the share of respondents with a negative opinion did not exceed 50%. In practice, as our survey shows, immigrants are indeed more likely to be involved in majority organisations (e.g., trade unions, organisations in the fields of education, arts, culture, environment protection, animal protection, sports and recreation, peace organisations, charitable and humanitarian organisations, organisations associated with religious beliefs) than in specific immigrant organisations (Bešter et al. 2023, 35).

The majority population is also more supportive of immigrant participation in existing political parties than of the establishment of immigrant civil society

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organisations. This option was supported by 26.3% of respondents, which is surprisingly high given the low proportion supporting the immigrants' rights to vote and stand for election.

In democratic countries, political parties act as a bridge between civil society and state institutions. Their role is to translate societal interests and ideologies into legislative proposals and to train and nominate individuals for various political offices. On one hand, party politics is an element of government policy; on the other hand, democratic parties are voluntary associations, not state institutions, that exercise legitimate political power. Not all political parties are part of the government; some remain on the margins of the political system, advocating for more radical political change (Martiniello 2006, 96). Political party membership and the willingness to take an active role within a political party is an important form of participation. Immigrants' party membership is an indicator of their involvement in wider society and an expression of their interest in central social issues. Their involvement can influence party positions and electoral politics (Doomernik et al. 2010). MIPEX notes that immigrants are allowed to join political parties without restrictions in 27 out of 56 countries (MIPEX 2020). In Slovenia, however, foreigners cannot become regular members of political parties under the Political Parties Act, though they can become honorary members if the party's statutes allow it. An exception is made for citizens of other EU Member States who have a recognised right to vote in Slovenia (Art. 7 of the Political Parties Act). These are individuals holding a permanent residence registration permit and having a registered permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia, or a residence registration permit and a registered temporary residence in the Republic of Slovenia (Art. 5. of the Local Elections Act).

In a similar proportion to immigrant membership in political parties, the majority population also supports the possibility for immigrants to exercise their rights by organising protests. Specifically, 27.3% of the majority population supports this option.

The right to protest is part of the rights to freedom of (opinion and) expression and to (peaceful) assembly and association, which are enshrined in fundamental human rights documents[11] and the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (1991, Art. 39 and 42). These rights have no limitations based on nationality or any other personal circumstances of the individual. While protests are a form of political participation that allows immigrants to express their needs and interests, they do not lead to the acquisition of institutionalised positions of power or political functions that would guarantee decision-making opportunities for immigrants. Decisions on whether the needs and interests expressed in protests will be taken into account remain in the hands of others. From this perspective, the majority population is likely to perceive the participation of immigrants in protests as less threatening and is therefore not so much opposed to immigrants exercising their rights by organising protests.

The data presented here confirm our assumption that the majority population in Slovenia is generally not in favour of the civic and political participation of immigrants. Notably, there is a reluctance towards those forms of political participation through which immigrants could have a more direct influence on political decision-making, such as running for political office or voting for candidates.

5. Factors Influencing the Attitudes of the Majority Population towards the Civic and Political Participation of Immigrants

In the section below, we will examine whether and how the following factors influence the respondents' views on the civic and political participation of immigrants: gender, age, education, type of settlement in which the respondents reside, their ideological orientation, and employment status.

Considering the findings of the Challenges of Integration survey, indicating that men, the older generation, respondents with lower education, and those living in rural environments have more negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in general (Medvešek et al. 2022a, 98, 125), we assume that these categories of the population also have more negative attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants (Medvešek et al. 2022a, 98, 125). As regards ideological orientation, research shows that more right-leaning members of the majority population feel more threatened by immigrants compared to their more left-leaning counterparts (Kende et al. 2024). Thus, in terms of threat perception, more right-leaning individuals might perceive politically active immigrants competing for political power as particularly threatening. On this basis, we hypothesise that more right-leaning individuals have more negative attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants than those who are more left-leaning. Another factor influencing the population's attitudes towards immigrants or immigration is employment, mainly because of its association with perceptions of economic threat. For example, Callens and Meuleman (2017) find that unemployment is associated with significantly stronger perceptions of economic threat, which may (in turn) be associated with more negative attitudes towards immigration (Lancee & Pardos-Prado 2013). In line therewith, we assume that the unemployed have negative attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants.

To test these assumptions, we first used the hierarchical clustering method to examine how respondents group themselves according to their agreement or disagreement with the possibility of immigrants having access to different forms of civic and political participation.[12] We used Ward's method, which has the fewest assumptions and provides the easiest way to detect different structures in the data. Differences between units were calculated using Euclidean distance.

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From the dendrogram, we extracted the classification of the respondents into three groups. The assumption of grouping the respondents into three groups was verified using the k-means clustering method.

The first group of respondents, which we called negative attitudes (n = 511), clusters respondents who predominantly answered No to the given questions (a–f, see Table 2) (we assigned a value of 2 to the answer No). Consequently, their answers have higher mean values. In the second group, undecided (n = 139), the answers to all questions have low mean values, indicating that this group consists of respondents who largely answered I don't know to the given questions (the answer I don't know was assigned a value of 0). In the third group, positive attitudes (n = 317), respondents often answered No to question b and partially to question a (value 2), while frequently answering Yes to the other four questions (value 1). Based on the classification of the respondents into three groups, we created a new variable, attitudes towards immigrant participation, with the following values: 1 – negative, 2 – undecided, and 3 – positive.

Next, we examined the characteristics of the respondents classified into these three groups according to their attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants (negative, undecided, positive) and the factors influencing such.

Chart 2: Correlation between the respondents' gender and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023
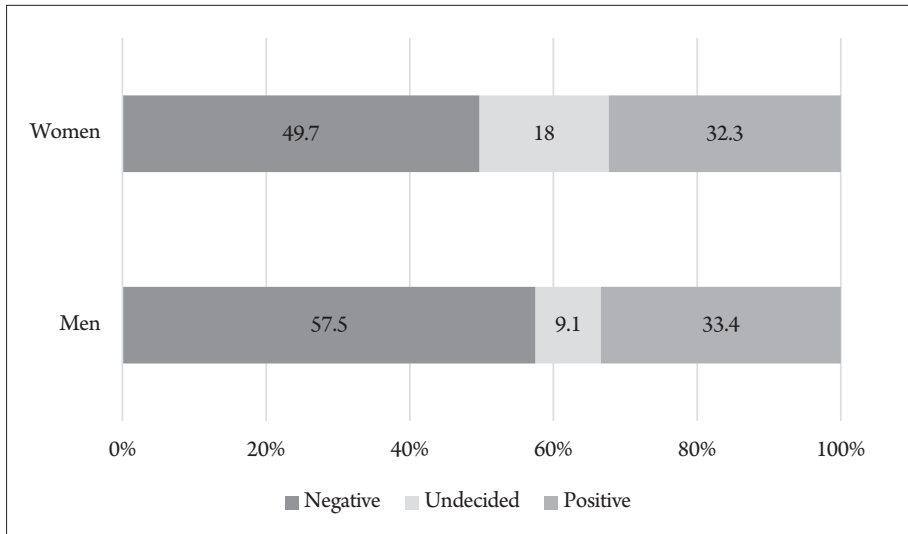
Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

There was a statistically significant correlation between the variable attitudes towards participation and gender, $\chi^2(2) = 15.64$, $p < .001$. Women were more

likely to be undecided (18%) than men (9.1%) about immigrants' participation. Conversely, men showed a higher proportion (57.5%) of negative attitudes towards participation than women (49.7%). However, the proportions of individuals with positive attitudes towards immigrant participation were similar among women (32.3%) and men (33.4%).

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Chart 3: Correlation between the respondents' age and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023

Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

There was also a statistically significant correlation between age and the variable attitudes towards participation, $\chi^2(6) = 16.93$, $p = .010$. Young people under 30 years of age exhibited the highest proportion of individuals across all age categories who displayed positive attitudes towards immigrant participation (43.6%), alongside the highest proportion of individuals undecided towards immigrant participation (17%) and the lowest proportion of individuals with negative attitudes (39.4%). Among respondents aged between 31 and 45 years, the highest proportion of individuals demonstrated a negative attitude towards immigrant participation (56.1%) compared to all other age categories, with 32.4% exhibiting a positive attitude and the lowest proportion (11.5%) showing indecision towards immigrant participation. The age groups 46–60 years and 61+ years displayed relatively similar attitudes towards immigrant participation. Over half of the respondents in both categories (55.2% of those aged 46–60 years and 55.6% of those aged 61+ years) held negative attitudes towards immigrant participation. Additionally, 29.3% of individuals aged 46–60 years and 30.1% of

those aged 61+ years expressed positive attitudes towards immigrant participa-
tion, while the shares of those undecided were 15.5% and 14.3%, respectively.

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Chart 4: Correlation between the respondents' education and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023

Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

A statistically significant correlation was also identified between education and the variable attitudes towards participation, $\chi^2(6) = 22.00$, $p = .001$. The data suggest that the higher the education level of the respondents, the greater the proportion with positive attitudes towards immigrant participation. Among respondents with a primary school education or less, 22.2% exhibited posi-tive attitudes towards immigrant participation. This figure rose to 26% among those with lower or secondary vocational education, further increasing to 31.1% among respondents with upper secondary technical or general education. Among those with tertiary education, the proportion with positive attitudes reached 38.1%. The highest proportion of respondents with negative attitudes towards immigrant participation was found among those with lower or second-ary vocational education (65%), while the lowest proportion was among those with tertiary education (46.2%). The shares of respondents who displayed an undecided attitude towards immigrant participation were highest among those with primary education or less (22.2%) and lowest among those with lower or secondary vocational education (9%).

Chart 5: Correlation between the type of settlement in which the respondents reside and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023

Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

There is a statistically significant correlation also between the type of settlement[13] where the respondents reside and the variable attitudes towards participation, $\chi^2(8) = 44.09$, $p < .001$. It appears that the proportion of individuals with negative attitudes towards immigrant participation decreases with increasing urbanisation and size of the settlement. For instance, respondents living in the capital, Ljubljana, exhibit the highest proportion of positive attitudes towards immigrant political participation (53%) and the lowest proportion of negative attitudes (29.5%). Similarly, residents of Ljubljana also display the highest proportion of undecided individuals. Conversely, respondents residing in non-urban settlements record the lowest proportion (24.2%) of individuals with positive attitudes and the highest proportion of individuals with negative attitudes towards immigrant participation (60.3%).

We also tested whether there was a correlation between the respondents' ideological self-classification and their attitudes towards immigrant participation. Ideological self-classification was assessed by asking respondents to position themselves on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represented left-leaning and 10 represented right-leaning. The analysis revealed that the respondents' ideological self-classification significantly influenced their attitudes towards immigrant participation $F(2, 738) = 28.87$, $p < .001$. Those classified in the group with positive attitudes towards immigrant participation tended to be more

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Chart 6: Correlation between the respondents' ideological self-classification on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 represents left-leaning and 10 indicates right-leaning, and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023
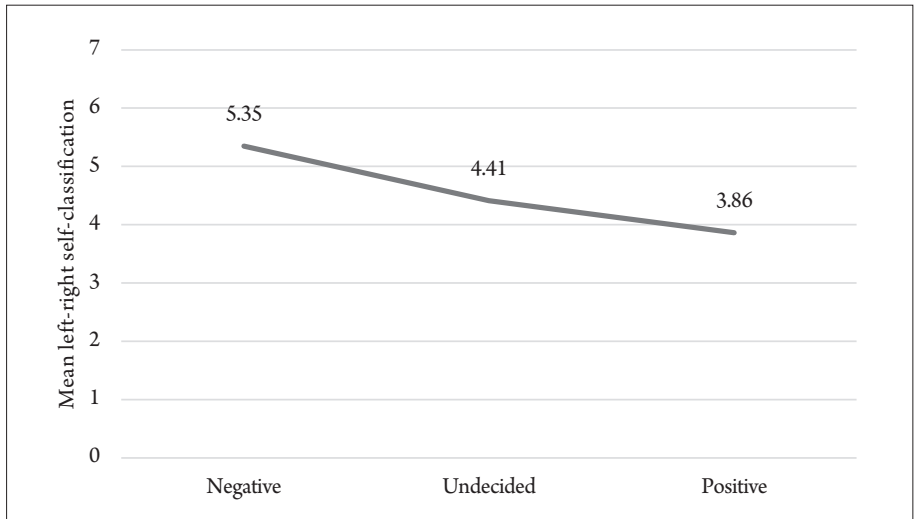
Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

Chart 7: Correlation between the respondents' status of employment and their attitudes towards civic and political participation of immigrants, 2023
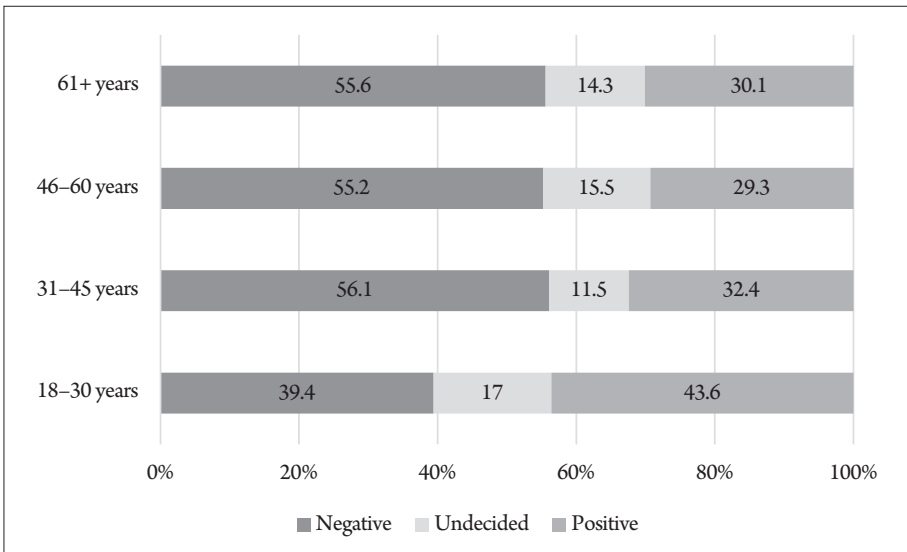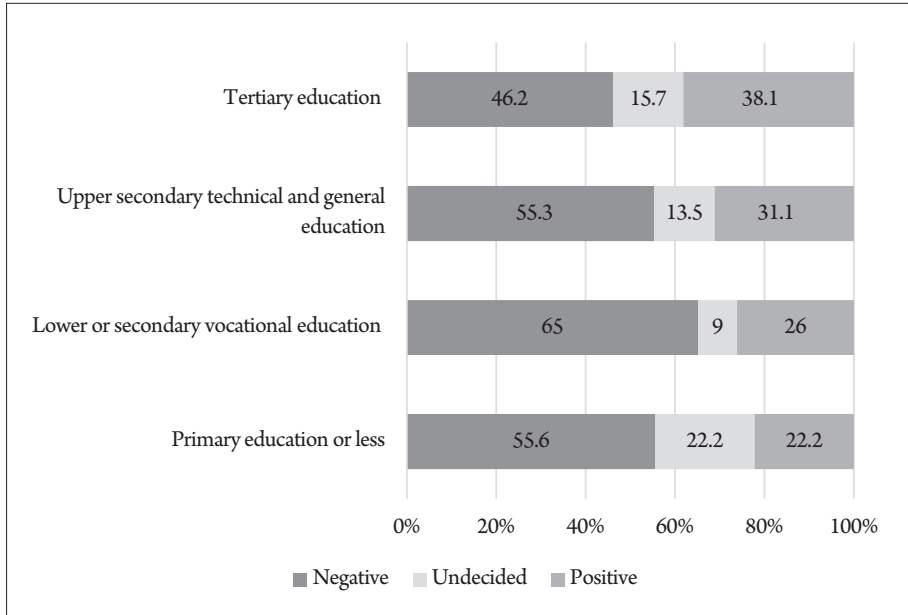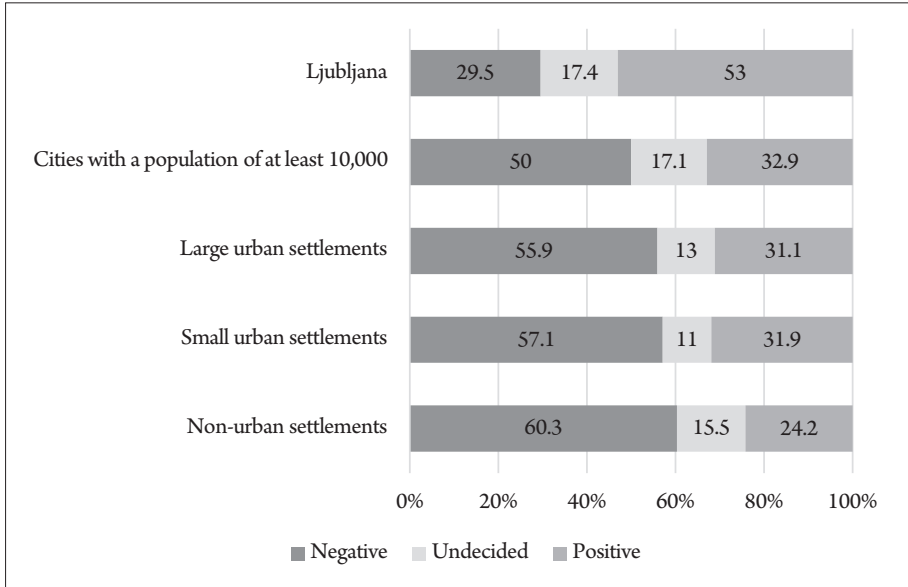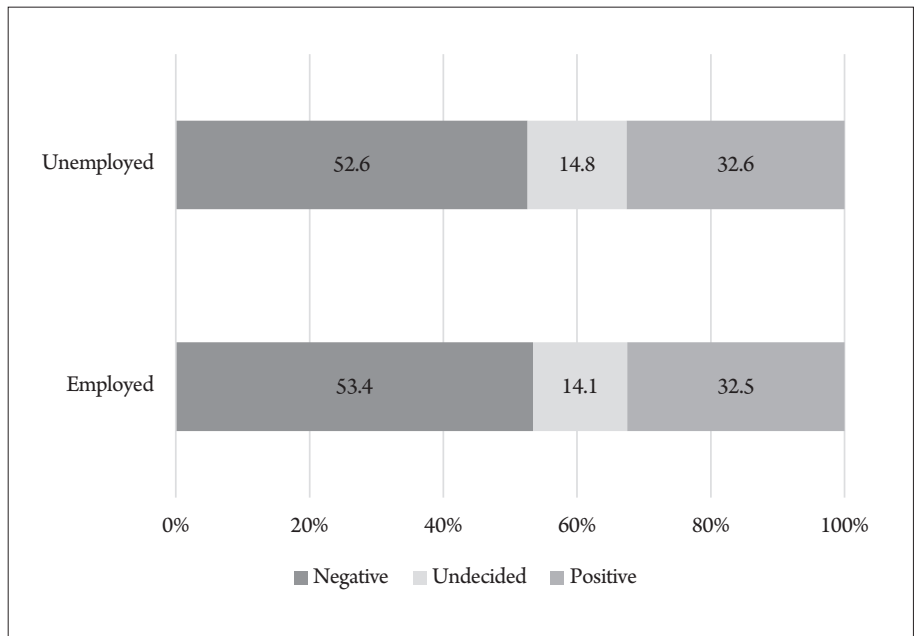

Source: Data from the Research on Participation.

left-leaning (mean = 3.86), while respondents in the undecided group leaned slightly towards the middle of the scale (mean = 4.41). Conversely, respondents in the negative attitudes group were more right-leaning (mean = 5.35). Post-hoc testing using Turkey's test further revealed statistically significant differences between undecided and negative attitudes groups ($p = .003$), as well as between the positive and negative attitudes groups ($p < .001$).

The correlation between the variable attitudes towards immigrant participation and employment did not prove to be statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 0.12$, $p = .937$. Regardless of employment status, approximately half of the respondents held negative attitudes, while less than a third expressed positive attitudes, with just over 14% showing indecision towards immigrant participation.

6. Conclusion

The civic and political participation of immigrants are gradually gaining recognition in the European setting as crucial dimensions of the integration process. Consequently, an increasing number of countries are beginning to promote integration into society by extending opportunities for immigrants to engage in socio-political activities in the receiving country. Immigrant participation has also become a prominent topic in research; however, most studies have focused on the forms and levels of political and civic participation, as well as the various individual and structural factors (opportunities and obstacles) that influence immigrant participation, while the attitudes of the majority population towards such participation have received limited attention in scientific research. The research presented in this paper aims to address this gap.

One of the objectives of this paper was to investigate the attitudes of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants in Slovenia. Drawing on the results of previous surveys on the attitudes of the majority population towards immigration and immigrants in general, which indicated considerable reluctance towards immigrants and immigration, and considering the rather unfavourable structural opportunities for immigrant political participation, we assumed that the majority population was largely hesitant towards the civic and political participation of immigrants. The analysis of data from the survey among the majority population of Slovenia confirmed our assumptions. The findings revealed predominantly negative attitudes towards all the above forms of civic and political participation of immigrants, particularly towards granting to immigrants without Slovene citizenship (even if they are permanent residents of Slovenia) the same voting rights as those pertaining to the majority population and allowing them to stand as candidates in elections. The most negative attitudes of the majority population are in fact observed in relation to traditional modes of political participation, specifically active and passive voting rights.

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Responses suggest concerns about the influence of immigrants on the political processes, with a prevailing sentiment that such rights should be tied to citizenship which implies a greater commitment to the State. The inclusion of immigrants without Slovene citizenship in the political decision-making process is obviously not widely perceived as a mechanism to strengthen democratic processes and promote a more inclusive society.

Another aim of the paper was to examine factors influencing the attitudes of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants in Slovenia, such as gender, age, education, type of settlement in which the respondents reside, ideological orientation, and employment status. Based on previous research on the influence of these factors on the attitudes of the majority population towards immigration and immigrants in general, we assumed that a similar influence would be found in the attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants. Our assumptions were that men, older individuals, those with lower education levels, residents of less urbanised areas, ideologically right-leaning individuals, and the unemployed would hold more negative attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants than women, the younger generation, people with higher education, those living in urban environments, ideologically left-leaning individuals, and those with full-time jobs. Again, the analysis confirmed most of our assumptions, except the last one. Although we expected that employment status would influence the attitude towards immigrant participation, our results revealed that economic stability related to the employment status did not appear to significantly shape attitudes towards immigrant participation. Instead, factors such as cultural differences, demographics, and political beliefs seemed to play a more prominent role.

Moreover, the analysis of the impact of these factors on the attitudes of the majority population towards immigrant participation revealed interrelationships between some of these factors. It is therefore expected that with the rise in the average level of education in Slovenia, there will also be an increase, to some extent, in the proportion of the majority population in higher age categories who will exhibit favourable attitudes towards the civic and political participation of immigrants. Conversely, the relationship between factors such as settlement type, educational structure, and ideological self-classification warrants further exploration. Large urban settlements tend to have a more highly educated population, which is generally more receptive to immigrant participation compared to the population of small or non-urban settlements, which tends to be more conservative on multiple issues (e.g., elections). Focusing on the type or size of the settlement only, the Research on Participation (Medvešek et al. 2023) showed that, due to the above-average share of immigrants in the largest settlements, at least one segment of immigrant civic participation was highly concentrated there, namely the activity of immigrant organisations. In 2023, almost three quarters of all immigrant organisations operated in the seven largest Slovene cities. These

are also the environments where the majority population shows the most positive attitudes towards immigrant participation, which could argue in favour of the intergroup contact theory.

The perceived reluctance of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants may stem from a sense of threat in the competition for political power. Members of the majority population may view politically active immigrants as a threat to their own position in society and a potential threat to their interests. The fear of losing the dominant influence of the majority population leads to a resistance against granting equal political rights to immigrants. It is also important to understand that attitudes towards immigrant participation are influenced by prevailing societal norms and values; societies favouring traditional identities and societal structures are less likely to support immigrant inclusion in political life as they are not in favour of societal changes. Moreover, the general reluctance of the majority population towards the civic and political participation of immigrants in Slovenia may be largely related to the general reluctance towards immigration perceived in other studies (e.g., Medvešek et al. 2022a). Among the factors contributing to the majority population's opposition to immigrant participation, perceptions of cultural threat are particularly noteworthy. This suggests that the majority population is wary of potential changes in the prevailing culture and values of Slovene society and may therefore oppose the civic and (especially) political participation of immigrants, fearing that such engagement could promote interests and viewpoints diverging from the *status quo*. It may not even be a matter of direct opposition to immigrant participation, but rather a resistance to changes that could disrupt societal norms. This line of reasoning is consistent with the notion of the participation paradox mentioned by Klarenbeek & Weide (2020), but additional research is required to validate these assumptions.

The reluctance of the majority population towards immigrant participation may also stem from a broader distrust of immigrants, possibly related to the majority population's distrust of institutions (institutional trust) and people (interpersonal trust) in general. In fact, in terms of institutional and interpersonal trust, Slovenia ranks below the EU average (OECD Data 2024; Ortiz-Ospina et al. 2016).

Considering its demographic and economic needs, Slovenia will likely continue to rely on immigrants in the future, possibly to an even greater extent. Therefore, it is essential to raise awareness about the importance of integrating immigrants into civic and political life to ensure their successful integration and to preserve the democratic character of Slovenia's society.

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Notes

[1] Civic participation refers to activities aimed at the general benefit of the community, rather than merely at the pursuit of personal interests. These activities include helping other community members, acting on behalf of the community, addressing community problems, and participating in community life in general (Barrett & Zani 2015, 5).

[2] Political participation refers to activities aimed at engaging with the political community or political institutions, processes, and political decision-making at various levels – local, regional,

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national, or supranational (Barrett & Zani 2015, 4). The purpose or effect of political participation activities is to influence government decisions and governance, either directly by shaping or implementing public policies, or indirectly by selecting individuals who shape those policies (Ekman & Amnå 2012).

3   The participants expressed their views on the following integration policy measures: implementing compulsory Slovene language courses; implementing compulsory integration programmes for immigrants, including an orientation course with basic information about everyday life, social values, and norms; educating young people in schools about intercultural coexistence and respect; implementing integration measures already in the immigrants' countries of origin; assisting immigrants in finding employment; promoting objective media reporting on the integration of immigrants and their descendants; providing information on the positive contributions of immigrants to the development of Slovene society; prosecuting individuals who publicly incite hatred or intolerance towards immigrants; and promoting the inclusion of immigrants in political decision-making.

4   Research data will be available in the Social Science Data Archives (ADP) (https://www.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/eng/) after the completion of the project.

5   Long-term security pertains to immigrants' ability to plan for settling in the country over the long term and to feel assured about their future there. This encompasses factors such as family reunification rights, criteria for obtaining permanent residence, and access to citizenship.

6   Once immigrants become part of the community and social ties are established, the majority population starts to see them as neighbours.

7   Exemptions from these two requirements are possible under the provisions of the Citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia Act. For example, under Art. 10, citizens of an EU Member States do not have to provide proof of release from their current citizenship if there is reciprocity between the two countries.

8   Immigrant organisations are organisations established by or primarily composed of members from immigrant communities or their descendants, whose activities focus on immigrant-related matters (in particular, the preservation of immigrant culture and language in their new environment, advocating for the rights and status of immigrants or immigrant communities), while majority organisations encompass all other organisations typically founded by members of the majority population.

9   Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) were received by e-mail on 7 May 2024.

10   Among the cultural programmes and projects financed by the State, Art. 65 of the Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act also lists those specifically intended for the "cultural integration of minority communities and immigrants, if their cultural programmes or projects exceed local relevance". Art. 66 of the same Act defines the competences of municipalities and provides that municipalities support "amateur cultural activities including those aimed at the cultural integration of minority communities and immigrants".

11   Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 19 and 20), Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Art. 10–12), European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 10 and 11), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 19 and 21).

12   See Table 2.

13   Variable type of settlement (according to the classification of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia): 1 – non-urban settlements, 2 – small urban settlements, 3 – large urban settlements, 4 – cities with a population of at least 10,000, 5 – Ljubljana.

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Mirjana Ule, Slavko Kurdija

Intercultural Relations and Attitudes towards Immigrants – The Case of Slovenia

The paper analyses public opinion towards immigrants in Slovenia, especially in terms of openness and acceptance. It begins by providing some key theoretical background on the topic and then draws on selected empirical data from the European Social Survey from a cross-temporal perspective. According to survey data, respondents in Slovenia have become more open towards immigrants in recent years. However, there are significant tensions between those who are more open to and those who oppose immigration. This divide between immigration supporters and opponents is a persistent social tension that characterises political orientations in Slovenia in general. Despite the shifting public opinion towards greater tolerance, right-wing populist politicians may still target and mobilise those who remain sceptical or hostile towards immigrants.

Keywords: migration, intercultural tension, social categorisation, acceptance, public opinion, populism.

Medkulturni odnosi in odnos do priseljencev – primer Slovenije

Prispevek analizira javno mnenje o priseljencih v Sloveniji, zlasti z vidika odprtosti in sprejemanja. Avtorji na začetku predstavijo nekaj ključnih teoretičnih izhodišč, nato pa raziskovalno tematiko proučijo še s časovnega vidika na podlagi izbranih empiričnih podatkov iz Evropske družboslovne raziskave. Slednja kaže, da anketiranci v Sloveniji v zadnjih letih postajajo bolj odprti do priseljencev, hkrati pa se pojavljajo napetosti med tistimi, ki so bolj odprti do priseljevanja, in tistimi, ki priseljevanju nasprotujejo. Ločnica med podporniki in nasprotniki priseljevanja je ena od oblik stalnih družbenih napetosti, ki so na splošno značilne za politične usmeritve v Sloveniji. Kljub nagibanju javnega mnenja k večji strpnosti lahko namreč populistični politiki z desnega pola še vedno najdejo somišljenike in podpornike med tistimi deli prebivalstva, ki do priseljencev ostajajo skeptični ali sovražni.

***Ključne besede:** migracije, medkulturne napetosti, družbena kategorizacija, sprejemanje, javno mnenje, populizem.*

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1. Introduction

In the European Union, migration has become a fact of life. As the Special Eurobarometer survey report entitled Integration of Immigrants in the European Union (European Commission 2022) notes, approximately 37 million persons born outside the EU reside in the Union, making up around 8% of its total population. Both within the EU and between the EU and the rest of the world, populations have become more mobile, moving for work, family, leisure, and, unfortunately, fleeing persecution and war. Migration and the integration of immigrants have become, and are likely to remain, politically sensitive issues.

A recent study by the Vienna-based International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) on migration trends in the EU warns that a substantial increase in non-European migrants to EU countries can be expected in 2024 (ICMPD 2024). In addition to established causes and reasons for the continued influx of migration into the EU – such as the increasing number of economically and politically threatened countries, worsening ecological crises, and new military conflicts around the world – the report cites the upcoming European and US elections. These elections will feature migration as a primary theme, with governments and opposition forces trying to convince their voters of their plans for reducing irregular arrivals and asylum applications (ICMPD 2024, 34). Consequently, we can expect a tightening of entry conditions to the EU for migrants from crisis areas. "I call it the closed-shop effect. People will hear all these measures on migration announced in election campaigns and will think they have to be here [in the EU] before they come into force," said ICMPD Director General Michael Spindelegger (O'Carroll 2024).

For most migrants, Slovenia is just a transit country, through which they try to reach the EU's central countries. However, with a larger influx, more immigrants are likely to want to stay in Slovenia. The key question here is whether, and to what extent, public opinion in the EU and Slovenia supports the social integration of immigrants who wish to stay in Slovenia and whether domestic society is willing to help them do so. Slovenia's policy towards immigrants has a significant impact on contact and communication with immigrants. On one hand, this policy tries to follow the prevailing attitudes, opinions, and expectations of public opinion in Slovenia towards immigrants, but it also strongly influences public opinion through the media and political messages.

In this paper, we analyse public attitudes towards immigrants in Slovenia, especially regarding openness and acceptance. We begin with some key social-psychological theoretical concepts, assuming that a more open public attitude consequently also allows for better integration. The relevance of a social-psychological approach to the study of attitudes towards immigrants is also highlighted in other contemporary studies on migration, such as the study by the Dresden Forum for Migration and Democracy on migration and populism in Germany

and the EU (MIDEM 2018) and the study by the Roman social psychologist Valerio Pellegrini et al. on the psychological underpinnings of anti-migrant attitudes among voters of populist parties in Italy (Pellegrini et al. 2022). In the second part of the paper, our central focus will be on selected empirical data on attitudes towards immigrants from the European Social Survey from a temporal comparative perspective.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Social-Psychological Characteristics of Intercultural Relations

Intercultural tensions are not the result of random events. They develop out of cultural differences influenced by socio-economic, historical, and social-psychological factors between different social groups. Relationships among members of the same micro-culture or culture are governed by the rules of interpersonal communication, where we enter relationships as individuals with personal characteristics. However, when interacting with persons from other cultures, micro-cultures, or groups, we typically act as representatives of those groups or cultures, not as individuals. This means that we perceive and judge ourselves and others as representatives of these cultures, not as individuals with specific characteristics. Personality traits take a back seat, while cultural and group characteristics come to the fore, governed by different rules (Arasaratnam 2013). In intercultural communication, we do not then act as "I" or "you". Instead, "we", "you" or "they" relations come to the forefront.

The most common strategy for intercultural communication and relations is to increase attention to group identity markers such as gender, age, race, physical characteristics, social belonging, and lifestyle. Gender, age, and race are typical categories or prototypes for social categorisation and therefore also the first characteristics noticed when perceiving people from other cultures (Postmes & Branscombe 2010). When comparing our own group with other groups, we tend to succumb to various errors of judgement, such as overestimating our own group and underestimating other groups. Renowned social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1978) calls this phenomenon the process of establishing a positive difference. By establishing a positive difference, we artificially raise the value of our own group and indirectly enhance our self-esteem. Experiments have shown that this phenomenon occurs even in purely ad hoc groups in laboratory experiments by artificially dividing the experimental subjects into two or more groups (Baron & Kerr 2003).

The spread of negative perceptions of other groups is also based on what are known as illusory correlations – the tendency to perceive less normal and socially disapproved behaviour in people from other groups rather than in members of one's own group (Kauff et al. 2016). The effect of illusory correlations is greater when people are anxious, scared, angry, or resentful. It is most common

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in times of crisis. Insecurity, anger, and fear are phenomena that are strongly present in the social fabric of the modern world. Ashley Whitaker (2020) talks about how a state of permanent insecurity causes existential rage, an intolerable and acute flooding of people with unreflected frustrations and anxiety about existential threats. The feelings of humiliation and anger that accompany this existential anger are common fodder for populist policies that exploit these feelings to spread hateful sentiments towards the perceived perpetrators of this situation, such as members of marginalised groups, people with different life-styles, refugees, migrants. It is then easy to make unjustified generalisations of negative characteristics based on certain observed negative traits, often express-ing the defensive behaviour of a minority group, which quickly escalates into a general devaluation of that group. They perceive possible violent behaviour by the minority as aggression, while they perceive violent behaviour by their own group as justified self-defence.

According to a study by the MIDEM Forum on Migration and Popu-lism, the segments of the population that feel most threatened by immigrants are those that are apolitical, have less education, and, above all, have had no contact with immigrants (MIDEM 2018, 20). These segments are also the most supportive of demands for radical restrictions on migration and the expulsion of immigrants from the country. These feelings are deliberately stirred up and reinforced by right-wing populist politicians and their extensive media propa-ganda, which spread fears of the devaluation of established ways of life, their own culture, and common identity (MIDEM 2018, 37). Although microaggressions are subtle, appearing as innocent verbal or behavioural slips in interpersonal relations between representatives of the host society and immigrants, they can have severe and long-lasting negative consequences for immigrants if they are continuously repeated, because they further reinforce and deepen their sense of social exclusion and unwantedness (Quassoli & Colombo 2023).

However, not all foreigners are equally accepted, although they are generally all subject to processes of stigmatisation or "chains of othering", as the cultural sociologist Edward Said (2005) calls this mechanism of negative social categori-sation. The first act in this chain of othering is the homogenisation of foreigners as other and different, without any internal differentiation among individu-als. Homogenisation is usually followed by the hierarchical classification of groups of strangers according to a biological, cultural, or historical hierarchical scale, as defined by Erwin Goffman in his stigma theory. In Goffman's typol-ogy of stigmas, strangers are victims of three types of stigmas, albeit to different degrees. The first type of stigma is represented by physical characteristics and deficiencies, such as gender and age. The second type is represented by real or imagined life and value orientations and habits. The third type of stigma is what Goffman calls "tribal stigma". This includes racial, ethnic, and religious character-istics (Goffman 1986).

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In relation to migrants, the third, "tribal stigma", which combines racial, ethnic, and religious "otherness", seems to overlap with the first two (physical and character). At the top of the hierarchical scale of otherness are therefore the "good foreigners", for example, white, wealthy members of Western culture who, although they are not natives, are interesting, useful, and acceptable. At the other end of the chain of othering are those foreigners who have accumulated all the deprivations of foreignness, for example poor, black, illegal immigrants (Van Rijswijk et al. 2009). Such stereotypes are common in situations where there are no clear guidelines for behaviour and speech and no objective criteria for judging other people.

Interestingly, the feeling of social deprivation is also common among members of dominant groups. For example, surveys of white people with conservative political leanings in the US have shown feelings of group disadvantage against black people, believing that black people are privileged in the US. Research on nationalist movements also shows that they are regularly associated with references to group disadvantage (Lopes et al. 2013). Members of German nationalist groups in Carinthia (Koroška) say that they feel disadvantaged because of the special rights enjoyed by members of the Slovene minority in Carinthia.

Unlike the simplistic adaptation constructs of the newcomer and the native, which serve primarily to navigate unfamiliar situations, the ideological (nationalistic, prejudiced) construct (of the foreigner) is different. Nationalist constructs further simplify the relationship to others and otherness by deliberately adapting to the particular interests that drive them, and therefore usually no longer have empirically observable links to the original reality. Nationalistic, prejudiced discourse is one of the most difficult obstacles to rational intercultural communication and relations. It manifests primarily in disrespectful, intolerant, or dismissive attitudes towards members of other nations, ethnic communities, races, cultures, people with different lifestyles, religions, or sexual orientations.

Otherness in nationalist discourse becomes a totalising signifier that serves as an argument for rejecting the coexistence or mixing of different racial or ethnic groups or individuals. Bauman (2003), for example, speaks of "myxophobia", the fear of mixing with foreigners. Goffman (1986) calls this type of fear the fear of contamination, the fear of being contaminated by a stigmatised person's trait and thus being devalued. It is precisely this otherness, underpinned by the thesis of the diversity of cultures and their mutual incompatibility, that is one of the main arguments against immigration and the integration of migrants into new environments.

Pellegrin et al.'s study on the psychological basis of anti-migrant attitudes, for example, finds that discrimination against migrants is closely linked to competition as a fundamental social strategy and to the tendency to maintain dominance and hierarchy in society (Pellegrini et al. 2022, 455). If we describe a minority as lazy or stupid, these descriptions help us to rationalise the social system that has

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created discrimination and marginalisation of that minority. Such rationalisations also justify the privileges of the dominant group. This means that prejudice has the ideological function of justifying the local or global social order.

But the world today is too heterogeneous and dynamic to narrow our relationships and actions to only those people we know, who are close to us, and who fit in with us. People from cultures different from the one in which we have been socialised are around us all the time. We need to be prepared to meet them. Anyone can find themselves in the role of stranger, in strange physical or social environments. The first experience of intercultural communication is precisely that of strangeness.

3. Introduction to Empirical Evidence

According to the Special Eurobarometer survey, Europeans tend to largely overestimate the number of non-EU immigrants as a proportion of the population of their countries (European Commission 2022)[1]. For example, around a third of respondents believe that their share is between 12% and 25%, while the average is only about 5%. Additionally, over a third of Europeans (36%) think that there are more immigrants staying legally than illegally (European Commission 2022, 18–19). 31% of Europeans view immigration as more of a problem than an opportunity, although this perception varies significantly by country. Compared to 2017, in 2021 Europeans were slightly more inclined to see immigration from outside the EU as an opportunity. The tendency to view immigration as an opportunity decreases with age, with 32% of those aged 15 to 24 seeing it as an opportunity, compared to only 18% of those aged 55 or older (European Commission 2022, 40–41).

Most Europeans (64%) feel comfortable with immigrants, and four in ten respondents interact with them on a weekly basis. Between 2017 and 2021, on average across the EU, respondents seem to have become noticeably more comfortable interacting with immigrants across various social categories (European Commission 2022). More than half of Europeans (51%) have either friends or family members who are immigrants, a sharp increase of 20 percentage points since 2017. Younger respondents (53%) and those with higher levels of education (45%) are consistently more likely to report higher levels of contact with immigrants on at least a weekly basis. This is also confirmed by the empirical data presented in the section below.

According to the survey, residents of Sweden, other Scandinavian countries, Denmark, and the Netherlands are the most open to immigrants. Slovenia falls in the middle range among EU countries on most questions in this report, close to Germany and France. On some questions, such as willingness to engage with immigrants, Slovenia is even more open. However, fewer respondents in Slovenia than in the EU average consider the integration of migrants to be successful,

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and significantly more respondents in Slovenia (40%) see migrants as more of a problem than an opportunity, with only 17% seeing them as more of an opportunity than a problem.

To examine attitudes towards immigrants in Slovenia in more detail, the following analysis will focus on selected questions measuring openness and acceptance towards immigrants based on data from the European Social Survey. We will also conduct a detailed comparison based on age and education.

4. Method and Data Sources

The baseline measurement was taken from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2002 to 2023 (ESS ERIC 2024). Since the beginning, ESS has included a comprehensive set of questions related to migrants. In 2002 and 2014, in addition to the standard block of questions, extensive modules on migration and migrants were also developed. The ESS offers an exceptional opportunity to monitor longitudinal and cross-national comparisons in attitudes towards migrants.[2]

The European Social Survey (ESS ERIC, n. d.) is a renowned cross-national social science survey emphasising empirical observations of social phenomena through systematic data collection and analysis. The ESS's research design relies on cross-sectional survey data collected from a representative sample of individuals across more than 30 European countries. The survey employs face-to-face interviews with standardised questionnaires, with a focus on high-quality translations into the languages of all participating countries. The ESS is one of the most valid and reliable instruments for systematically monitoring attitudes and subjective perceptions in European countries. Its methodology has reached the highest level of standardisation in comparative social science research (Malnar & Kurdija 2010), and the survey has been awarded the Descartes Prize, the highest European award in scientific research, for its achievements in ensuring consistency and equivalence of methods cross-nationally.

Within the regular ESS questions on public attitudes towards migration, we find various perspectives on the issue, from the permeability of national borders to different types of migrants and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of migration. We will use longitudinal comparisons of Slovene data over the entire survey duration from 2002 to 2023 (Kurdija et al. 2023). However, some highlights will focus specifically on structural differences between 2014 and 2023. We will mainly observe two aspects of attitudes towards immigrants. The first examines the level of support for immigration in Slovenia from an inter-temporal perspective with the question: "Has Slovenia become a worse or a better place to live due to people coming to live here from other countries?". Respondents answered using a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating a worse place to live and 10 a better place to live.

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Secondly, we will observe public attitudes towards immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe. Namely, the survey records attitudes towards different categories of migrants regarding geographical proximity and similarity to Slovene national origin. The focus on immigrants from poorer non-European countries will most clearly show the contradictions within the Slovene public, considering the different social positions according to the respondent's age and education. Previous studies have shown pronounced distinctions in these two variables (Kunovich 2004). For age, we took three basic categories: 15–34 (young), 35–64 (middle) and 65+ (old). As for education, we grouped the categories from the cross-nationally comparable ISCED classification into three basic categories: lower, middle, and high education. The lower category includes all individuals with no or incomplete primary education to secondary vocational education, the medium category includes those with general secondary or higher vocational (post-secondary) education, and the high category includes those with a university diploma or higher. However, our focus will primarily be on observing the gap between the low and highly educated. The second aspect will be based on the question: "To what extent do you think Slovenia should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here?" The four possible answers were grouped into two predominantly opposing categories: 1 – Allow many/some migrants and 2 – Allow few/no migrants.

5. Results – Openness and Acceptance towards Immigrants in Slovenia

In the introduction to the empirical presentation, we first examine general attitudes towards immigration in Slovenia over time. Specifically, we address the question: "Has Slovenia become a worse or a better place to live due to people coming to live here from other countries?" Looking at the average values on a scale from 0 to 10 (with 0 indicating a worse place to live and 10 a better place to live), Slovenia ranks 18th with an average score of 4.45 in 2002, and 17th out of 21 countries in 2014 with an average of 4.54 (Austria, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Hungary are also behind Slovenia). In 2023,[3] the average is a bit higher (4.90), showing a slightly more optimistic general attitude towards immigration over time.

We can see a fairly stable picture in general attitudes towards immigration over the whole period, with no significant deviations. Even during and after the pronounced refugee crisis in 2015, there were no marked changes in public opinion. There was a slight downward swing in Slovenia from 2012 to 2016, but it was not particularly pronounced. On the contrary, the trend line shows a mild increase in the general climate towards this issue. A similar pattern can be observed in most other European countries. This is somewhat surprising, given

that in the broader European context, there has been a sharpening of the political discourse towards immigrants in the aftermath of the refugee crisis mainly caused by the war in Syria.

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Chart 1: Has Slovenia become a worse or a better place to live due to people coming to live here from other countries?
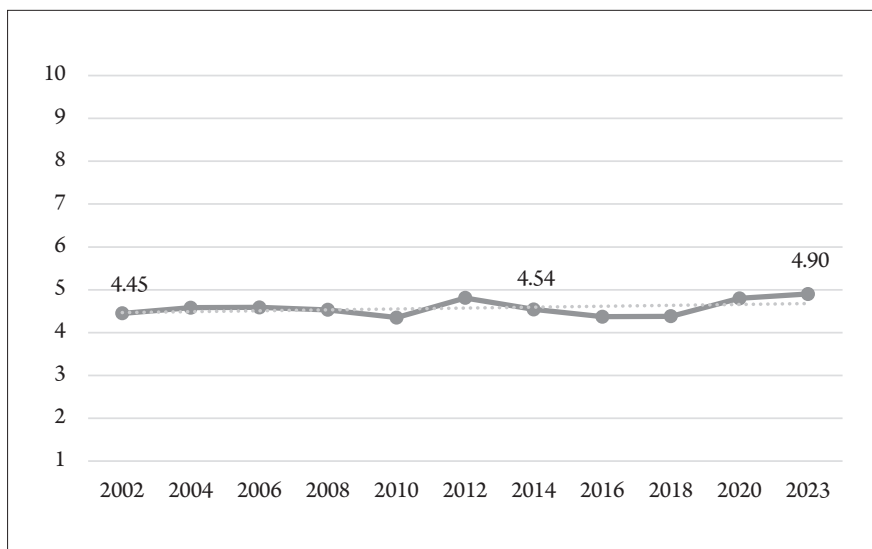
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2002–2023.
Note: The average on a scale from 0 to 10 (with 0 = worse place to live / 10 = better place to live).

If we analyse the data differently and focus only on the share of respondents who answered "better place to live" among the value-defined group, we observe more dynamics in the cross-temporal comparison. For the category "better place to live", we summed responses 7, 8, 9 and 10 on a scale from 1 to 10; for the category "worse place to live", we summed values 0, 1, 2, and 3. The midpoint values of 4, 5 and 6 were excluded as less defined in terms of their position. This approach provides clearer proportions, highlighting the positions expressed (in the sense of pro and contra) more distinctly. The percentages shown are calculated based on the number of respondents who selected answer choices 0, 1, 2, 3, and 7, 8, 9, 10.[4]

Chart 2 shows a slightly more evident, positive shift in attitudes towards immigration. Two notable peaks highlight this shift: the first in 2012, before the large-scale refugee crisis of 2015, and the second in 2023. These two points in the timeline shift the trend notably upward. The linear trend line shows an increase of around 10% in acceptance of immigration over 20 years.

Chart 2: Has Slovenia become a worse or a better place to live due to people coming to live here from other countries? Proportion of responses "better place to live" among more clearly opinionated respondents (%)

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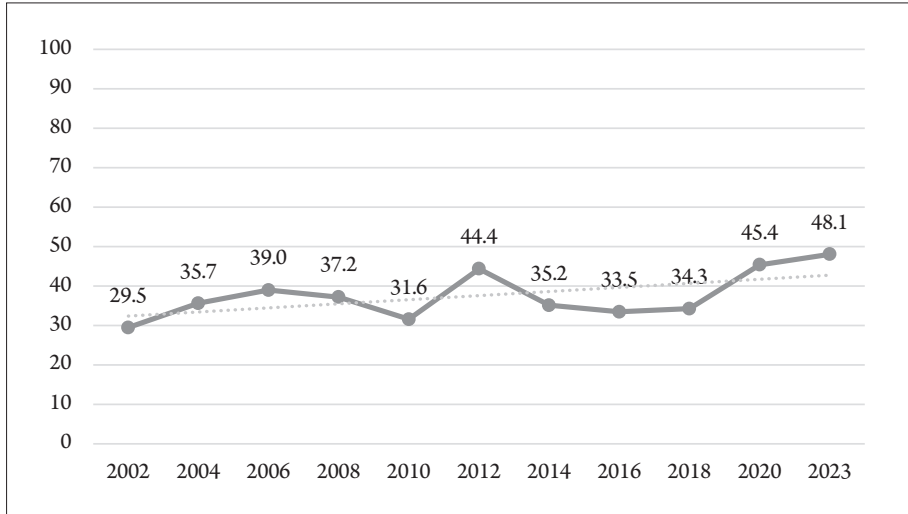
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2002–2023 (author's own calculations).

We also examined structural differences in attitudes towards immigration, focusing on questions that reveal greater divisiveness. The ESS categorises several types of immigrants based on their origin, but a detailed breakdown is beyond the scope of this paper. Our primary interest is identifying points where values and political attitudes towards immigrants diverge significantly. To this end, we analysed responses to the question: "To what extent do you think Slovenia should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here?" For this analysis, we will use (in sum) two opposing categories: 1 – Allow many/some migrants, indicating openness and acceptance, and 2 – Allow few/no migrants, indicating restriction or closure towards such immigrants.

A glance at Chart 3 confirms the impression given in the previous illustration. The dark line, which represents acceptance of migrants (from poor countries outside Europe), tends to rise, especially after 2018. The curves intersected in 2006, meaning the public was split down the middle. Since then, however, the share of "allow many/some migrants" has been slightly higher than the share of "allow few/no migrants". The increase is particularly pronounced after 2018, confirming the gradual increase in openness towards migrants from poorer countries outside Europe.

In the next step, we aim to investigate structural differences regarding this attitude dilemma for 2023. We will use the age and education of the respondents as the two basic demographic control criteria, as they reflect, to a large extent, the diversity of views at the subpopulation level.

Chart 3: To what extent do you think Slovenia should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here? (%)
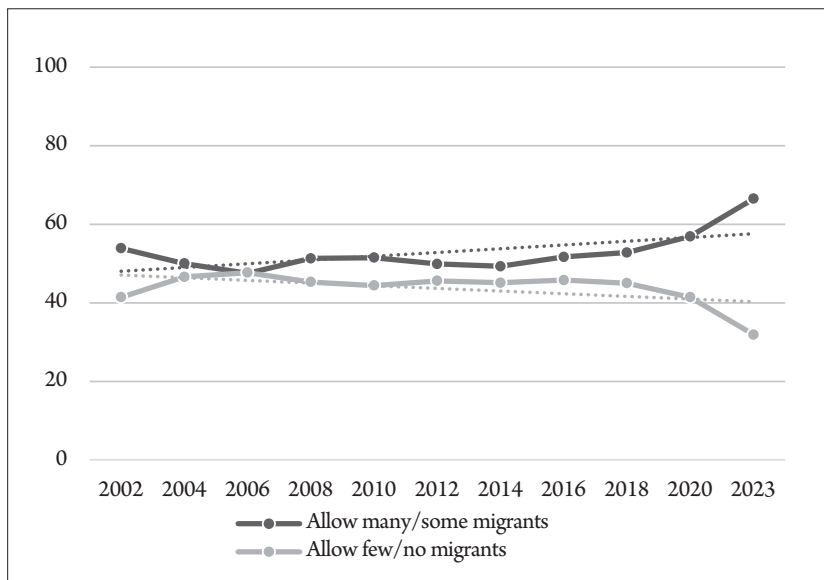
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2002–2023.

Chart 4: To what extent do you think Slovenia should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here? – By age (%)
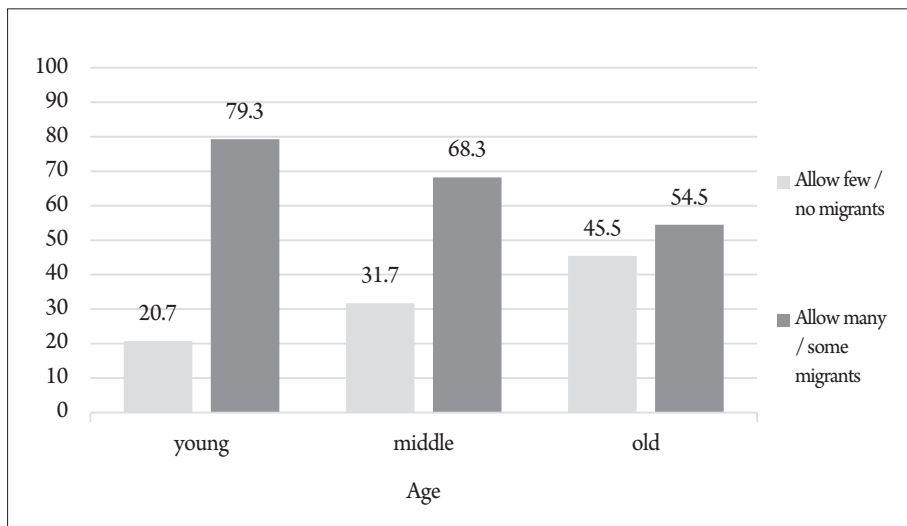
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2023.

Chart 5: To what extent do you think Slovenia should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here? – By education (%)
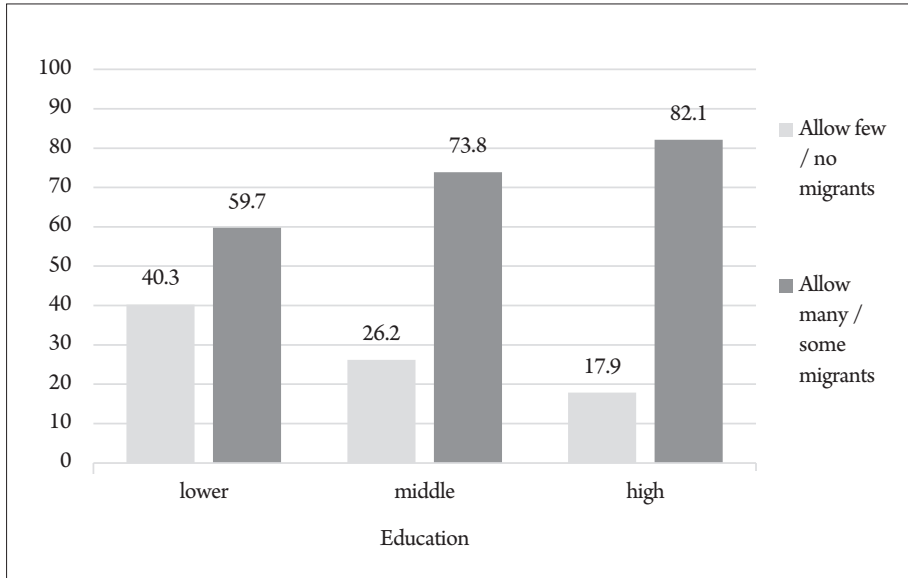
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2023.

The two bivariate analyses for 2023 (Chart 4 and 5) show a clear linear relationship between the control variables and the dependent variable (allowing entry of migrants from poor countries outside Europe). The differences by age category are significant (Cramer's V: 0.19; sig 0.0000), with younger individuals being significantly more open to the arrival of this type of migrants than older individuals. Interestingly, even within the older age category (which tends to be much more reserved), the answer "allow many/some migrants" still prevails, albeit with a significantly smaller margin. A similar picture, with even more pronounced differences, is observed in the case of education. The differences are statistically significant (Cramer's V: 0.21; sig 0.0000) and particularly pronounced between the low-educated group and the other two categories – middle and high, within which the mass-dominant view favours an affirmative attitude towards migrants.

A marked differentiation by age and education is also highlighted in the migration module of the ESS Topline series report analysis (Heath & Richards 2016). This analysis indicates that the cleavage by age and education in attitudes towards migrants is visible in most European countries. The gap is further exacerbated when considering separate sub-categories that account for both criteria simultaneously, with low-educated older people on one hand and high-educated young people on the other.[5] The disparity in views between these two population segments shows the true range of public divisions within a society regarding the acceptance of migrants (especially those from poor non-European countries).

We have followed up this 2014 example with a comparable analysis using the most recent ESS data on Slovenia (referring to 2023).

Chart 6: The difference in support proportions (for allowing migrants from poorer countries outside Europe to come to Slovenia) between young, highly educated individuals and old, less educated ones. Cross-temporal comparison 2014–2023 (%)
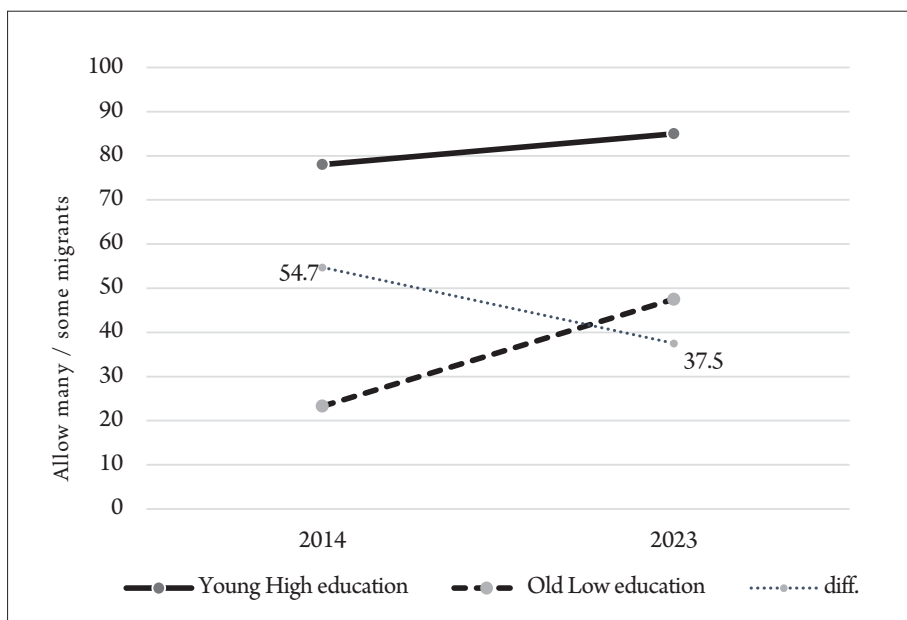
Source: ESS data on Slovenia 2014–2023.

The 2014 analysis in the above-mentioned report (Heath & Richards 2016) already points to a gap between the two observed social categories across European countries. These differences are not equally distributed across Europe; they are significantly smaller in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ireland, and Israel. Interestingly, at the opposite end of the spectrum, the largest differences are observed in Slovenia, followed by France and the UK. The difference between the two groups is as high as 50% or more in the countries where the groups hold the most divergent views. This is particularly evident in Slovenia, where the difference measured in 2014 was almost 55%. To provide a comparison, we conducted a similar analysis using data from 2023. Chart 6 shows that this difference has narrowed markedly in the most recent measurement. However, it remains at over 37%. The marked increase in support is evident among the older, less educated category, which has apparently adjusted its views towards migrants over the past decade.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

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Immigration remains a focal point in European politics, retaining its status as one of the foremost concerns among voters across many nations. The influx of labour immigrants into several European countries, coupled with persistent demands to provide refuge for those fleeing war-torn regions globally, ensures that this issue will maintain its relevance for the foreseeable future.

According to public opinion data, respondents in Slovenia generally hold relatively positive attitudes towards immigrants. They have become somewhat more open towards immigrants in recent years, which is a positive trend. Overall, the integration of immigrants is decreasingly perceived as a problem and increasingly acknowledged as a two-way process where both immigrants and society share responsibility, as well as a high governmental priority. Viewing migration as a problem may not necessarily imply hostility towards immigrants but rather reflects a perception that governments are not adequately managing the issue of immigrant integration. It reflects a growing recognition of the value that immigrants could bring to societies, both economically and culturally.

However, the presence of a significant division within the population between supporters and opponents of immigrants underscores ongoing societal tensions and polarisation on this issue – something that characterises a broader field of values and political orientations in Slovenia and is becoming a kind of historical aftermath of the Slovenia's transition. Right-wing populist politicians adeptly exploit such divisions for their own political gain, often by stoking fears and anxieties among segments of the population who perceive immigrants as a threat to their economic well-being (job competition, strain on social services), cultural identity (cultural dilution), or national security (naming migrants as possible terrorists). Even in the face of shifting public opinion towards greater tolerance, these politicians may target and mobilise those who remain sceptical or hostile towards immigrants, using inflammatory rhetoric and fear-mongering tactics to galvanise their base and appeal to those who feel left behind or marginalised in an increasingly diverse society.

Right-wing populist rhetoric may exploit the division within the population by framing themselves as the voice of the people against a perceived out-of-touch establishment – liberal elites pushing an agenda of open borders and multiculturalism. They may seek to capitalise on any conflict involving immigrants to stoke anti-immigrant sentiments further and rally their supporters. Blaming immigrants for societal problems also deflects attention away from other pressing issues or failures of governance. Specifically, the impression that populist politicians are perceived as addressing problems with concrete solutions, despite neither approach yielding positive outcomes, creates an illusion that could impact public attitudes. These characteristics make nationalist and populist ideologies dangerous simplifications, not so much because they are misleading, but because they serve as the catch-nets for many undisclosed vested interests.

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It is crucial for political actors and civil society organisations to counter the narrative of fear and division by promoting inclusive and evidence-based policies that address the legitimate concerns of all segments of society, fostering dialogue and understanding across different communities, and challenging xenophobic rhetoric wherever it arises. By advocating for values of tolerance, diversity, and solidarity, we can mitigate the influence of divisive and exclusionary politics and work towards building a more inclusive and equitable society.

In terms of living and social standards, Europeans and Slovenes are in the top 20% of the world's population, yet we cannot ignore the misfortunes of the remaining 80% of the population. Accepting migrant refugees brought to us by hardship, misfortune, war, and unbearable tyranny means not only agreeing to integrate immigrants into our local social community but also integrating ourselves into the world as our human common home. It is not a question of integrating foreigners into our world but of integrating ourselves into a globalised common world. With Ulrich Beck (2016), we could say that this is a "cosmopolitanism from below", starting from the local ground and ascending into the globalised world to finally return to the local, enriched by the experience of solidarity.

Therefore, attitudes towards immigrants are an essential test of a society's maturity, namely its maturity to deal democratically and equally with differences, in this case, immigrants from different cultural backgrounds. It is not only a question of acceptance but also of democratic participation and non-coercive integration of migrants into the host society. "The equal participation of all members of society in the political process lies at the core of democracy," as the Finnish sociologist Laura Ahocas points out (Ahocas 2010, 18). She also stresses that "migrants' participation is a matter of belonging and trust. It is a matter of ownership and realising potentials and possibilities through social engagement, which makes participation important" (Ahocas 2010, 47). Supporting this kind of conception of democratic integration is the only way to secure respect for intercultural differences and equality as basic principles in modern democratic societies. Such a vision of the democratic integration of immigrants is, of course, in sharp contrast to the populist and authoritarian defensive reflex against migrants that has proliferated in many EU (and global) countries in recent years. This attitude threatens immigrants with various barriers (physical, social, linguistic, etc.), social exclusion, and assimilationist integration.

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Notes

[1] This survey, commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), was carried out by the Kantar network in the 27 EU Member States between 2 November and 3 December 2021.

[2] Several analyses based on longitudinal measurements have already been produced in national and cross-national comparative contexts (see, for example, Zavratnik et al. 2017).

[3] At the time of writing the article, the ESS 2023 cross-national data set was still being prepared.

[4] The opposite line "worse place to live" would be a mirror image of the presented line, aligned with the 50% mark.

[5] It is worth noting the seemingly stereotyped definition of age and education. Age, in itself, is not necessarily a predictor of attitudes but rather reflects indirect effects related to practical experience and contacts, which younger people may have more of due to their connections with individuals of immigrant origin and their engagement with globalised forms of communication. Here, age serves more as a proxy for what constitutes empirical practice. Similarly, education can be considered an indirect indicator, associated with both income and feelings of job insecurity, as well as certain economic pressures that immigrants represent in the minds of the majority population.

Damjan Mandelc

Medijske reprezentacije in prakse diskriminacije priseljencev v intersekcijski perspektivi

Članek obravnava fenomen množičnih migracij s pomočjo intersekcijske analize, s katero pokažemo na součinkovanje diskriminatornih praks in raziskujemo skupne mehanizme izključevanja na primeru dveh manjšinskih skupin, muslimanskih žensk ter migrantov in beguncev. Izhodišče analize je medijski diskurz o dveh pravnih dokumentih, ki naslavljata prepoved zakrivanja obraza muslimanskih žensk in problem nelegalnih migracij (Marakeška deklaracija). Rezultate raziskave apliciramo na širši razmislek o vzrokih in posledicah diskriminacijskih politik na manjšinske in priseljenske skupnosti.

Ključne besede: migracije, priseljenci, medijska reprezentacija, diskriminacija, intersekcija.

Media Representations and Practices of Discrimination against Immigrants from an Intersectional Perspective

The article addresses the phenomenon of mass migration through an intersectional analysis, highlighting the interaction of discriminatory practices and exploring common exclusion mechanisms in the case of two minority groups: Muslim women and migrants/refugees. The starting point of the analysis is the media discourse on two legal documents addressing the ban of Muslim women's headgear and the problem of illegal migration (the Marrakesh Declaration). The results of the research are applied to a broader reflection on the causes and consequences of discriminatory policies on minority and immigrant communities.

Keywords: migrations, immigrants, media representation, discrimination, intersectionality.

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1. Uvod

Od velike t. i. evropske migrantske krize leta 2015,[1] ki je bila prvenstveno kriza evropskih migracijskih politik, smo v mednarodnem in domačem znanstveno-raziskovalnem okolju deležni številnih dognanj o značilnostih in zakonitostih migracij ter odzivov javnosti nanje. V takšno razpravo, ki posega v analizo medijskih reprezentacij priseljencev in migrantov, želimo umestiti tudi naš prispevek, kjer v središče postavljamo interpretacijo rezultatov raziskovalnega projekta Državljanstvo in diskriminacija: intersekcijski pristop k raziskovanju družbene izključenosti (Državljanstvo in diskriminacija 2018) in si zastavljamo vprašanje o tem, kako izbrani slovenski nacionalni medijski portali naslavljajo področje množičnih migracij ter v kolikšni meri mediji zaznavajo multiplo diskriminacijo ranljivih družbenih skupin, med njimi beguncev in migrantov.

2. Metoda argumentacije

Raziskovanja in refleksije fenomena množičnih migracij se v pričujočem prispevku lotevamo s pomočjo intersekcijske analize, v kateri želimo na prvem mestu opazovati intersekcijsko součinkovanje diskriminatornih praks, obenem raziskujemo skupne mehanizme izključevanja in na izhodišču teze, da imata nestrpnost in diskriminacija, ki se pojavljata v slovenski in drugih evropskih družbah, skupne izvore (Kuhar 2009), opravimo širši premislek o vzrokih in posledicah diskriminacijskih politik na manjšinske in priseljenske skupnosti. Na takšne skupne izvore želimo pokazati ne le s pomočjo ugotovitev raziskave, temveč tudi drugih študij, ki so se izvajale v preteklem obdobju (Baumgartl & Favell 1995; Ramet 1999; Gajić 2021, idr.).

Intersekcijska perspektiva je inovativen pristop v raziskovanju družbene izključenosti, ki jo v prvi vrsti pripisujemo ameriški raziskovalki Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), pri katerem je v središču zanimanja problem/kritika enodi-menzionalnega opazovanja in razumevanja diskriminacije, čeprav, kot dokazuje avtorica, je diskriminacija zmeraj učinek več različnih okoliščin.[2] Podobno ugotovitev prispeva Yuval Davis (2011), ki naslavlja prekrivanje multiplih oblik identifikacije in pripadanja v raznolikih okoljih ter političnih in družbenih kontekstih. V tem pogledu intersekcijsko raziskovanje ne želi izpostavljati oziroma seštevati posameznih identitet ali okoliščin, ampak postavi v središče svojega zanimanja sistemske probleme diskriminacije in sovplivanje različnih dimenzij diskriminacije. Podobno stališče zavzameta Hrženjak in Jalušič (2011, 34), ko zapišeta, da intersekcionalnost opazuje medsebojno učinkovanje in kompleksnost izvorov neenakosti. Teza v izhodišču naše razprave je večplastna; pokazati želimo, da diskriminacija različnih družbenih manjšin temelji na podobnih mehanizmih izključevanja, ki jih generira diskurz o ogroženosti; da se mehanizmi izključevanja prepletajo in je zato najustreznejša pot, kako jih naslo-

viti, prav intersekcijska metoda; ter da imajo tovrstni mehanizmi izključevanja vpliv na druge pojave in procese v širši družbi in prostoru.

Na tej točki velja omeniti, da Crenshaw (1991) razlikuje med tremi vrstami intersekcije; strukturno, politično in intersekcijo reprezentacij, pri čemer nas v pričujoči analizi zanima predvsem slednja. Kot pokažejo Smrdelj in soavtorji (2021, 124), gre za tematiziranje diskurza, v katerem umanjkanje intersekcijske perspektive krepi diskriminacijski diskurz, četudi je takšen diskurz v svoji intenci antidiskriminacijski. Obenem velja dodati, da intersekcija reprezentacij osvetli tudi druge vrste diskurzov, denimo političnega, in ob tem razkriva tako politične kot strukturne dimenzije intersekcijskega pristopa (Smrdelj et al. 2021, 125; Verloo 2005; 2006).

Izhodišče naše analize sta odmevna dokumenta, v katerih osrednje mesto zasedajo ranljive družbene skupine, muslimanske ženske ter migranti in begunci. Prvi dokument je Zakon o varstvu javnega reda in miru (2006 in dop. 2020), z noveliranjem katerega so želeli predlagatelji (Slovenska demokratska stranka s prvopodpisano poslanko Anjo Bah Žibert) urediti vprašanje oziroma sankcionirati zakrivanje obraza in se pri tem sklicevali na Zakon o varnosti cestnega prometa (2008), ki prepoveduje zakrivanje obraza med vožnjo. Predlagatelji so se naslonili tudi na francosko zakonsko rešitev, ki prepoveduje popolno zakrivanje obraza, pri čemer je francoska vlada prepoved predstavila kot ukrep za zaščito muslimank pred siljenjem k zakrivanju obraza s pokrivali, kot sta burka in nikab, kar so strokovnjaki s področja varovanja človekovih pravic prepoznali kot držo rasizma in kolonializma (Salihović-Gušić 2023), slovenski predlagatelj pa se je skliceval na nedoslednost obstoječe zakonodaje in je šele parlamentarna razprava razkrila resnične intence predlagateljev, tj. poseganje v ustavno zagotovljeno svobodo izražanja vere in kulture. Zakonu bi po omenjenem predlogu dodali dva člena, ki definirata muslimansko žensko oblačilo, dodatni člen bi uveljavil prepoved tovrstnega zakrivanja ter predvidel globo v višini 100 evrov. V raziskavi smo natančno analizirali razpravo, ki je v Državnem zboru (v nadaljevanju DZ) potekala 17. 12. 2015 in je obsegala prvo obravnavo predloga Zakona o dopolnitvah Zakona o varstvu javnega reda in miru, ter opravili analizo medijskega diskurza o tej temi. Drugi analizirani dokument predstavlja razpravo v DZ (Državni zbor Republike Slovenije 2018) na temo vladnih priporočil v zvezi z Globalnim dogovorom o varnih, urejenih in zakonitih migracijah (Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration 2018) (v nadaljevanju Marakeška deklaracija) z dne 21. 11. 2018. Predlagatelji so zahtevali sklic izredne seje DZ zaradi nezakonitih migracij iz afriških in bližnjevzhodnih držav, kar naj bi za slovensko državo predstavljalo resno varnostno grožnjo. Proceduralni argument za sklic izredne seje je bil način, s katerim je Vlada Republike Slovenije pristopila k podpisovanju Marakeške deklaracije, osrednji vsebinski očitek predlagateljev pa, da takšen mednarodni dokument izenačuje status zakonitih in nezakonitih migracij ter da ob tem spodbuja množične migracije in odpira meje

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za nezakonite migrante, s tem pa Slovenijo spreminja v migrantski žep,[3] ker so se vse sosednje države podpisu Marakeške deklaracije odpovedale. V raziskavi smo analizirali razpravo v DZ in ugotavljali, v kolikšni meri protagonisti (tj. politične stranke ter njihovi poslanke in poslanci) implicitno ali eksplicitno naslavljajo intersekcijsko diskriminacijo; v prvem primeru muslimanskih žensk in v drugem primeru migrantov in beguncev. Preliminarna ugotovitev je bila, da parlamentarna razprava intersekcijske diskriminacije niti implicitno niti eksplicitno ne naslavlja, prispeva pa k polarizaciji javnega diskurza na temo migracij in krepi antiimigracijski sentiment v širši javnosti.

Drugi korak, ki mu v prispevku namenjamo osrednje mesto, je bila analiza medijskega poročanja, s katero smo želeli ugotoviti, kako manjšine (v našem primeru muslimanke in migranti) vstopajo v medijski prostor, kako se reproducirajo objave o obeh skupinah, kakšne so medijske predstave o njih ter katere so identificirane diskriminatorne prakse in predsodki, ki jih mediji objavljajo. Zanimalo nas je, ali in v kolikšni meri mediji prepoznavajo problematiko intersekcionalnosti.

3. Medijski diskurz na primeru muslimanskih žensk, migrantov in beguncev – intersekcija reprezentacij

V okviru tega segmenta raziskave smo preverjali okoliščine sprejemanja in medijske razprave ter poročanje o Zakonu o varstvu javnega reda in miru in Marakeški deklaraciji. Naše metodološko izhodišče je kritična diskurzivna analiza (KDA) medijskih reprezentacij (Fairclough 2010), s katero pokažemo na oblikovanje diskurzivnih praks, ki omogočajo ohranjanje in reproduciranje družbenih statusov, imajo ideološke učinke in lahko reproducirajo neenakosti v družbenih odnosih. Medijske reprezentacije so potekale v obdobju, ko je zakonodajna veja oblasti razpravljala in sprejemala zakone, ki so naslavljale omenjeni manjšinski skupini. Vloga množičnih medijev je bila zato v tem času odločilna pri določanju odnosa državljanov do begunske oziroma migrantske problematike (Smrdelj et al. 2021, 128).

Na podlagi zastavljene metodologije smo v zamejenem časovnem obdobju, ki je sovpadalo z razpravo v Državnem zboru, poiskali medijske objave s ključnimi besedami, ki se nanašajo na oba dokumenta. S pomočjo kodiranja smo oblikovali skupne in prevladujoče teme, ki smo jih zaznali v obravnavanih objavah.

Vzorec raziskave smo oblikovali na podlagi nabora štirih večjih/osrednjih spletnih portalov slovenskih medijev, ki dosegajo nacionalno občinstvo: Multimedijski center Radiotelevizije Slovenija (www.rtvslo.si), portal medijske hiše Pro plus (www.24ur.com), TS Media (www.siol.net) in portal Nova hiša d.o.o. (www.nova24TV.si). Zajeli smo vsebine v časovnem oknu, ki se je raztezalo v obdobju dveh tednov pred in dveh tednov po razpravi v Državnem zboru.

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Razprava o prvem dokumentu (Zakon o varstvu javnega reda in miru) je potekala v okviru 14. redne seje DZ 17. 12. 2015, zato je bilo iskanje omejeno na obdobje med 1. 12. 2015 in 5. 1. 2016. Razprava o drugem dokumentu (Globalni dogovor o migracijah, tj. Marakeška deklaracija) je potekala v okviru 13. izredne seje DZ 21. 11. 2018, zato smo iskanje omejili na obdobje med 5. 11. 2018 in 5. 12. 2018.

Vzorec analize je po pregledu vseh objav v tem obdobju zajel 76 medijskih objav, od tega na temo Marakeške deklaracije 61 objav (na Nova24TV 32 objav, na MMC RTVSLO 17, na 24ur.com 9 in na Siol.net 3 objave), na temo Zakona o varstvu javnega reda in miru pa 15 objav (na MMC RTVSLO 5 objav, na 24ur.com in Siol.net po 4 objave, medtem ko je bilo na Nova24TV najti zgolj 2 objavi).[4] Zajete objave predstavljajo raznolik nabor, največ najdemo med njimi novic (55), sledijo prispevki, ki so povzetki večernih poročil (8), kolumne (8), komentarjev je bilo 5, medtem ko intervjuja kot specifične zvrsti med identificiranimi objavami ni bilo najti. Preverba, v katero rubriko so uredništva spletnih portalov umestila posamezno objavo, pokaže, da je portal MMC RTVSLO večino objav umestil pod rubriko Slovenija, podobno sta razvrščanje zastavila portal 24ur.com in Nova24TV. Nasprotno je portal Siol.net več objav uvrstil v rubriko Novice iz sveta.

O razpravi ob sprejemanju Marakeške deklaracije sta največ poročala Nova24TV in MMC RTVSLO, medtem ko so o spremembah Zakona o varstvu javnega reda in miru medijski portali poročali približno enako pogosto. Od 76 analiziranih objav smo z imenom in priimkom pod objavami identificirali 23 novinark in novinarjev, pod nadaljnjih 36 prispevkov so bili avtorice oziroma avtorji podpisani zgolj z inicialkami, pri preostalih objavah pa avtorstva ni bilo moč razbrati, najpogosteje zato, ker je šlo za video vložek televizijskih poročil ali pa je bila pod objavo navedena povezava na drug medij, od koder je portal črpal novico. Pri pregledu objav, podpisanih s polnim imenom, je mogoče razbrati, da gre za zaposlene v posamezni medijski hiši ali gostujočega kolumnista/komentatorja.

Vseh 76 objav smo analizirali, da bi ugotovili, na kakšen način se v njih pojavljajo in reprezentirajo manjšine. Zanimalo nas je, katere manjšine se v objavah pojavljajo, kakšno stališče do manjšin zavzemajo avtorji oziroma avtorice objav, ali je mogoče objave klasificirati in ponuditi oceno o tem, kakšna so stališča analiziranih medijev do izbranih manjšin oziroma kako so manjšine skonstruirane kot objekt medijskih reprezentacij (Van Dijk 2001). Zanimalo nas je, kako se mediji razlikujejo v poročanju, ali so razlike v poročanju glede na avtorstvo (ko je znano avtorstvo oziroma ko gre za anonimizirane objave), ali in v kolikšni meri se v besedilih pojavljajo omembe narodnosti/nacionalnosti. Kot zadnje nas je zanimalo, čigav glas se v objavah sliši; ali so informacije o manjšinah preverjene, ali je vključen glas predstavnikov manjšin, ali je v objavo pripuščeno mnenje stroke, ali in koliko je najti diskriminatornih stališč oziroma reproduciranja pred-

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sodkov in stereotipov o izbranih manjšinah. Ob koncu smo opravili preverbo, ali se v besedilih pojavlja (implicitna ali eksplicitna) intersekcionalnost ter za kakšne vrste intersekcijo gre.

Intersekcija je v analizi strukturirana na treh nivojih (Crenshaw 1991, 1241–1242): intersekcija kot učinkovanje več osebnih okoliščin, intersekcija kot součinkovanje osebne okoliščine in družbenega statusa posameznika oziroma posameznice ter intersekcija kot součinkovanje osebnih okoliščin in širšega družbenega konteksta (ekonomski, socialni, kulturni vidik).

4. Vsebinski poudarki medijskega poročanja

Objave, ki naslavljajo t. i. Marakeško deklaracijo, se na portalu MMC RTVSLO najpogosteje nanašajo na politično razpravo ob sprejemanju omenjenega dokumenta. Migranti (in v mnogo manjši meri begunci) so osrednja manjšina, ki jo članki omenjajo, pri čemer migranti niso naslovljeni glede na državo izvora ali širši kontekst, iz katerega prihajajo (vojaški konflikti, revščina ipd.), temveč so označevani kot homogena, nediferencirana skupina. Poročanje na MMC RTVSLO migrantov ne označuje s pejorativnimi konotacijami, zaslediti ni nikakršnega sovražnega govora proti migrantom, portal skuša uravnoteženo poročati o politični razpravi, ki se odvija na državni, evropski in globalni ravni na temo sprejemanja Globalnega dogovora o migracijah oziroma Marakeške deklaracije.[5] Manjši del prispevkov se referira na druge države, kjer so potekale podobne razprave, prevladujoče novinarji pokrivajo tiste, ki so proti sprejetju dogovora. Med diskurzivnimi specifikami velja omeniti, da večina prispevkov posreduje opredelitve političnih strank, med avtorskimi in anonimiziranimi prispevki vsebinskih razlik v poročanju ni opaziti. Objave poleg političnih protagonistov zgolj izjemoma dajejo prostor tudi civilni družbi in globalnim akterjem. Poročanje je zastavljeno izrazito črno-belo; na eni strani so stranke, ki sporazumu nasprotujejo, na drugi stranke, ki ga podpirajo.

Poročanje o predlogu sprememb Zakona o javnem redu in miru, s katerimi želijo predlagatelji v Sloveniji prepovedati nošnjo islamskih ženskih pokrival, sledi podobnemu vzorcu. Objave poudarjajo diametralno nasprotna stališča političnih akterjev, na eni strani stranki SDS in NSi prepričujeta, da gre pri spremembah zakona in prepovedi zakrivanja muslimank za varnostne in kulturne razloge, na drugi strani stranke SD, SMC in Združena levica opozarjajo, da bi takšna prepoved posegla v ustavno varovane pravice; menijo, da gre pri predlogu za populizem in zastraševanje. Zgolj ena objava je vključila glas prizadete manjšine, ko so po stališču povprašali Slovensko muslimansko skupnost, ki predloga sicer ni želela komentirati, napovedala pa je ustavni spor, ker bi sprejetje zakona kršilo temeljne človekove pravice in drastično poseglo v svobodo verskega izražanja.

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Spletni portal 24ur.com poročanje o Marakeški deklaraciji zastavi pregledno, ponuja zgodovinsko perspektivo pri sprejemanju dokumenta, pojasnjuje razlike med begunci in migranti, globalne migracije naslavlja brez navijaškega tona ali diskriminatornih predpostavk, obenem objavi tudi osnutek obeh dokumentov, Globalnega dogovora o varnih in urejenih migracijah ter Marakeške deklaracije. V objavah ni zaslediti stališč civilne družbe, stroke ali organizacij, ki se ukvarjajo z vprašanjem migracij, predstavljena so zgolj stališča političnih strank. Enako je s poročanjem o spremembah Zakona o javnem redu in miru, kjer medij ne ponudi stališč stroke ali manjšinskih skupnosti, poročanje je vrednostno nevtralno, predstavljena so zgolj stališča parlamentarnih akterjev. Edina objava, kjer zasledimo intersekcijo, je referenca na muslimanke kot posebno skupino znotraj manjšinske skupnosti (intersekcija spola in etnične pripadnosti).

Spletni portal Siol.net v svojih redkih objavah glede omenjenih tematik ne izstopa od zgoraj predstavljenih portalov, prispevki so fokusirani na politično razpravo v Sloveniji in drugih državah Evropske unije, predstavitve so deležne politične stranke, ne pa tudi stroka. Obravnavane manjšine so predstavljene nevtralno, v besedilih na temo Marakeške deklaracije nismo zasledili implicitne ali eksplicitne intersekcije, v zgolj eni objavi nas obvešča, da se je novinar za stališče obrnil na obe muslimanski skupnosti v Sloveniji (Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji in Slovenska muslimanska skupnost), vendar odzivov ni prejel. Na temo sprememb Zakona o javnem redu in miru smo našli eno objavo, ki naslovi diskriminacijo muslimanskih žensk, ki jih predlagana prepoved zadeva, in predstavi stališče predstavnika manjšine, francoskega Alžirca, ki muslimankam v Franciji plačuje kazni, ki jih prejmejo zaradi nošnje nikaba, rekoč, da imajo muslimanke pravico do svobode oblačenja na podlagi svoje vere in kulture (Lončar 2016). Zaznana intersekcija je referenca na muslimanske migrantke v zahodnih družbah, ki so podvržene diskriminaciji zaradi svojih oblačil. Gre za intersekcijo (Crenshaw 1991), kjer so naslovljene osebne okoliščine: spol in verska pripadnost.

Spletni portal Nova24TV je o sprejemanju obeh dokumentov poročal največkrat (32 objav) od analiziranih medijev, zato mu namenjamo več prostora. Ko gre za obravnavo Globalnega dogovora in Marakeške deklaracije, se medijske objave omenjenega portala, ki obravnavajo vprašanje množičnih migracij, na migrante najpogosteje nanašajo kot nelegalne oziroma ilegalne. Poročanje o priseljencih je izrazito negativno, migranti so predstavljeni kot grožnja in kot nevarnost, ki preti slovenski in evropskim družbam. Osrednji očitek, ki se brez izjeme ponavlja skozi obravnavana besedila, trdi, da Marakeška deklaracija izenačuje legalne in nezakonite migracije, da bi omogočila množično priseljevanje iz afriških in muslimanskih držav. Po mnenju avtorjev prispevkov naj bi šlo za skriti načrt globalnih elit, ki želijo državam kratiti suvereno odločanje o azilnih in migracijskih politikah. Ob tem prispevki omenjajo tudi domnevno

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cenzuro, ki jo levičarske vlade in mediji izvajajo nad nasprotniki migracij. Medij oziroma portal ponuja preprosto sliko dveh antitetičnih grupacij, na eni strani so globalisti, ki slabijo narod in nacionalno državo, na drugi strani so domoljubi, ki jih skrbi za identiteto, jezik in kulturo, zato migracije dosledno zavračajo.

Analiza prispevkov pokaže, da so migranti in migrantske skupnosti označene negativno in zaničevalno (prim. »z migranti se Zahod spreminja v luknjo tretjega sveta« (Sajovic 2018), »migracije so spodbujane za krepitev volilnega telesa levice« (J. G. 2018)), pogosto pa prispevki napadajo tudi predstavnike civilne družbe, medije in mednarodne organizacije. Prispevki izrazito naklonjeno navajajo politike, ki migracijam nasprotujejo, medtem ko so izjave podpornikov migracij in zagovornikov človekovih pravic navedene zato, da jih lahko v objavah diskreditirajo. Izbrani medijski zapisi[6] izkazujejo, da namen objav na portalu Nova24TV ni poročanje o relevantni družbeni temi, temveč aktivacija desnega in skrajno desnega občinstva ter podpora interesom partikularne politične opcije. Med avtorji objav so večinoma v mediju zaposleni novinarji, medtem ko kolumne ponujajo prostor tudi za gostujoče pisce. Izkaže se, da je jezik kolumnistov radikalnejši in napadalnejši kot zapisi zaposlenih novinarjev v mediju ter da v nasprotju s predvidevanji anonimizirani zapisi in tisti, podpisani zgolj z inicialkami, niso radikalnejši kot prispevki, podpisani z imenom in priimkom avtorja. Izpostavljamo primera dveh avtorjev, ki še posebej izstopata po radikalnih stališčih, takratnega gostujočega kolumnista Bernarda Brščiča in urednika Nova24TV Jožeta Biščka. Medtem ko prvi prepričuje, da se za migracijami v Evropo skriva agenda »velike nadomestitve« prebivalstva, ki naj bi evropsko različnost spremenila v nekakšno »evrazijsko-negroidno raso prihodnosti, kar predstavlja demografski in kulturni samomor« (Brščič 2018), Biščak navaja, da vključevanje muslimanskih priseljencev v evropsko družbo pomeni »kulturno posilstvo« ter da »ne vidi druge rešitve kot uporabo surove, brutalne moči« (Biščak 2018). Manipulativni pristop omenjenega medijskega portala lahko pokažemo na primeru novice (Blažič 2018) o italijanskem pevcu (Toto Cutugno), ki je leta 1990 zmagal na tekmovanju za pesem Evrovizije s skladbo Skupaj (orig. *Insieme*). Pesem ob razpadu hladnovojne ureditve opeva Evropo brez meja. Avtor prispevka na Nova24TV vsebino pesmi arbitrarno poveže s stališčem prvega predsednika Republike Slovenije Milana Kučana, ki je v zgodnjih devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja dejal, da nastaja Evropa, ki z mejami ne more več živeti. Kučan je v omenjenem obdobju za prispevek k izgradnji slovenske demokracije odlikoval tudi Georga Sorosa, madžarsko-ameriškega filantropa, ki ga evropski desni tisk propagira kot t. i. botra migracij. Prispevek poveže besedilo italijanske skladbe, citat prvega predsednika države in domnevno Sorosevo migracijsko agendo. Podobno lahko pokažemo na primeru objave (Sokić 2019), v kateri projekt civilne družbe, ki je potekal v slovenskih osnovnih šolah in spodbujal sožitje, strpnost in odprto družbo, označijo za vsiljevanje ideologije in levičarsko propagando, ki so ji podvrženi tudi otroci, stari 6 let. Ko gre za objave, povezane

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z razpravo o predlogu prepovedi muslimanskih ženskih pokrival, opazimo, da jih večina datira v obdobje med 2016 in 2019, torej precej po razpravi o predlogu spremembe Zakona o javnem redu in miru. V časovno zamejenem obdobju, v katerem je potekala parlamentarna razprava, je na portalu Nova24TV najti zgolj dve objavi in v obeh fokus na muslimansko manjšino, obe povzemata stališča predlagateljev (SDS), da gre za varnostno vprašanje in problem integritete slovenske kulture. V nasprotju z ostalimi prispevki, ki reproducirajo predsodke do muslimanske skupnosti, omenjena prispevka izkazujeta sočutje do muslimanskih žensk, ki so prisiljene oblačiti t. i. zatiralska oblačila, vendar lahko tudi v tem primeru prepoznamo reprodukcijo predsodkov do muslimanske skupnosti; gre za perfiden način argumentacije, ki še poglablja razlike med t. i. civiliziranimi nami in t. i. barbarskim drugim, tj. muslimanom, ki sili ženske v ponižujoča oblačila. Tudi v primeru omenjenih objav medij ponuja zgolj stališče politike, ne ponudi pa glasu predstavnikom oziroma predstavnicam manjšine ali stroke. Intersekcija, ki jo zaznamo, je implicitna, ko omenjajo muslimanke. Gre za intersekcijo osebnih okoliščin (spol in vera).

V analizi 76 medijskih objav, ki so rezultat nabora medijskega poročanja v zamejenem časovnem obdobju, ugotavljamo, da so osrednje manjšinske skupine, ki jih prispevki naslavljajo migranti, begunci in muslimani, v redkih primerih muslimanske ženske, ko gre za razpravo o predlogu prepovedi nošnje muslimanskih ženskih pokrival. Poročanje na prvih treh analiziranih medijskih portalih (MMC RTVSLO, 24ur.com, Siol.net) je vrednostno nevtralno, medtem ko so objave na Nova24TV izrazito ksenofobne in poglabljajo predsodke in distanco do priseljenskih in muslimanskih skupnosti. Manjšine so v vseh obravnavanih medijih predstavljene površ(i)n(sk)o, analizirani mediji se ne poglabljajo v specifike in kontekst, prav tako v največji meri k besedi ne pripuščajo predstavnic in predstavnikov manjšin ali strokovne javnosti. Manjšine so skozi medijsko poročanje skonstruirane kot nediferencirana gmota, kot homogena množica brez notranjih razlik ali specifik. V nobeni od objav nismo zasledili proaktivne drže novinarjev, ki bi kritično reflektirali izjave predstavnikov politike, ko so ti izrekali nestrpna in diskriminatorna stališča ali generirali predsodke do manjšinskih skupnosti in ranljivih skupin.

Na vprašanje, kdo v medijih pri tovrstnih družbeno občutljivih temah dobi besedo, je moč odgovoriti, da v prevladujoči meri zgolj politika. Čeprav gre za področja, ki se neposredno dotikajo položaja in človekovih pravic manjšin, dobijo v medijih praviloma mesto zgolj stališča političnih strank oziroma njihovih predstavnikov. V izraziti manjšini so objave, v katerih zasledimo stališča znanosti, stroke in organizacij, ki imajo specifična znanja s področja migracij in integracije priseljencev. V niti enem od analiziranih medijskih prispevkov nismo zasledili stališč osrednjih institucij, ki se v Sloveniji znanstveno in raziskovalno ukvarjajo z vprašanji migracij (denimo Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani, Mirovni inštitut, Znanstveno-raziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umet-

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nosti itd.). Implicitne oziroma zdravorazumske predpostavke v medijskih tekstih se razlikujejo glede na medij, ki smo ga analizirali. MMC RTVSLO, 24ur.com in Siol.net dosledno upoštevajo načelo uravnoteženega poročanja, ko dajejo besedo vsem ključnim političnim protagonistom, medtem ko daje Nova24TV privilegiran prostor stranki SDS, vsebinsko pa v objavah poglablja predsodke in stereotipe ter legitimira diskriminatoren diskurz.

V polju intersekcionalnosti ugotavljamo, da se ta pojavlja izjemno redko. Nikjer nismo našli mesta, kjer bi bila naslovljena eksplicitno, pojavlja se zgolj posredno, ko avtorji in avtorice uporabijo besedne zveze, kot so *ženske muslimanke*, skupine mladoletnih migrantov ipd. Gre za intersekcijo osebnih okoliščin (spol, etnična in verska pripadnost) ter v manjši meri za intersekcijo osebnih okoliščin in družbenega konteksta (prim. mladoletni migranti).

5. Sklep

Raziskovalni projekt Državljanstvo in diskriminacija: intersekcijski pristop k raziskovanju družbene izključenosti, katerega sestavni del je bila tudi v tem prispevku obravnavana analiza medijske reprezentiranosti, je pokazal, da so osrednji, pogosto izključni nosilci diskurza o migracijah politični predstavniki in državne institucije. Distribucija tovrstnega diskurza se dogaja skozi obsežno medijsko poročanje, kar še utrjuje prevladujoče razumevanje tematike v širši javnosti, kot pokažejo tudi druge podobne raziskave in prispevki (prim. Kralj 2008; Pajnik 2016; Pajnik 2017; Jontes 2017).

Politični diskurz, ki ga na temo migracij generira desni in skrajno desni del politike, priseljence predstavlja kot varnostno grožnjo, kot izkoriščevalce socialnih sistemov in kot kulturno tako drugačne od večinskega prebivalstva, da sobivanje z njimi ni mogoče in ni zaželeno. Predvsem prvi (varnostni) vidik je tisti, ki prevladuje in usmerja razumevanje migracij v večini evropskih družb (Učakar 2017). Raziskave, katerih fokus je intersekcijska perspektiva, pritrjujejo, da inovativni raziskovalni pristopi prispevajo k teoretskim naporom razumevanja diskriminacije in izključenosti. Izkaže se, da se agresivno politično portretiranje priseljencev in drugih ranljivih družbenih manjšin prevaja v medijski diskurz, ki manjšine obravnava površinsko, ne naslavlja njihovega težkega položaja in ne prepoznava (oziroma namerno zamolči) multiple diskriminacije, v kateri se najdevajo manjšinske skupnosti, zato javnost v pomembni meri ponotranji sekuritizacijo in predsodke, ki jo generirajo skrajna politika in njeni medijski glasniki. Kot smo pokazali z analizo medijskega poročanja, politični akterji v veliki meri ne motrijo rešitev za izboljšanje položaja marginaliziranih in diskriminiranih skupin, temveč delujejo predvsem za promocijo svojih stališč, mediji pa takšno politično klimo prenašajo v svoje objave. Problem intersekcijske diskriminacije je v objavah malodane nenaslovljen, edini deležniki v javnem prostoru, strokovna javnost ter relevantne slovenske in mednarodne institucije, ki bi lahko na podlagi

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svojih znanj in izkušenj prispevali k javni debati, k političnemu soodločanju in v medijski prostor praviloma niso pripuščeni. Potrjuje se stališče Crenshaw (1991), da je diskriminacija razumljena pomanjkljivo in enodimenzionalno, kar šibi tudi tiste politične in civilno-družbene akterje, ki sicer zastopajo stališča proti diskriminaciji.

Širši vidik odnosa do priseljenskih skupin v Sloveniji, ki se na strani dela javnosti manifestira v izključevanju in zavračanju, na politični pa v ukrepih, ki zaostrujejo politike priseljevanja, je razbrati tudi v izsledkih drugih raziskav zadnjega obdobja (prim. Kralj 2008, 171–172), obenem pa ne gre za izoliran proces, ker podobno razpoloženje merijo v vseh evropskih družbah (Lubbers et al. 2002; Norris 2005; Rydgren 2010). Politike priseljevanja so v središču političnega diskurza, države se namesto z upravljanjem ukvarjajo z njihovim preprečevanjem, kriminalizacijo in sekuritizacijo, odmev takega diskurza v širši javnosti pa še krepi skupine tistih, ki migracije dojemajo kot nevarne in ogrožajoče. Priseljencem je onemogočeno polnopravno oziroma enakopravno članstvo v politični sferi (Učakar 2017, 13), v okvirih državljanske skupnosti, pri dostopu do socialnih storitev in ekonomskem življenju. Kot še ugotavlja Učakar (2017, 26–28), se Evropa spreminja v »trdnjavo«, osrednji angažma države pa se vrti okoli varovanja meje in krepitve nadzora nad priseljevanjem. Raziskave (prim. Bešter 2003; Rydgren 2010) sugerirajo, da se med večinsko populacijo krepi strah pred priseljenci z očitkom, da nelegitimno zasedajo delovna mesta in stanovanja, da so breme socialnih sistemov, da ogrožajo večinsko kulturo in prispevajo k višji kriminaliteti. Slovenske oblasti nikoli doslej niso zasledovale modela kulturne asimilacije (topilni lonec, orig. *melting pot*), ampak so na ravni zakonodaje (prim. Resolucija o imigracijski politiki Republike Slovenije, 1999) priseljencem nominalno omogočile integracijo in ohranjanje njihove kulturne identitete, žal pa ob tem niso storile potrebnih korakov, da bi aktivno preprečevale razraščanje diskriminacije, ksenofobije in rasizma (Bešter 2003, 14–16). Diskriminacija je v demokratičnih evropskih družbah sicer protizakonita, ne velja pa to za predsodke, etnično distanco, stereotipiziranje, latentni ali manifestni rasizem (Brezigar 2005, 183), predvsem ko gre za priseljence iz neevropskih držav globalnega juga (Kralj 2008, 171), ko gre za slovensko romsko skupnost, ki v demokratični slovenski Ustavi ni pridobila statusa narodne skupnosti in je zato oropana številnih pravic, ki pripadajo madžarski in italijanski narodni skupnosti, ali ko gre za priseljenske skupnosti iz držav nekdanje Jugoslavije (Mandelc 2011, 117), kjer so izpostavljena tarča najpogosteje albanski priseljenci (Gajić 2021). Takšna subtilna diskriminacija se namreč v pravnih kontekstih ne kaznuje (Brezigar 2005, 183).

V članku analizirane medijske reprezentacije dveh manjšinskih skupin (muslimank ter migrantov), kjer smo izhajali iz intersekcijske perspektive, so pokazale, da so manjšine, ki se pojavljajo v medijskih zapisih, etnično in geografsko nedoločljive, politični in medijski diskurz jih obravnavata površno,

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pogosto so portretirani negativno ter stereotipno, kar se sklada z ugotovitvami drugih raziskav (Saifuddin & Matthes 2017; Van Dijk 1991). Ugotovili smo, da medijsko poročanje, ko gre za nacionalnost manjšinskih skupin, ni natančno in konsistentno, ampak se poslužuje stereotipizacij, še posebej, ko se nanaša na migrante z območij Severne Afrike, Bližnjega in Srednjega Vzhoda; mediji o državah izvora poročajo površno in pri tem reproducirajo predsodke o okoljih, iz katerih prihajajo migranti in begunci.

Če je mogoče na nekaterih medijskih portalih (MMC RTVSLO, 24ur.com, Siol.net) prepoznati uravnoteženo predstavitev političnih stališč, je konstruiranje manjšin na spletnem portalu Nova24TV izrazito enostransko, predstavniki manjšin in stroka niso pripuščeni v razpravo, informacije najpogosteje niso preverjene, diskriminatorna stališča, ki jih izreka del politike, se reproducirajo in potencirajo v medijskem poročanju, ki ima nato osrednjo vlogo v javnem diskurzu o migracijah in etničnih manjšinah. Diskriminatorna stališča, legitimiranje predsodkov in stereotipov niso zastopani v vseh medijih, vendar vsi mediji v imenu uravnoteženosti ponujajo mesto tudi skrajnemu političnemu diskurzu, ki tako doseže najširšo javnost. Položaj migrantov je bil v obdobju globalne pandemije še dodatno zaostren, postali so »kužni drugi« (Zavratnik & Cukut Krilić 2021, 73) in bili tako ob siceršnjih okoliščinah marginalizacije deležni novih oblik diskriminacije (Zavratnik & Cukut Krilić 2021, 75), pogosto so se znašli v situaciji dvojne diskriminacije, ker so bili izključeni iz mehanizmov pomoči, kar je dodatno potenciralo njihov ranljivi položaj (Zavratnik & Cukut Krilić 2021, 83–84). Zavratnik v svoji analizi prepoznava intersekcijsko učinkovanje družbenega razreda, rase, etničnosti in dostopa do sistema javnega zdravja.

Eden od problematičnih načinov, kako mediji reprezentirajo manjšine, je generalizacija. Gre za pripisovanje stereotipnih lastnosti celotni skupini oziroma posploševanje značilnosti dogodka ali posameznika na celotno skupnost (Ješe Perković 2022). Muslimani so, kot pokaže v svoji raziskavi tudi Kuhar (Petković et al. 2006, 140–141), največkrat pozicionirani v razmerju mi-oni, vanje je projecirana ogroženost Evrope, za poročanje o njih so značilni evropocentrični diskurz, žrtveni diskurz in diskurz grožnje.

Muslimani so kot ena najbolj izpostavljenih in diskriminiranih skupin postali priročni za multiplo diskriminacijo – na podlagi vere, kulture, jezika, prehranskih in oblačilnih navad (Strabac & Listhaug 2008). Medijski teksti z generalizacijo in diskurzom mi-oni ustvarjajo podobo dveh homogenih svetov, na eni strani civiliziranega Zahoda, na drugi nasilnega in zaostalega muslimanskega sveta. Stereotipizirana podoba muslimana (in muslimanke) je tako svoje mesto našla tudi v medijskem poročanju ob sprejemanju Zakona o javnem redu in miru ter Priporočil v zvezi z Globalnim dogovorom o varnih, urejenih in zakonitih migracijah (Marakeška deklaracija).

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Opombe

[1] Evropske države so se leta 2015 znašle nepripravljene na prihod številčnih skupin migrantov, predvsem z območij Severne Afrike, Bližnjega Vzhoda in Srednje Azije, od koder so pred revščino in negotovimi varnostnimi razmerami bežali sto tisoči. Slovenija je bila zaradi geografske lege eno od območij množičnega prehajanja (samo konec leta 2015 jo je prečkalo več kot 400.000 migrantov, kljub zahtevni demografski sliki pa je država leta 2015 podelila status azilanta zgolj 46 ljudem, leta 2016 je podelila 170 tovrstnih statusov) (Rogelj 2018).

[2] Crenshaw (1991) oriše položaj temnopoltih Američank, ki so verjele, da doživljajo diskriminacijo zgolj na podlagi barve kože, vendar je bilo očitno, da so diskriminirane tudi zaradi svojega spola. Takšno večplastno diskriminacijo avtorica poimenuje intersekcionalnost.

[3] Migrantski žep se nanaša na situacijo, v kateri se znajde večje število migrantov, ki ne morejo naprej v naslednjo državo, obenem pa se ne morejo vrniti v državo, iz katere so vstopili, za državo gostiteljico naj bi to predstavljalo finančno breme in varnostno tveganje.

[4] Na spletnem portalu Nova24.TV je novic o prepovedi nošenja burke in nikaba sicer precej več, vendar jih velika večina datira v obdobje med letoma 2016 in 2019, torej precej po razpravi o predlogu spremembe Zakona o varstvu javnega reda in miru, ki je vseboval predlog o prepovedi nošenja muslimanskih pokrival, zato omenjenih kasnejših objav nismo zajeli v analizo, bomo pa o širšem družbeno-političnem kontekstu razpravljali v zaključnem delu prispevka.

[5] Globalni dogovor o varnih, urejenih in zakonitih migracijah je bil sprejet na Generalni skupščini Združenih narodov julija 2018, Marakeška deklaracija pa na medvladni konferenci v Marakešu v Maroku decembra 2018. Marakeška deklaracija je bila pomemben korak pri potrditvi Globalnega dogovora, ki je osnovni dokument za mednarodno sodelovanje na področju migracij, Marakeška

deklaracija ga dopolnjuje in potrjuje. Slovenski mediji med dokumentoma praviloma niso razlikovali, prevladujoče so se nanašali na Marakeško deklaracijo.

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6 »Poslanstvo slovenske države je skrb za Slovence in ne za Pakistance, Afganistance in druge tujce«, »migranti so večinoma socialni turisti«, »multikulturnost je kot AIDS, ki uničuje evropsko družbo«, »podporniki migracij izvajajo lažni humanizem, ki je v resnici posel predvsem za tihotapce«, »Marakeška deklaracija predvideva cenzuro vseh medijev, ki so kritični do migracij« itd.

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»*Io ho avuto molti problemi con questo concetto di Nazione Madre*«: razumevanje koncepta matične domovine med pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji

Članek raziskuje razumevanje koncepta matične domovine pri pripadnikih italijanske narodne skupnosti v Slovenski Istri. Avtorji v članku ugotavljajo, da sta tako koncept domovine kot koncept matičnosti teoretsko še popolnoma nedefinirana in nedodelana, kar skorajda onemogoča raziskovanje amalgamiranega teoretskega koncepta matična domovina, ker se vsaka raziskava na to temo začne *ab ovo*. Prav tako avtorji ugotavljajo metodološke nekonsistentnosti v različnih raziskavah, ki se ukvarjajo s proučevanjem koncepta matične domovine. Ključna ugotovitev članka je, da intervjuvanci, pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji, trdijo, da je po njihovem mnenju koncept matične domovine preživet, saj je danes razmišljanje znotraj binarnih (o)pozicij zaradi fluidnosti identitet že samo po sebi zastarelo.

Ključne besede: matična domovina, Slovenija, Italija, italijanska narodna skupnost, intervjuji.

"*Io ho avuto molti problemi con questo concetto di Nazione Madre*": The Notion of Kin-State from the Perspective of Members of the Italian National Community in Slovenia

The article delves into the understanding of the notion of kin-state or homeland among members of the Italian national community in Slovene Istria. The authors find that both the notions of kinness and homeland remain theoretically unclear and incomplete, posing significant challenges to the exploration of the amalgamated theoretical construct of kin-homeland as each investigation into this topic begins "ab ovo". The authors also note methodological inconsistencies across various studies investigating this concept. Their key finding is that members of the Italian national community in Slovenia regard the concept of kin-state or homeland as outdated, attributing this perception to the fluidity of identities that renders binary modes of thinking obsolete.

Keywords: kin-state, Slovenia, Italy, Italian national community, interviews.

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1. Uvod in oris raziskovalne problematike

»Vaša domovina je Italija,« je bila izjava predsednice Republike Slovenije Nataše Pirc Musar, ki je med slovensko narodno skupnostjo v Italiji izzvala veliko ogorčenje, sočasno pa je bila predsednica republike deležna kritik na to temo tudi doma.[1] Po začetnem ogorčenju, ki so se mu (privoščljivo) pridružili v vseh slovenskih političnih strankah, je predsednica hitela s pojasnjevanjem, da je mislila na državo, ne na domovino. Sledili so poskusi blaženja ponesrečene izjave, sklicevanje na Okvirno konvencijo Sveta Evrope,[2] ki nalaga državam, v katerih manjšine prebivajo, skrb zanje, ter pojasnjevanje razumevanja razlike med »domovino« in »državo«. A izhodišče, ki se je pri tej izjavi nehoteno pokazalo kot problematično, je razumevanje koncepta matična domovina (prim. Batory 2009), ki po mnenju Komaca (osebna komunikacija, 17. 5. 2021)[3] »sodi v 19. stoletje in danes nima v sistemu varovanja manjšin kaj iskati«, a se ne glede na to vseskozi pojavlja v tej ali oni obliki.

Dva primera sta, ko se na Slovenskem beseda matičen pojavi simbolično na najvišji državni ravni: poimenovanje praznikov združitev prekmurskih Slovencev z matičnim narodom in vrnitev Primorske k matični domovini.[4] Po mnenju takratnega zakonodajalca so Slovenci znotraj meja takratne Slovenije predstavljali matičen narod in k temu narodu so se pridružili tudi prekmurski in primorski Slovenci. Zadeva postane še bolj zanimiva, če analiziramo Ustavo Republike Slovenije (1991), ki v 64. členu določa posebne pravice italijanske in madžarske manjšine, ki živita v Sloveniji. V tem členu je navedeno, da je »[n]arodnima skupnostima in njunim pripadnikom […] zagotovljena pravica, da gojijo odnose s svojima **matičnima narodoma** [poudarili avtorji] in njunima državama […]«, kar pomeni, da Slovenija kot država razume, da sta italijanska in madžarska narodna skupnost dela matičnega naroda, ki ne živi v Republiki Sloveniji.[5] Sledeč ustavi, je v primeru italijanske narodne skupnosti njen matičen narod italijanski narod, v madžarskem primeru pa madžarski narod.[6] Razumevanje narodnih (manjšinskih) skupnosti v Ustavi Republike Slovenije tako vzpostavlja klasično binarno razdelitev med matičnim in nematičnim, pri čemer izhaja iz razmišljanja, da je pogoj, da je nekaj razumljeno kot matično, predvsem to, da obstaja enota, ki ima s tem matičnim objektom ali subjektom določene kulturne ali zgodovinske povezave, je pa geografsko od njega oddvojena. V takem razumevanju si je nemogoče zamisliti, da bi lahko bila za npr. italijansko manjšino v Sloveniji matična nacija slovenska nacija.

Namen pričujočega članka je na konkretnem primeru štirih pripadnikov italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji ugotoviti, kakšno je njihovo razumevanje koncepta matična domovina kot rezultata samodefiniranja z matičnim narodom in nacijo. Pri tem avtorji izhajamo iz že omenjenega razmišljanja binarnih (o)pozicij, ki predvideva, da bodo vsi štirje sogovorniki za svoj matični narod in nacijo definirali italijanski narod/nacijo. Pri tem se zavedamo omejitev, ki jih

naša raziskava prinaša. Prva je gotovo ta, da smo zajeli majhno število intervjuvancev, kar onemogoča posploševanje na celotno italijansko narodno skupnost v Sloveniji. Druga omejitev je tudi družbeno-ekonomsko-politični položaj sogovornikov. Sami smo se zavestno odločili, da se ognemo možnosti, da bi te intervjuje opravljali s političnimi pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti na Slovenskem, ker menimo, da bi njihova stališča bolj kot osebna bila uradna stališča italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji. Tretja omejitev je starost intervjuvancev. Tudi pri tem smo izhajali iz binarnih (o)pozicij, kar pomeni, da smo predvidevali, da bodo starejši predstavniki italijanske narodne skupnosti bolj naklonjeni mišljenju, da je njihova matična domovina Italija, matični narod in nacija pa italijanska. Za mlajše nasploh namreč velja, da so njihove identitete veliko bolj fluidne, kot to velja za starejše (Chim Wong 2016).

Na podlagi vsega predstavljenega in tudi omejitev smo si postavili dve raziskovalni vprašanji, na kateri želimo v članku odgovoriti. Prvo se nanaša na to, kako intervjuvanci razumejo koncept matična domovina ter na katera področja (kultura, zgodovina, jezik ipd.) njihovega življenja/delovanja se ta koncept nanaša. Drugo raziskovalno vprašanje se osredinja predvsem na vprašanje identitete posameznika, in sicer v okviru njegove povezanosti z matično domovino. Pri tem nas bo zanimalo predvsem njegovo samorazumevanje (ne)pripadnosti matičnemu narodu.

Na raziskovalni vprašanji bomo odgovorili s kombinacijo več metod. V teoretsko-analitičnem delu, ki sledi uvodnemu poglavju, bomo prikazali različna razumevanja konceptov matična država in matična domovina ter ju segmentirali in ovrednotili na način, da bomo lahko prek tega operacionalizirali postavljena raziskovalna vprašanja za preverjanje v empiričnem delu članka. Ta bo predstavil konceptualna izhodišča štirih intervjuvanih posameznikov, pripadnikov italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji, ki jih bodo avtorji spraševali na temo razumevanja koncepta matične domovine in njihove povezave s slednjo ter samoidentitete in odnosa do slednje. Empiričnemu delu bo sledila razprava z zaključki, v katerih bomo izpostavili ključne ugotovitve, jih kontekstualizirali, predvsem pa opozorili na še odprta področja, ki bi jih veljalo raziskovati v prihodnje.

2. Matična domovina: teoretsko-konceptualni okvir

Dilema razumevanja tega, kaj je matična domovina, se pojavlja v dveh kontekstih. Prvi je teoretsko-konceptualen, drugi pa oseben in se dotika predvsem posameznikovega razumevanja njegove identitete, njene umeščenosti v določen čas in prostor, pa tudi vprašanja, kako drugi razumejo določenega posameznika in njegovo identiteto (prim. Milharčič-Hladnik 2015; Sedmak & Zadel 2015). V tem kontekstu se je smiselno vprašati ne le, če matična domovina kot koncept sama po sebi sploh obstaja, ampak tudi, če kot koncept obstaja, kako se njena

konceptualizacija umešča v družbeno in osebno. Osebno se veže predvsem na identiteto posameznika (Sršen 2016; Zdravković 2015), kot jo percipira sam, družbeno pa se kaže v neke vrste podeljevanju atributov posamezniku glede na njegove osebne okoliščine – vero, jezik, zgodovino oz. pripadnost določenemu narodu ali narodnosti. Samorazumevanje družbene atributizacije, ki je dodeljena posamezniku zaradi nekaterih njegovih osebnih okoliščin, je smiselno razgraditi na vprašanje družbene identitete same po sebi (prim. Južnič 1996; Vižintin 2015; Bajt 2016), sočasno pa tudi na definiranje tega, kdo je tisti, ki določeno družbeno identiteto posamezniku podeljuje (Spreizer 2015). Šele ko razrešimo to izhodiščno dilemo, lahko razpravljamo o konceptualizaciji dileme glede samodefiniranja lastne identitete bodisi posameznika bodisi določene družbene skupine.

Postopek konceptualizacije matične domovine zaplete še ena predpostavka, in sicer inherentna struktura tega koncepta, ki je sestavljen iz samostalnika domovina in pridevnika matična. Če skušamo najprej konceptualizirati, kaj je domovina, potem moramo vzeti v obzir različne ne samo definicije, ampak poudarke o tem, kako jo definirati. Na tem mestu moramo opozoriti, da je definiranje tega, kaj je za posameznika ali družbeno skupino domovina, predvsem dojemanjskega značaja. To pa pomeni, da za domovino ne obstaja neka določena objektivna definicija, ampak je takšna definicija podvržena posameznikovemu razumevanju (prim. Žigon et al. 2020) in pogojena s čustvi (»*Kampbegriff um Emotionalisierungen …*«), zato jo je nemogoče ukalupiti (Weber et al. 2019, 5).

Navkljub takšnemu ohlapnemu razumevanju koncepta domovina Weber et al. (2019, 5) navedejo sedem dimenzij, ki naj bi jih ta koncept vseboval. Prva se veže na societalno oz. identitetno komponento, torej na »osebne odnose, kot so družina, prijatelji, sorodniki […]«; druga na zadovoljstvo s svojim življenjem, ki »se umešča v določene sfere družbe«. Tretja komponenta je pogojena s časom, četrta pa s krajem oz. kraji (*locus* oz. *loci*), s katerim(i) se posameznik identificira (lahko je to njegov ožji ali širši življenjski prostor). Naslednje komponente so pogojene s kontekstom razumevanja koncepta domovina ter zunanjimi in notranjimi omejitvami, kot jih razume posameznik (npr. moja domovina se zaključi tam, kjer se začne domovina drugega) (Weber et al. 2019, 8–10). Weber et al. (2019, 10) navajajo tudi raziskavo Kühneja in Spellerbergerja (2010), ki je bila izvedena v Posarju in v kateri se je tri četrtine respondentov ali več strinjalo, da je zanje domovina tam, (1) kjer se počutijo varno (77 %), (2) kjer so preživeli otroštvo (76 %), (3) kjer imajo svoj dom oz. kjer živijo (76 %) ter (4) kjer imajo prijatelje (74 %). Da bi domovino definiral skupen jezik, se je strinjalo le 59 % respondentov; da bi to bil kraj, kjer ljudje mislijo enako kot respondenti, se je strinjalo 45 % respondentov. Našteto jasno kaže, da je za navedene respondente koncept domovine povezan predvsem z osebno varnostjo ter družbenim

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in samoidentifikacijskim okoljem. Domovina je zanje torej neke vrste ovoj, v katerem se počutijo varni in sprejeti.

Apliciranje razumevanja koncepta domovina na bivanjske značilnosti posameznikov pokaže, da je koncept domovine pogojen s svetovnonazorskim pogledom posameznika. Berr (2019, 34) izpostavlja, da je razumevanje koncepta domovina pogosto povezano s konservativnim pogledom na svet ter je kot takšno določeno na podlagi tradicije in socializacije posameznika v določeni skupnosti. Tako razumevanje seveda vzpostavlja nasprotje ciceronskemu razumevanju, da je domovina tam, kjer ti je lepo (*ubi bene, ibi patria*). Berr (2019, 36–42) svoje razmišljanje nadaljuje s tem, da se definiranje domovine postavlja v odnos med samoizpričano ali samoživeto posameznikovo svobodo in družbenimi institucijami ter med stabilnostjo družbene ureditve in posameznikovimi preferencami. A kljub tem izpostavitvam in osvetlitvam jasnega odgovora, kaj domovina je, Berr ne ponudi. Na podobnem razmišljanju o konceptu domovine gradita tudi Bruns in Münderlein (2019, 99–120), ki ugotavljata, da je odgovor na to, zakaj ljudje svoje čustvene vezi gradimo v odnosu z določeno (geografsko) lokacijo, nejasen in nedorečen. Samo navezanost posameznika na določen prostor (*place*) povežeta ne samo z njegovimi osebnimi lastnostmi, ampak tudi s pripadnostjo določeni družbeni skupini (identitetno vprašanje), pa tudi s procesi, katerih del je posameznik, med katere uvrščata njegov proces navezanosti (*affect*), kognicije (*cognition*) in vedenja (*behaviour*). Domovina je po njunem razumevanju tako določena z individualno-čustveno-identitetnimi občutki posameznika, njemu bližnjim do srednjeoddaljenim geografskim prostorom ter razlikovanjem med tujim (ontološka razdalja) in oddaljenim (geografska razdalja) (Bruns & Münderlein 2019, 112). Vse povedano pokaže, da je za definicijo koncepta domovina predpogoj posameznikovo razumevanje nečesa kot domovine, pri čemer lahko pri teh razumevanjih prihaja tako do presečišč kot tudi do praznih množic. Kar je za nekoga domovina, za drugega ni in obratno.[7]

Dejstvo, da je razumevanje koncepta domovina težko objektivizirati oz. postaviti v enoten, obče sprejet spekter (ki bi presegal minimalni skupni imenovalec), omogoča lažjo ideologizacijo tega koncepta. Weber et al. (2019, 7) tako navajajo nemški primer, ko je v sto letih (od narodnega vzpona do konca druge svetovne vojne) koncept domovina za Nemce dobival različne odtenke in tudi poimenovanja. Iz 19. stoletja poznajo Nemci koncept očetnjave (*Vaterland*), ki se je v začetku 20. stoletja prelil v koncept domovine (*Heimat*). Med obema vojnama pa se je ta koncept zlil s konceptom nacije (*Nation*) ter z vzponom nacizma kulminiral v konceptu *Heimat-Vaterland-Volks*, pri čemer so se razlike med različnimi razumevanji pomena posameznih konceptov izgubile in so se ti koncepti uporabljali kot sopomenke.

Tudi druge študije (prim. Anderson 2006; Cordell 2007; Bajt 2011; Eigler 2012; Nossal 2018; Pogonyi 2015; Fedinec 2016; Baskar 2020, idr.) opozarjajo

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na poenostavljeno (in lahko tudi ideološko obarvano) razumevanje koncepta domovina, ki je v mnogih razpravah povezan ne samo s posameznikom, ampak s sorodnimi koncepti, kot so etničnost, narod in nacionalnost, katerih definicij je vsaj toliko, kolikor je avtorjev. Kot ilustracijo te pestrosti in nedorečenosti definicij navajamo ugotovitve Udoviča et al. (2022, 10), ki navajajo dve definiciji naroda in etničnosti, ki sta si že v izhodišču nasprotni, in sicer definiciji naroda Janeza Evangelista Kreka in Petra Kovačiča Peršina. Prvi k definiciji naroda pristopa bolj biologistično, ko pravi, da naj bi narod imel skupne telesne in duševne lastnosti, drugi pa bolj narodopisno, saj naj bi se narod samodefiniral prek svojega jezika (morda sorodnosti narečij) in skupnih običajev ter znotraj zgoščene geografske poselitve zgodovinske sorodnosti. Tretjo definicijo v ta mozaik dodaja Komac (osebna komunikacija, 7. 3. 2024),[8] ki pravi, da vlada v slovenskem jeziku zmeda med definiranjem konceptov naroda in nacije. Kot ugotavlja,

> [v] Sloveniji nimamo ne definicije naroda in ne nacije. Narod, torej *ethnic group*, ostaja nedefiniran, koncept nacije pa smo pobrali iz srbohrvaškega jezika in ga nikoli nismo definirali. [...] V Sloveniji sicer pogostokrat slišite, da je nacija dozorel narod. Ma kakšen dozorel narod. Narod ni organizem, je tip socialne organizacije, ki združuje edinstvene posameznike. Drugo je nacija. Ta bi morala obsegati vse državljane Republike Slovenije, ki imajo v Sloveniji stalno prebivališče in v Sloveniji tudi dejansko živijo.

Komac tako še zaplete razumevanje koncepta domovina, saj poudari, da sta narod in nacija obliki organiziranja, ki povezujeta različne dele družbe, ki so lahko različnih narodnosti, v eno, sinhrono nacijo. Kot takšna je ta vseobsegajoča in pogojena predvsem z geografsko, ne pa z etnično komponento.

Če smo sedaj predvsem razpravljali o konceptu domovine in z njo povezanimi koncepti naroda in nacije, moramo še raziskati, kaj bi znotraj tega teoretskega okvira označeval koncept matična domovina. Komac (osebna komunikacija, 7. 3. 2024) trdi, da je koncept matične domovine težko definirati, ker je to preživet koncept 19. stoletja in je »bil zastarel že takrat, ko so ga lansirali,« ter dodaja, da tudi ta koncept potrjuje razmišljanje, da je narod/nacija neka oblika organizacije oz. da gre v osnovi za biološki koncept. »[Matična domovina] spominja na čebeljo organizacijo družbe, kjer sredi sedi neka matica in male čebeľče letijo okoli ter skrbijo za futranje matice. Matica pa v bistvu pravzaprav ne skrbi za čebele ...«.[9] Po Komačevem razumevanju koncept matične domovine kombinira elemente biologističnega pristopa (kjer matica skrbi za svoje čebelice) z organizacijskim pristopom, znotraj katerega matica čebelicam pove, kaj je prav ter kako se morajo pravilno obnašati, po potrebi pa jih lahko tudi zaščiti.

Udovič et al. (2022, 11) k definiranju matičnosti pristopijo bolj strukturno kot Komac (osebna komunikacija, 7. 3. 2024), ko določijo štiri pogoje, ki morajo biti izpolnjeni, če želimo govoriti o matičnosti naroda oz. domovine. Po njihovem mnenju matičnosti ni, (1) če ni naroda, (2) če narod ni ustvaril lastne države,

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(3) če ni fizično ločene[10] enote naroda, (4) matičnost pa je mogoče definirati le pod pogojem, da obstaja zavedanje o prej naštetih pogojih. Avtorji dodajajo še opozorilo, da je matičnost binaren koncept, ki je – kot že poprej opozarjata Bruns in Münderlein (2019) – definiran po načelu naš – tuj, pri čemer so določila tega, kaj se definira kot naše ali tuje, lahko narodopisna, biologistična, identitetna, čustvena ali pa kombinacija vseh (prim. npr. Jurić Pahor 2015; Smrdelj 2021).

Dihotomija naš – tuj, ki je inherentno del razumevanja matičnosti, opozarja še na eno značilnost tega koncepta, in sicer na njegovo statičnost. Matičnosti kot koncepta sploh ne moremo definirati, če ne privzamemo, da je odnos med matico in fizično ločeno enoto statičen, opozarja Strle (2007, 119), ki še poudarja, da se etnična identiteta [fizično ločene enote – op. a.] »konstantno spreminja v času in prostoru«, kar pomeni, da je nestalna, s tem pa bi se morala spreminjati tudi definicija matičnosti, če bi želeli ujeti tisti *conditio sine qua non* odnosnosti med obema enotama. Tudi v njeni analizi je razvidno to, kar smo že omenili, torej da sta koncepta domovine in matičnosti predvsem perceptivna. Kot ugotavlja sama (Strle 2007, 120), so nekateri slovenski izseljenci v Kanadi »svojo domovino videli v celotni Jugoslaviji, drugi le v Sloveniji, nekateri v svoji lokalni skupnosti, regiji, religiji, morda le pokrajini in domači hiši […]«. Po njenem mnenju domovina ne pomeni le ozemeljske tvorbe, ampak »tudi konkretne ljudi, ki tam živijo oziroma so živeli, dogodke, običaje, vrednote in spomine«.

Kako torej razumeti koncept matične domovine in kaj naj bi bile njene naloge? Teoretsko obstajata dve razumevanji – *top-down* in *bottom-up*. Prvo razumevanje je strukturno. Kaže se tako, da si neka enota avtoritarno prida matičnost nad določenimi oddvojenimi enotami. Ta koncept je lasten predvsem srednje- in vzhodnoevropskem prostoru. Značilnost tega koncepta je, da naj bi ta, matična enota, skrbela za svoje oddvojene dele, v skrajnih primerih pa naj bi jih tudi osvobodila tujega jarma.[11] Izhodiščno je takšen koncept matičnosti pokroviteljski, hkrati pa v veliko primerih tudi kulturno imperialističen, saj želi s svojim obstojem *ipso facto* ustvariti sliko, da je le pot matice tista prava, oddvojeni deli pa morajo, če želijo biti pripadni, tej poti slediti. Drugi koncept izhaja od spodaj, iz posameznika. Ta je povezan veliko bolj z identiteto, pripadnostjo določeni družbeni skupini,[12] lahko pa tudi z lastnimi ekonomskimi, kulturnimi ali samouresničitvenimi potrebami. V prehajanju identitet, sploh v večkulturnih družbah, se tako lahko dogaja, da posameznik v nekem časovnem trenutku kot matično razume eno domovino oz. državo, v drugem pa drugo, lahko pa se čuti oddvojenega od klasičnih teritorialnih ali zgodovinskonarodopisnih načel (prim. Bufon 2017; Komac 2015a; 2015b) ter kot domovino razume kraj, kjer se počuti nasploh sprejetega.

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3. Matična domovina pripadnikov italijanske manjšine v Sloveniji: Slovenija ali Italija? – empirična analiza

3.1 Metodologija raziskave

Teoretska izhodišča, ki smo jih predstavili v prejšnjem poglavju, so predstavljala okvir za izvedbo polstrukturiranih intervjujev s štirimi pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, ki živijo na območju Slovenske Istre. Dva sogovornika sta bila moškega spola, dva pa ženskega spola. Kar se starosti tiče, so bili vsi sogovorniki starejši od 75 let. Zakaj smo se odločili za starejše sogovornike? Želeli smo dobiti sogovornike, ki so primarno socializacijo, pa tudi vsaj del primarnega, sekundarnega in morebiti terciarnega izobraževanja opravili v italijanskem jeziku. Vsi sogovorniki so še danes aktivni pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti.[13]

Pred izvedbo raziskave smo si kot del raziskovalnega okvirja postavili dve tezi (ena je imela izvedeni podtezi), ki smo ju želeli testirati.

– T1: Pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, ki so primarno socializacijo in del izobraževalnega procesa opravili še v italijanskem jeziku ter so še vedno intenzivno povezani z narodno skupnostjo, bodo kot svojo matično domovino razumeli Italijo.

  • T1a: Matično domovino bodo razumeli v okviru oz. kot del binarnih (o)pozicij.
  • T1b: Menili bodo, da je matična domovina lahko samo ena.

– T2: Pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, ki so primarno socializacijo in del izobraževalnega procesa opravili še v italijanskem jeziku ter so še vedno povezani z narodno skupnostjo, bodo matičnost Italije povezovali z italijansko kulturo, jezikom, običaji, zgodovino ipd.

Da bi testirali navedene teze, smo intervjuvancem postavili štiri glavna vprašanja, po potrebi pa smo postavili še podvprašanja. Glavna vprašanja so bila:

– Q1: Kako vi razumete besedo matična domovina (izvorno *Nazione Madre*),[14] kaj je za vas tisto, kar nekaj dela matično? Je ta koncept še aktualen ali je preživet?

– Q2: Menite, da ima lahko človek več matičnih domovin ali je to lahko samo ena?

– (Če ni na široko odgovoril na Q1, je sledil še Q3: Kaj pogojuje razumevanje nečesa kot matične domovine? Ozemlje, jezik, kultura … vse skupaj ali kaj drugega?)

– Q4: Je za italijansko narodno skupnost v Sloveniji po vašem mnenju matična Italija ali Slovenija? Če prvo, kako se počutite kot manjšina v nematični državi? Se vam zdi, da se vam godi slabše kot tistim, ki za svojo matično domovino štejejo Slovenijo?

Vsi intervjuji so bili izvedeni med novembrom in decembrom 2023 v italijanskem jeziku, v kombinaciji z istrobeneškim narečjem. Vsak intervju je načeloma trajal vsaj eno uro, nekateri so bili malce daljši. Ker bi slovensko bralstvo lahko imelo težave z razumevanjem tako vsebine kot besedišča odgovorov, smo se odločili, da dele intervjujev, ki smo jih v pričujočem besedilu uporabili, prevedemo. V izvorni različici smo pustili le določene poudarke, za katere smo menili, da bi s prevodom izgubili v svoji medvrstičnosti.

3.2 Rezultati

3.2.1 Kaj je za intervjuvance matična domovina?

Prva ugotovitev, ki izhaja iz vseh štirih intervjujev, je, da je bil koncept matične domovine za intervjuvance tuj oz. nepoznan. Za odgovore, ki so jih posredovali, so potrebovali nekaj časa, pa tudi delne usmeritve izpraševalca o tem, o čem jih sploh sprašuje. Pričakovanje avtorjev, da bodo intervjuvanci kot iz topa izstrelili Italija, se ni izkazalo za točno. Eden od intervjuvancev je tudi jasno priznal, da je zanj težko to definirati, ker ne ve, kaj bi rekel (Intervjuvanec 2), nato pa je nadaljeval z vprašanjem, če bi lahko matično domovino povezali s pravicami ali morda tem, da oni govorijo italijanski jezik. Intervjuvanec 1 je prav tako priznal, da se na to, kaj je zanj matična domovina, ne da odgovoriti enostavno, saj naj bi to bila Italija, ker se je rodil pod Italijo, ampak živel pa je v Jugoslaviji in zdaj živi v Sloveniji, ter zaključil, da se zaradi vsega tega »počuti kot državljan sveta«. Na večidentitetnost je opozoril tudi intervjuvanec 3, ki je izpostavil, da ima s konceptom razumevanja matične domovine »veliko težav« tudi zaradi svoje osebne zgodbe, povezane s krajem rojstva, krajem študija, družinskimi zadevami in podobno. Dodal je še, da bi raje kot o matični domovini govoril o lastni kulturi (*cultura madre*), ki jo sam definira kot kulturo, ki je pustila največji pečat v njegovi nacionalni identifikaciji (Intervjuvanec 3).

Drugačen odgovor od prej naštetih je podal intervjuvanec 4, ki je matično domovino povezal z manjšino, v katero spada (»*Noi dicevamo sempre che siamo minoranza della madre italiana*«).[15] Po njegovem mnenju je njegova pripadnost manjšini (in ne določenemu narodu, naciji ali državi) tisto, kar zanj *ipso facto* določa tudi njegovo matično domovino. V nadaljnjem razgovoru je to nato potrdil še dvakrat. Je pa vmes tudi razumevanje, da pripadnost italijanski narodni skupnosti avtomatsko pomeni, da je matična domovina zanj Italija, malce relativiziral, ko je ustvaril nekakšno bilateralno nasprotje med manjšinsko pripadnostjo in nacionalno pripadnostjo, rekoč:

> Doma smo govorili, da smo Italijani. Toda mama je vedno poudarila, da smo italijanska manjšina, ki živi na območju, na katerem je bila prej Italija, zdaj je pa Jugoslavija (Intervjuvanec 4).

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Ta intervjuvanec je bil edini, ki je ves čas intervjuja poudarjal pomen pripadnosti manjšini, do razumevanja tega, kaj je matična domovina, pa se ni znal opredeliti, kar kaže tudi njegovo nihanje v odgovorih.

Nasploh lahko ugotovimo, da je bilo za intervjuvance zelo težko oz. nemogoče definirati, kaj sami razumejo s konceptom matične domovine. Kljub temu, da so skoraj vsi razložili, da so večidentitetni oz. so se odgovoru skušali ogniti,[16] so ob vprašanju, kaj naj bi bila matična domovina za pripadnike italijanske narodne skupnosti, odgovorili Italija, razen intervjuvanca 4, ki se je odgovoru ognil s smehom ter na podvprašanje o tem odgovoril: »Zame je matična domovina tam, kjer živim«, kar pomeni, da je zanj matična domovina veliko bolj kot kulturno določena lokacijsko oz. v odnosu do tistih, ki so mu blizu. To pa potrjuje tudi teoretske predpostavke o razumevanju koncepta domovina, ki smo jih predstavili v teoretsko-konceptualnem poglavju.

V okviru razprave glede definicije matične domovine smo se z intervjuvanci dotaknili še enega področja, in sicer nas je zanimalo, če je po njihovem mnenju koncept matične domovine preživet ali ne oz. kakšno težo mu dajejo sami. Intervjuvanec 1 se je strinjal, da je koncept matične domovine preživet, četudi v tem strinjanju ni bil ravno odločen. Bolj prepričan v to, da je koncept matične domovine preživet, je bil intervjuvanec 2, ki pa je dodal: »Mnogi ga želijo nazaj, ampak za mlade, zanje je preživet, zelo preživet.« Tudi intervjuvanec 3 se je strinjal, da je koncept preživet, poudaril pa je, da sam preživetost tega koncepta povezuje z velikimi spremembami[17] in s tem, da je vedno živel ob meji. Slednji razmislek je še posebej pomemben, saj so že Udovič et al. (2022) ugotovili, da ima t. i. obmejni prostor ne samo veliko prostora za interpretacijo, kaj to sploh je, ampak tudi sposobnost, da se v njegovi nedefiniranosti najdejo ljudje z različnimi identitetami.[18]

3.2.2 Kateri so elementi definiranja matične domovine

Predpostavka, da se koncept matične domovine močno povezuje z jezikom ali kulturo, ki ji sogovorniki pripadajo, se je pokazala kot točna. Intervjuvanec 1 je poleg jezika in kulture dodal še pomen konteksta, v katerem nekdo razume pripadnost nečemu, pa tudi tradicijske prakse, ki so po njegovem razumevanju za samodoločanje pripadnosti zelo pomembne. Intervjuvanec 2 je poudaril pomen jezika in kulture ter dodal še pomen ozemlja, na katerem posameznik živi, in tudi tradicije (*tradizioni comuni*). Na pomen ozemlja, na katerem posameznik živi, je opozoril intervjuvanec 3 s poudarkom, da je prav območje, na katerem živiš, zelo pomembno (»*Il territorio è molto importante.*«); pridružil se mu je tudi intervjuvanec 4. Pri tem moramo poudariti, da je ozemlje (oz. območje) vsak od intervjuvancev razumel drugače. Če ga je intervjuvanec 1 razumel predvsem kot svoj domači kraj, v katerem tudi sodeluje kot pripadnik italijanske narodne skupnosti, pa je intervjuvanec 4 ozemlje oz. območje, ki ga definira, razumel širše

(»*Io mi sento come istriano.*«).[19] Najširše ga je razumel intervjuvanec 3, verjetno tudi zaradi njegovih številnih selitev iz kraja v kraj.

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V intervjujih najdemo še določene poudarke, vezane na prototipe matične domovine, ki so jih navedli posamezniki sami. Tako intervjuvanec 1 pojasnjuje, da to, da se počutiš Italijana (»*sentirsi italiano*«)**,** ne pomeni nujno, da je tvoja matična domovina Italija. Čeprav se nam zdi to malce nelogično, pa nadaljnji odgovori tega intervjuvanca pokažejo, da je pri njem jasna pripadnost italijanski kulturi, prav tako pa tudi jasna pripadnost državi (Jugoslavija, Slovenija), ne ve pa točno, kako bi umestil koncept matične domovine. Če ga torej povežemo z narodom, bo dejal, da je njegova matična domovina Italija, če pa koncept matične domovine povežemo z državo, kjer živi, bo dejal, da je njegova matična domovina Slovenija ali pa se bo temu odgovoru ognil.

Intervjuvanec 2 poudarja, da je pripadnost oz. definiranje matične domovine dinamična kategorija. V njegovih besedah se to sliši tako:

> Včasih je tako, včasih drugače. Recimo, če igra nogomet Slovenija proti Italiji. Ključno vprašanje bo, za koga navijaš. Enkrat navijam za ene, drugič za druge. Včasih sem bolj povezan z narodom, ki govori moj jezik, drugič pa … Vem, da ni za vse enako oz. da se spreminja, kdaj čutiš pripadnost eni ali drugi naciji (Intervjuvanec 3).

Intervjuvanec 2 s tem, ko oriše dinamičnost identitet in njihovo prelivanje, potrdi teoretska dognanja, da je za uspešno obravnavanje konceptov v zvezi z manjšinami nujno okostenele modele, ki jih poznamo, dinamizirati in aktualizirati. Dejstvo ostaja, da ti modeli niso nikoli zares odsevali realnosti na terenu, a so kljub temu danes veliko bolj okosteneli in preživeti, kot so bili pred desetletji ali stoletji.

Na problem binarnih (o)pozicij opozarja tudi intervjuvanec 3, ki poudarja, da bi sam definiral svojo identiteto kot fluidno. Glede na njegove izkušnje je to po njegovem mnenju edino logično. Ampak v situacijah, kjer se od njega terjajo črno-bele rešitve oz. binarna opredelitev, ki se implicitno skriva v vprašanjih »Kaj si?« ali »Kdo si?« ali »Pripadnik katerega naroda si?«, in ne bo imel možnosti, da na dolgo opiše svojo fluidnost, torej če se mora opredeliti po kategorijah, bo jasno izpostavil, da je Italijan. A ni nujno, da se to vedno odraža v njegovih vsakodnevnih dejanjih, kar opiše tako:

> Preživeti smo [govori o italijanski manjšini – op. a.]. In to je največja težava. In karkoli se trudimo narediti, se moramo zavedati, da smo stari in zastareli. Ko grem v trgovino, govorim slovensko, saj nimam več moči, da bi se bil z mlini na veter. Mi je sicer žal, ker morda za mano stoji kakšen mlajši pripadnik italijanske skupnosti,[20] ki zato, ker mene vidi govoriti slovensko, govori slovensko tudi on (Intervjuvanec 2).

Intervjuvanec 4 z uporabo mešanega jezikovnega koda ter jezikovne kombinacije »*farli* upoštevat« (moral bi reči *applicarli*) posredno pritrjuje pomisle-

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kom intervjuvanca 3 o pomenu uporabe jezika in problemu medjezikovnega sovplivanja za razumevanje matičnosti oz. pripadnosti.

Z vidika razumevanja, kaj definira matičnost in posledično pripadnost matičnosti, je zanimiv odgovor intervjuvanca 4, ki za razliko do ostalih treh, ki jezik in kulturo enačijo, sam poudarja predvsem jezik. Kultura je namreč po njegovem mnenju ožji koncept, kot je jezik, sočasno pa tudi bolj spremenljiv. Kot pravi sam:

> Kultura se začne s časom spreminjati. Ko si otrok, si ji podvržen bolj tudi zaradi domače vzgoje. S časom, ko odideš od doma, ko se srečuješ z drugimi, ko sodeluješ v različnih organizacijah z drugimi ljudmi … se kultura spremeni, razširi. In tako postaneš kulturno odprt (Intevjuvanec 4).

4. Razprava in zaključek

Dosedanja razprava je pokazala tri ključne značilnosti razmišljanja oz. definiranja koncepta matične domovine. Prva je, da sta tako koncept domovine kot koncept matičnosti teoretsko še popolnoma nedefinirana in nedodelana, kar skorajda onemogoča raziskovanje obeh konceptov, ker se vsaka raziskava začne *ab ovo*. Drugi izziv so metodološke nekonsistentnosti definiranja koncepta matične domovine. Raziskave ta koncept še vedno preučujejo v okviru pozitivističnih teorij, pri čemer pa je njihov inherentni koncept, identiteta, že leta preučevan znotraj postpozitivistične metodologije. Tak trk pristopov onemogoča jasno definiranje raziskovalnega predmeta kot tudi določitev primernih metod za njegovo preučevanje. V našem primeru smo se zato poslužili metode intervjuja, ki pa se ni pokazala kot najbolj primerna, saj so bili intervjuvanci soočeni z vprašanji, o katerih niso že poprej veliko razmišljali. Tudi test[21] te metode na mlajši generaciji pripadnikov italijanske narodne skupnosti je pripeljal do podobnih rezultatov. V prihodnosti velja tako razmisliti, da bi za preučevanje te tematike raziskovalci večkrat uporabljali metodo fokusne skupine ali opazovanja z udeležbo.

Pri testiranju tez smo bili tudi znotraj omejitve le štirih sogovornikov zgolj delno uspešni. Prve teze, da bodo pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, ki so primarno socializacijo in del izobraževalnega procesa opravili še v italijanskem jeziku ter so še vedno intenzivno povezani z narodno skupnostjo, kot svojo matično domovino razumeli Italijo, z dostopnimi podatki ne moremo potrditi. Še več, na podlagi pridobljenih podatkov lahko celo trdimo, da pripadnost italijanski narodni skupnosti oz. italijanskosti ne izključuje dejstva, da je matična domovina za sogovornike lahko tudi Slovenija. To potrjujeta tudi intervjuvanca 1 in 3. Intervjuvanec 1 pravi: »Ne počutim se drugačnega od ostalih [v Sloveniji]«, intervjuvanec 3 pa: »Piran je moja domovina in Slovenija me je lepo sprejela.«

Tudi izvedeni tezi, da bodo pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti razumeli (a) matično domovino v okviru binarnih (o)pozicij ter da bodo menili, (b) da je matična domovina samo ena, lahko zavrnemo, saj temu v analiziranih primerih gotovo ni tako. Za intervjuvance, tudi zaradi samopoudarjene fluidnosti njihove identitete, matična domovina ni del binarnih opozicij, posledično pa tudi ni samo ena.

Smo pa za razliko od prve teze drugo tezo delno potrdili. Namreč, pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, ki so primarno socializacijo in del izobraževalnega procesa opravili (še) v italijanskem jeziku ter so še vedno povezani z narodno skupnostjo, svoje razumevanje matičnosti vežejo predvsem na italijanski jezik in kulturo (z določenimi omejitvami), ki predstavljata pomemben vir avtosimbolike (prim. Arbeiter 2019), kar posledično pomeni, da posredno matičnost – če bi morali izbirati znotraj binarnih kategorij – pripisujejo Italiji (kot nosilki italijanskega jezika in kulture). A tu ni enotnosti – opozarjamo predvsem na intervjuvanca 4, ki matičnost bolj kot Italiji pripisuje italijanski manjšini *per se*.

Na koncu lahko zaključimo z dvema opažanjema: prvo je, da je to področje konceptualizacije matičnosti in iz tega matične domovine smiselno raziskovati še naprej, saj bo lahko le tako mogoče ugotoviti, ali je koncept matične domovine sploh še aktualen oz. ali bi ga bilo treba potisniti v ropotarnico zgodovine. Drugo pa, da bi morali na področju proučevanja matičnosti in domovinskosti več raziskovanja izvajati na terenu. V identitetni pestrosti in zmedi, ki vlada v 21. stoletju, bi bilo morda določene koncepte, ki so se razvili v 19. stoletju in so bili delno še aktualni do vzpona interneta ter fragmentiranih družbenih dejstev, aktualizirati, dinamizirati, predvsem pa približati stvarnosti.

Intervjuvanci

Intervjuvanec 1 – Lucija, 18. 11. 2023.

Intervjuvanec 2 – Lucija, 18. 11. 2023.

Intervjuvanec 3 – Piran, 25. 11. 2023.

Intervjuvanec 4 – Lucija, 14. 12. 2023.

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Opombe

[1] To ni bil prvi zdrs na tem področju. Predsednica republike je že poprej razburila slovensko narodno skupnost na avstrijskem Koroškem, ko je za televizijo ORF povedala, da so pravice slovenske manjšine zgledno urejene.

[2] Okvirna konvencija Sveta Evrope (The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1995) velja za prvi mednarodnopravni dokument s področja zaščite manjšin.

[3] Pogovor avtorja Boštjana Udoviča z Miranom Komacem, Ljubljana, 17. 5. 2021.

[4] Praznika je uvedla prva Janševa vlada leta 2005 (Zakon o praznikih in dela prostih dnevih v Republiki Sloveniji, 2005).

[5] Namen te razprave ni predstavljati kompleksnih odnosov med Slovenijo in Italijo ter nastanka italijanske narodne skupnosti v Slovenski Istri. Zainteresirani bralec lahko več informacij o tem najde v sledečih virih: Abram (2018; 2021; 2022); Bajc (2014; 2017); Bajc & Matjašič Friš (2019); Bucarelli et al. (2016); Dato (2010); Godeša (2014); Hrobat Virloget (2019); Jurić Pahor (2012; 2015); Klabjan (2011); Lampe (2018; 2019); Lenassi & Paolucci (2020); Montini & Mišić (2017); Novak-Lukanović (2011); Orlić (2015; 2019); Pirjevec (2015; 2016); Poropat Jeletić (2017); Pupo (2012); Purini (2012); Ramšak (2016); Režek (2016); Tomaselli et al. (2021); Udovič & Novak Lukanović (2024); Umer Kljun (2015); Žitko (2015; 2023).

[6] Komac (osebna komunikacija, 9. 4. 2024) opozarja, da je po njegovem mnenju 64. člen Ustave na prvi pogled zelo širok in demokratičen, v skladu s sodobnim varovanjem človekovih pravic in pravic manjšin, a »je v resnici nedemokratično izključujoč, saj izključuje obe manjšini [italijansko in madžarsko – op. a.] iz slovenskega nacionalnega telesa«. Pogovor avtorja Boštjana Udoviča z Miranom Komacem, Ljubljana, 9. 4. 2024.

[7] »Dom si lahko vsak človek ustvari, kjerkoli je. Če ima družino, si ustvari dom. Medtem ko domovina je samo ena. Domovine pa ti ne moreš menjati ali reči: 'To je moja domovina'. Kanada ni moja domovina, Kanada je moj dom« (Ahačič Pollak 2024).

[8] Intervju avtorice Lare Sorgo z Miranom Komacem, Ljubljana, Lucija, 7. 3. 2024. Zvočni zapis hrani avtorica.

[9] S Komacem pogled deli tudi Vospernik (1986, 59), ko pravi: »Matica - to pomeni biološki, zgodovinski, geografski izvir, ob matici se pojavljajo hierarhično razporejeni otroci in potomci.«

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Je pa med njima občutna razlika. Če Komac (osebna komunikacija, 7. 3. 2024) čebelice pušča v prostem letu in jih razume kot enake, jih Vospernik hierarhizira od bolj do manj pomembnih. Katere so katere je prepuščeno različnim odločevalcem in odločitvam, dejstvo pa je, da imajo te odločitve običajno predvsem ideološko (in ne zgodovinsko-racionalno) podstat.

[10] Avtorji uporabijo termin *detached*. O diasporizaciji na Slovenskem prim. Jurić Pahor (2023).

[11] V italijanskem primeru pred prvo svetovno vojno je bil to koncept *liberazione delle terre irredente*.

[12] Strle (2007, 120) na primeru Slovencev iz Kanade opozarja na razlikovanje med »Slovenci v Kanadi« in »kanadskimi Slovenci«. Slednji so identitetno definirani drugače od prvih.

[13] Morda se zdi, da so štirje intervjuvanci premalo za kakršno koli sklepanje na populacijo italijanske narodne skupnosti, a zavedati se moramo, da je dobiti smiseln vzorec glede na predstavljene omejitve – spol, izobrazba, izkušnje, starost, oblike primarne in sekundarne socializacije znotraj italijanskega jezika in skupnosti – realno skorajda nemogoče. Pri tem smo se vseskozi zavedali, da so štirje intervjuji premalo za podajo dokončnih odgovorov, a so začetek, ker so zabeleženi in odstirajo tudi druge značilnosti, na podlagi katerih raziskovalci lahko ustvarjajo nove ideje in predloge za raziskovanje omenjene problematike.

[14] V italijanščini koncept *Nazione Madre* ni najbolj razširjen, pogosteje se uporablja koncept *Madre-patria*. A vendarle koncept *Nazione Madre* najdemo tudi v določenih zapisih, mdr. italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji, kar lahko namiguje, da je ta izraz v italijanski jezik narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji prišel pod vplivom slovenskega koncepta matična domovina.

[15] »Mi smo vedno govorili, da smo manjšina, katere mati je Italija.«

[16] Nekateri so to skrili v izgovor, da so državljani sveta (intervjuvanec 1 in 4), drugi pa, da imajo več identitet, ki se prelivajo (Intervjuvanec 3).

[17] Ni točno jasno, na katere je mislil, a dovolimo si zaključiti, da je mislil na zgodovinske spremembe v Sloveniji in v svetu.

[18] Intervjuvanec 4 na to vprašanje ni odgovoril oz. ga je [namenoma – op. a.] preskočil.

[19] »Počutim se kot Istran.« Na prvi pogled se zdi, da intervjuvanec 4 govori o celotni Istri, a preverjanje s podvprašanjem pokaže, da ko reče »istriano«, misli predvsem na območje Slovenske Istre.

[20] Ta del je zaradi zakritja identitete besedno nekoliko drugačen od izvirnika, vendar to ne vpliva na bistvo sporočila intervjuvanca 3.

[21] Podoben intervju smo želeli opraviti tudi z mlajšimi pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti, pa smo se potem odločili za fokusno skupino, ki je dala boljše rezultate.

[22] Fokusni intervjuji s skupino štirih mladih pripadnikov italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji. (Lucija, Ljubljana, po Zoom-u, 12. 1. 2024.) Zvočni zapis hrani avtorica.

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Narodnostni vidiki parlamentarnih volitev na Madžarskem leta 2022 s posebnim ozirom na slovensko narodnost

Parlamentarne volitve na Madžarskem leta 2022 so narodnostim že tretjič ponudile priložnost, da izvolijo svojega narodnostnega zagovornika oz. na prednostni ali preferenčni način izglasujejo svojega parlamentarnega poslanca. Polom liste predstavnikov najštevilčnejše, romske narodnosti in odločitev Evropskega sodišča za človekove pravice o kršitvi številnih elementov volilnega sistema pa sta pozornost usmerila na nujnost celovite ocene dosedanjih izkušenj in reforme preferenčnega narodnostnega mandata in institucije zagovorništva. K temu želi s predstavitvijo institucionalnih okvirov in volilnih rezultatov, s posebnim poudarkom na analizi narodnostnih vidikov zadnjih parlamentarnih volitev in položaja slovenske narodnosti, prispevati tudi pričujoča študija.

Ključne besede: Madžarska, parlamentarno zastopstvo narodnosti, volilna udeležba, etnopolitična mobilizacija, slovenska narodnost, zagovornica Slovencev v madžarskem parlamentu, Evropsko sodišče za človekove pravice.

Ethnic Aspects of the 2022 Hungarian Parliamentary Elections with Special Reference to the Slovene National Minority

The 2022 parliamentary elections in Hungary offered for the third time an opportunity for national minorities to elect their representative by casting a preferential vote for their Member of Parliament. However, the failure of the list of representatives of the most numerous ethnic group, the Roma, and the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights concerning the violation of multiple elements of the electoral system underscored the need for a comprehensive assessment of hitherto experience and for a reform of the preferential minority mandate and the institution of advocacy. This study aims to contribute to this process by examining the institutional framework and the electoral results, with a particular focus on the analysis of minority-related aspects of the last parliamentary elections and the situation of the Slovene national minority.

Keywords: Hungary, parliamentary representation of national minorities, voter turnout, ethnopolitical mobilisation, Slovene nationality, Slovene minority advocate in the Hungarian Parliament, European Court of Human Rights.

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1. Uvod: sporna narava madžarske narodnostne politike in zastopstva v parlamentu

Dogodki leta 2022, zlasti polom liste predstavnikov romske narodnosti in s tem tudi izguba mandata zagovornika ali preferenčnega poslanskega mandata naj-številčnejše manjšine v državi, rezultati parlamentarnih volitev in pozneje tudi sodba v zadevi Bakirdzi in E. C. proti Madžarski (2022), ki jo je Evropsko sodišče za človekove pravice (ESČP) objavilo novembra, so pozornost ponovno usmerili na težave sistema zastopstva narodnih manjšin v parlamentu, vzpostavljenega v začetku leta 2010, ter na nujnost celovite ocene dosedanjih izkušenj in reforme problematičnih delov, ki pa jih ni mogoče ločiti od drugih elementov volilnega sistema. Čeprav ima Madžarska relativno homogeno etnično sestavo, je njena politika do narodnih in etničnih manjšin – po novejši uradni terminologiji narodnosti – ter hkrati do veliko številčnejših madžarskih manjšin v zamejstvu vse od političnih sprememb iz začetka devetdesetih let 20. stoletja z različnih vidikov predmet političnih in akademskih razprav. Predvsem glede tega, kako opredeliti temelje politične skupnosti ter uskladiti etnični in nevtralni (civilno-državljanski) pristop k narodu in državljanstvu. V strokovni literaturi je prevladovalo stališče, da je bil glavni (in za mnoge tudi edini) razlog za sprejetje manjšinskega zakona in ustanovitev institucij osebne avtonomije, to je manjšinskih samouprav, preprečiti morebitne kritike oziroma dati dober zgled ali celo izvajati pritisk na sosednje države, da bi izboljšale položaj tamkajšnjih madžarskih manjšinskih skupnosti (cf. Molnár Sansum & Dobos 2020).

Narodnosti na Madžarskem so relativno maloštevilne: pripadniki trinajstih uradno priznanih etničnih skupin[1] so po kriteriju pripadnost narodnosti[2] ob popisu leta 2011 predstavljali približno 6,5 % celotnega prebivalstva (Preglednica 1) oziroma približno 10 % po ocenah predstavnikov narodnosti, poleg tega pa se je večina hkrati s pripadnostjo manjšini opredelila tudi za Madžare.[3] Med uradno priznanimi manjšinami je slovenska najmanj številčna, saj se je po kriteriju pripadnost slovenstvu[4] za Slovence takrat opredelilo 2.820 oseb oziroma so evidentirali 2.385 oseb slovenske narodnosti. Daleč največ jih živi na skrajnem zahodu države, natančneje v monoštrskem okraju Železne županije oziroma v Porabju, območju ob slovenski in avstrijski državni meji.[5] Popisovalci so v sedmih naseljih v Porabju (Monošter - Slovenska ves,[6] Dolnji Senik, Števanovci, Gornji Senik, Verica - Ritkarovci, Andovci in Sakalovci) zabeležili skupaj 1.609 oseb po kriteriju pripadnost slovenstvu, ki so predstavljali dve tretjini celotnega števila Slovencev na Madžarskem. Zaradi razmeroma neugodnih demografskih trendov so leta 2011 Slovenci predstavljali večino le še v štirih naseljih: v Števanovcih, na Gornjem Seniku, na Verici - Ritkarovcih in v Andovcih (Munda Hirnök 2014, 110). Tako kot druge manjšine (razen Romov) so se tudi Slovenci s socialno-ekonomskega vidika dobro vključili v madžarsko družbo in etnična pripadnost na splošno nima tako pomembne vloge, da bi za mnoge lahko postala

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politična mobilizacijska sila, poleg tega pa so številni že na visoki stopnji jezikovne in kulturne asimilacije (Bartha & Borbély 2006). Izjemno zapletene, večplastne in dinamično spreminjajoče se oblike identitete, dvojne ali celo večkratne identitete onemogočajo jasne določitve meja skupnosti in razmejitve subjektov z manjšinskimi pravicami, obenem pa skupaj s skupinami, katerih materni jezik je madžarski, vendar so z vidika kulture navezani na narodnost, prispevajo k javnim razpravam o naravi identitet in njihovi zlorabi, splošno znani kot etnobiznis.

Preglednica 1: Številčni podatki o pripadnikih 13 uradno priznanih narodnosti leta 2011

Pripadnost narodnosti	Število pripadnikov	Delež v prebivalstvu
Romi	315.583	3,18 %
Nemci	185.696	1,87 %
Romuni	35.641	0,36 %
Slovaki	35.208	0,35 %
Hrvati	26.774	0,27 %
Srbi	10.038	0,10 %
Ukrajinci	7.396	0,07 %
Poljaki	7.001	0,07 %
Bolgari	6.272	0,06 %
Grki	4.642	0,05 %
Rusini	3.882	0,04 %
Armenci	3.571	0,04 %
Slovenci	2.820	0,03 %

Vir: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (2013).

Razprave o presoji manjšinskih politik so se ponovno okrepile po parlamentarnih volitvah leta 2010, ko je desnosredinska vlada pod vodstvom Viktorja Orbána z dvotretjinsko večino v parlamentu sprejela novo ustavo (Magyarország Alaptörvénye, 2011), ki je na novo opredelila temelje politične skupnosti in uzakonila številne tradicionalne vrednote. Razvoj novih zakonodajnih okvirov na področju manjšin in njihova vsebina sta tako na mednarodni ravni kot doma sprožili resne kritične odzive, predvsem zato, ker je v primerjavi s prejšnjim, bolj civilno-nevtralnim pristopom prišlo do odločnega premika k etnokulturnemu pojmovanju nacije, kar se je med drugim pokazalo z uvedbo madžarščine kot uradnega jezika ter s poenostavljenim postopkom za pridobitev državljanstva in posredno s tem volilne pravice na parlamentarnih volitvah za Madžare v zamejstvu (Pogonyi 2017, 73–123). Čeprav so narodnosti na Madžarskem še vedno priznane kot sestavni del politične skupnosti in jim je kot ena najpomembnejših institucionalnih sprememb zagotovljena tudi določena stopnja parlamentarne zastopanosti in prisotnosti, pa vse večja vloga etničnosti nedvomno vpliva na

njihove politične in institucionalne možnosti. Prevladujoča politična komunikacija poleg poudarjanja etnokulturne interpretacije madžarskega naroda ter čezmejne povezanosti zaradi dvojnega državljanstva in volilne pravice pripadnikov madžarske manjšine v zamejstvu pogosto sugerira podobo nacionalno in etnično homogene države. Morda je vse to prispevalo tudi k temu, da se je delež pripadnikov narodnosti na Madžarskem ob popisu leta 2022 zmanjšal za dobrih 20 % v primerjavi s popisom leta 2011 (Népszámlálás, 2022), kar lahko v nekaterih naseljih vpliva na politično zastopanost manjšin ter njihove jezikovne, kulturne in izobraževalne pravice. Na splošno pa spremembe mnogi opisujejo kot izpraznitev ali zaton demokracije, neke vrste avtoritarni ali hibridni sistem, vodeno ali iliberalno demokracijo (cf. Pap 2018).

Da bi lahko narodnosti na Madžarskem izražale svoje interese v procesih odločanja, ki jih zadevajo, od lastnih društev in strank, narodnostnih samouprav pa vse do udeležbe v vladnih posvetovalno-svetovalnih organih in možnosti za pridobitev preferenčnega mandata v svetih lokalnih samouprav, so bile po spremembi politične ureditve na Madžarskem ob koncu osemdesetih let 20. stoletja vzpostavljene številne oblike sodelovanja in zastopanja. Priložnosti, ki so se pojavile po političnih spremembah, so izkoristili tudi Slovenci na Madžarskem ter 27. oktobra 1990 na Gornjem Seniku ustanovili Zvezo Slovencev na Madžarskem, ki deluje kot civilna organizacija. Prve slovenske samouprave so bile ustanovljene leta 1994 (na Dolnjem Seniku, v Števanovcih, v Monoštru - Slovenski vesi in v Andovcih), na naslednjih lokalnih volitvah pa so se oblikovale tudi druge. Leta 1995 je bila ustanovljena Državna slovenska samouprava s sedežem na Gornjem Seniku, za lažje vzdrževanje stikov z državnimi institucijami in uradi pa so odprli tudi predstavništvo v Budimpešti (Munda Hirnök 1999, 61–62).

Čeprav je bilo v zadevi vzpostavitve preferenčnega ali prednostnega parlamentarnega zastopstva, ki je bila ena od glavnih političnih zahtev narodnosti po letu 1990, podanih več predlogov, je bila do določene mere izpolnjena šele po letu 2010, ko se je poudarek od zastopstva preusmeril bolj na sodelovanje pri delu v državnem zboru. A žal zaradi števila svojih pripadnikov večina narodnosti preferenčnega praga za pridobitev polnopravnega parlamentarnega mandata ni mogla doseči. Na parlamentarnih volitvah leta 2014, ko so pripadniki narodnosti prvič volili svoje predstavnike, je uspela vsaka narodnost izvoliti le enega zagovornika brez glasovalne pravice.[7] Na volitvah leta 2018 in 2022 pa je lista nemške narodnosti po uspešni mobilizaciji dobila polnopravno parlamentarno zastopstvo. V nasprotju z njimi številčno največja manjšina v državi, politično sicer zelo razdeljeni Romi, na zadnjih parlamentarnih volitvah ni uspela sestaviti niti samostojne liste (obširneje glej Kállai 2022). Glede na pogosto sporno naravo glavnih zakonskih določb in institucionalnih rešitev narodnostne politike na Madžarskem ni presenetljivo, da je ta nova možnost volitev narodnostnih poslancev in zagovornikov kmalu postala predmet kritik tako z vidika načina njihove izvolitve kot tudi pravnega statusa. Konec leta 2022 je ESČP v svoji sodbi

ugotovil protipravno kršitev tajnosti glasovanja, pomanjkanje realne možnosti izbire in da velika večina narodnosti praktično nima možnosti za pridobitev preferenčnega poslanskega mandata. V zvezi z njihovim delovanjem v parlamentu se postavlja tudi vprašanje, ali predstavlja institucija zagovorništva v skladu s predpisi in priporočili mednarodnega varstva manjšin res učinkovito udeležbo narodnosti v javnem življenju (OSCE/HCNM, 1999; OSCE/ODIHR, 2001) oziroma ali lahko narodnosti vsebinsko bistveno vplivajo na odločitve, ki jih zadevajo (Molnárné Balázs 2021).

Temeljno vprašanje glede volitve zagovornikov pa je, v kolikšni meri lahko govorimo o polnopravni ali, nasprotno, le o omejeni udeležbi in zastopanosti narodnosti. Razen v primeru najštevilčnejših narodnosti, predvsem Nemcev in Romov, sistem pravzaprav ne spodbuja javnega izražanja narodnostne identitete, obsežnejše udeležbe na volitvah ter ustvarjanja zadostne podpore volivcev narodnostnih zagovornikov ter njihove reprezentativnosti in legitimnosti. Zadnje parlamentarne volitve so pokazale, da se je za narodnostne volivce, ki bi lahko na parlamentarnih volitvah glasovali za posamezne narodnostne liste, ki skorajda niso imele možnosti za pridobitev polnopravnega poslanskega mandata (medtem ko je bila udeležba zagovornikov zagotovljena že s samo enim veljavnim glasom), opredelilo veliko manj ljudi, kot sicer izhaja iz števila pripadnikov narodnosti in glede na stanje na volitvah v narodnostne (lokalne) samouprave. Pri tem seveda ne smemo pozabiti, da je možnost podaje samoizjave omogočala, da so se kot narodnostni volivci lahko registrirale tudi osebe, ki niso bile pripadnice zadevne narodnosti, bili pa so tudi primeri, ko je bila vprašljiva celo narodnostna pripadnost zagovornika.[8] V takih okoliščinah se na eni strani postavlja vprašanje, v kolikšni meri so za mobilizacijo zainteresirane same samouprave, na drugi oziroma na strani volivcev pa, kdo, kje in zakaj je bodisi iz simbolično-emocionalnih razlogov, ki izhajajo iz občutka identitete, bodisi prek mrež, ki so jih mobilizirale samouprave, ali na podlagi drugih racionalnih preudarkov oziroma strateških vzrokov, kot sta pokroviteljstvo ali klientelizem, podprl narodnostne liste, ki niso obetale prav veliko mandatov. V strokovni literaturi nazor, ki ga je mogoče povezati s primordialistično šolo teorij nacionalizma ter velja za enega od možnih vzrokov in temeljnih dejavnikov etnopolitične mobilizacije in etničnega glasovanja, opozarja na močno vlogo subjektivne etnične navezanosti, ki bistveno opredeljuje vedenje posameznika, ter na etničnost kot osnovno in nujno lojalnost. Nasprotno pa je danes bolj sprejet konstruktivističen pristop, po katerem je etnična identiteta družbena kategorija, kjer so za pripadnost skupini nujne določene značilnosti, o dejanski etnični identiteti pa lahko govorimo le, če so te značilnosti prisotne. V primerjavi s tem se »aktivirana« identiteta nanaša na lastnosti, ki jih posameznik izraža sam ali pa ga z njimi povežejo drugi. Po definiciji Chandra in Wilkinson (2008, 517) je prav koncept »etničnih praks« tisti, ki najbolje izraža značilnosti in kategorije identitet, ki jih posamezniki in skupine običajno aktivirajo v različnih kontekstih, na primer med volitvami.

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Namen pričujoče študije je torej, da poleg glavnih spornih točk preferenčnega ali prednostnega poslanskega mandata in institucije zagovorništva narodnosti na Madžarskem predstavi in analizira tudi nova področja ter glavne institucionalne okvire etničnega glasovanja, s posebnim poudarkom na zadnjih parlamentarnih volitvah 3. aprila 2022 in položaju slovenske narodnosti. Že četrtič po letu 2010 so rezultati volitev privedli do oblikovanja ustavodajne vlade Viktorja Orbána z dvotretjinsko večino. Mednarodni opazovalci oziroma člani mednarodne opazovalne misije za volitve OVSE so na splošno ugotovili, da so bile temeljne volilne pravice sicer spoštovane, vendar politična tekma zaradi prisotnosti vladnih virov še zdaleč ni bila enakovredna, pristranskost medijev in netransparentno financiranje kampanj pa sta prostor za politično razpravo dodatno omejila (OSCE/EOM, 2022). Poglavitno vprašanje pri tem je, kako se je v okvirih vse bolj iliberalnega političnega sistema oblikovala zastopanost narodnosti v parlamentu in kako ta v praksi deluje. V kolikšni meri pomeni to za pripadnike narodnosti učinkovito sodelovanje v javnem življenju v skladu s priporočili mednarodnega varstva manjšin? In nenazadnje, kako se manjšine same odzivajo na ta nov kanal zastopstva, v kolikšni meri sodelujejo pri volitvah in kako lahko izkoristijo njegove možnosti? Da bi odgovorili na vsa ta vprašanja, študija celovito analizira veljavno zakonodajo, volilne statistike in strokovno literaturo, s čimer poskuša zapolniti obstoječe vrzeli v obravnavani tematiki.

2. Volilni sistem za poslance in zagovornike narodnostnih manjšin

Voditelji narodnih manjšin so svoje zastopstvo v parlamentu, ki pred koncem osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja nekega posebno pomembnega dela ni opravljal, imeli tudi v obdobju enopartijske države (od volitev leta 1958), čeprav ne v institucionalizirani obliki. Tudi zaradi tega je vzpostavitev parlamentarnega zastopstva postala ena glavnih političnih in državnopravnih prizadevanj manjšin po letu 1990. Da se bo to moralo rešiti z nekim preferenčnim sistemom, so jasno nakazovali številni dejavniki. Med te so spadali po eni strani relativno majhna številčnost narodnosti, njihova razpršenost in v večini primerov visoka stopnja asimilacije, po drugi strani pa šibak nastop etničnih, pretežno romskih strank na volitvah po letu 1990, natančneje dejstvo, da za razliko od drugih držav v regiji njihova narodnostna identiteta ni postala pomembnejša sila za oblikovanje političnih skupin na volitvah, oziroma majhno število manjšinskih predstavnikov, ki so svoje mandate pridobili v barvah političnih strank, in njihove omejene možnosti. Morebitna ureditev zastopstva manjšin v obstoječem enodomnem parlamentarnem sistemu je sprožila številna vprašanja, poleg tega pa je ideja o uvedbi drugega doma vedno imela več nasprotnikov kot zagovornikov. Hkrati je bil sporen tudi del besedila ustave, spremenjene leta 1990, ki pravi, da »zakoni Republike Madžarske zagotavljajo zastopstvo narodnih in etničnih manjšin, ki

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živijo na njenem ozemlju« (1949. évi XX. Törvény …, 1949, 68. čl., 3. odst.), in sicer glede tega, ali je to zastopstvo vključevalo tudi predstavništvo v parlamentu in ali je zato v zvezi s tem prišlo do kršitve ustave. Zakon o pravicah narodnih in etničnih manjšin iz leta 1993 (imenovan tudi manjšinski zakon) je bil že nekoliko jasnejši in je določal, da »imajo manjšine, na način, določen v posebnem zakonu, pravico do svojega predstavnika v parlamentu« (1993. évi LXXVII. Törvény …, 1993, 20. čl., 1. odst.), a nobena od predlaganih rešitev ni dobila zadostne podpore med poslanci. O zastopanosti slovenske manjšine v madžarskem parlamentu so od začetka 21. stoletja razpravljali praktično na vsakem zasedanju Slovensko-madžarske mešane komisije za manjšine (SMMK) (Bešter & Pirc 2018, 147). Na 8. zasedanju SMMK, ki je potekalo 3. aprila 2006 na Gornjem Seniku, je komisija z obžalovanjem ugotovila:

> […] da Parlament Republike Madžarske ni sprejel predloga zakona o zastopstvu narodnih skupnosti v Parlamentu RM, zaradi tega slovenska narodna skupnost na Madžarskem še naprej nima svojega poslanca v madžarskem parlamentu, kot ga ima madžarska narodna skupnost v Sloveniji že vsa leta v Državnem zboru Republike Slovenije (Komac & Vizi 2018, 247).

SMMK je na istem zasedanju predlagala sledeče priporočilo:

> Madžarska stran naj si v naslednjem parlamentarnem ciklu prizadeva, da na podlagi Slovensko-madžarskega sporazuma o zaščiti manjšin v skladu z reformnimi postopki nacionalne zakonodaje in volilne pravice zagotovi dokončanje zakonskega predloga glede zastopstva manjšin v parlamentu, ki bo omogočal, da slovenska manjšina v Republiki Madžarski na naslednjih volitvah izvoli svojega zastopnika v Parlament Republike Madžarske (Komac & Vizi 2018, 250).

Vendar je do vzpostavitve dejanskega parlamentarnega zastopstva narodnih manjšin lahko prišlo šele po volitvah leta 2010. Parlament je že pred volitvami sprejel sklep, s katerim je vlado pozval, naj do konca leta 2012 pripravi in predloži predlog zakona o zastopstvu manjšin, ki bo od leta 2014 zagotavljal realne možnosti za njihovo zastopstvo oziroma »potrebne in zadostne« ugodnosti (20/2010. (II. 26.) Országgyűlési határozat …, 2010). Vlada je z dvotretjinsko večino po volitvah leta 2010 sprejela spremembo ustave, ki je na eni strani število poslancev s 386 znižala na »največ dvesto«, na drugi strani pa določila, da se za zastopstvo manjšin lahko izvoli še dodatnih, največ 13 poslancev (Az Alkotmány 2010. május 25-i módosítása …, 2010). Demonstrativna sprememba je že nakazovala namen reševanja tega vprašanja, vendar na koncu pri pripravi in sprejetju nove ustave niso upoštevali določila v zvezi z zastopstvom manjšin v parlamentu. Kljub temu pa je parlament leta 2010 s sklepom o pripravi volilne reforme pripravljalni odbor pozval, naj spoštuje načela in roke, določene v prejšnjem sklepu o zastopstvu manjšin (37/2010. (VI. 16.) OGY határozat …, 2010).

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V primerjavi z navedenim je nova ustava, ki je začela veljati 1. januarja 2012, določala le »sodelovanje narodnosti pri delu parlamenta« (53/2011. (VI. 29.) OGY határozat …, 2011, 2. čl., 2. odst.), hkrati pa se je v številnih elementih bistveno spremenil volilni sistem. Veljavni sistem, prvič uporabljen na volitvah leta 2014, je število poslancev v državnem zboru znižal na 199, temu primerno pa je število volilnih okrajev zmanjšal na 106, jih proporcioniral in prekrojil njihove meje. Ukinil je nekdanje regionalne liste ter namesto dotakratnih dveh list (regionalne in državne) vpeljal zgolj eno državno oziroma nacionalno strankarsko listo. Poenostavil je prijavo posameznikov in nacionalne strankarske liste, in sicer tako, da mora posameznik za kandidaturo namesto prejšnjih 750 po novem zbrati le 500 podpisov, možno pa je predlagati tudi več kandidatov in s 13.500 podpisi oblikovati nacionalno strankarsko listo. Vendar v nasprotju z ustavno spremembo iz leta 2010, ki na koncu vseeno ni stopila v veljavo, skupnega števila 93 možnih mandatov na nacionalni listi ni povečal, temveč ga lahko v primeru, če katera od narodnostnih list pridobi preferenčni mandat v parlamentu, celo zmanjša. V skladu z Zakonom o volitvah parlamentarnih poslancev (2011. évi CCIII. Törvény …, 2011, 9. člen) lahko narodnostno listo oblikujejo samo državne narodnostne samouprave po priporočilu vsaj enega odstotka, vendar največ 1.500 volivcev, vpisanih v narodnostni volilni imenik. Na listi z najmanj tremi kandidati so lahko navedene samo osebe, ki so vpisane v volilni imenik dane narodnosti. List državnih samouprav ni mogoče povezati in ne morejo tvoriti skupne liste. Parlamentarno zastopstvo narodnosti na Madžarskem so obravnavali tudi na 13. zasedanju že omenjene SMMK, ki je potekalo 26. septembra 2012 v Ljubljani. V zvezi s tem je SMMK sprejela naslednje priporočilo:

> SMMK ugotavlja, da se je v skladu z zakonom št. CCIII. iz leta 2011 o volitvah parlamentarnih poslancev za narodne manjšine na Madžarskem odprla možnost parlamentarnega zastopstva. SMMK nadalje ugotavlja, da zakonski pogoji omogočajo, vendar slovenski narodni skupnosti ne zagotavljajo uspešne izvolitve parlamentarnega poslanca, ampak le izvolitev zagovornika. SMMK predlaga madžarski strani, naj v luči dejstva, da je v slovenski parlament voljen poslanec madžarske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji, slovenski narodnostni skupnosti na Madžarskem zagotovi čim širše pristojnosti v okviru dela parlamenta Madžarske (Komac & Vizi 2018, 287).

V novem volilnem sistemu lahko volivci s stalnim prebivališčem na Madžarskem svoj glas oddajo enemu kandidatu iz volilnega okraja in eni strankarski listi, medtem ko se morajo volivci s stalnim prebivališčem, vpisani v narodnostni volilni imenik, odločiti, ali bodo prejšnjemu primeru podobno volili posameznega kandidata iz volilnega okraja in strankarsko listo ali posameznega kandidata iz svojega volilnega okraja in dano narodnostno listo. Po zakonu je treba seštevek glasov, oddanih za strankarske in narodnostne liste, deliti s 93, to je s številom možnih mandatov na strankarskih listah, dobljeni rezultat pa se nato deli še s štiri. Narodnostna lista, katere prejeti glasovi dosežejo to prednostno

kvoto, dobi največ en preferenčni ali prednostni mandat. Če narodnost na ta način preferenčnega mandata ne pridobi, bo prvi kandidat na listi zagovornik te narodnosti v parlamentu brez glasovalne pravice (2011. évi CCIII. Törvény …, 2011, 14–18. čl.).

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V zvezi z nujnostjo in upravičenostjo zastopstva oziroma prednostnega zastopstva narodnih manjšin so se pojavili tako zadržki glede ustavnosti in teorije predstavništva kot tudi pragmatično-politični pomisleki, ki so se kasneje v veliki meri oblikovali tudi v zvezi s samim sistemom po letu 2014. Kritike o smiselnosti obstoja same institucije so se osredotočale na vprašanje, zakaj bi bilo treba med interesno razslojenimi družbenimi odnosi institucionalno izpostaviti in predočiti prav interese narodnosti (Szente 2011, 87) oziroma zakaj je treba podvojiti vladine usklajevalne obveznosti napram manjšinam, če že obstajajo državne narodnostne samouprave (Kállai 2020, 26).

Opozorili so tudi, da je zaradi specifičnosti narodnostnih skupnosti izredno težko določiti vsaj približno število volivcev, ki bi prišli v poštev pri volitvah narodnostnih zastopnikov. Glede na to, da kljub uvedbi narodnostnih volilnih imenikov leta 2005 možni objektivni pogoji narodnostne pripadnosti zakonsko še vedno niso opredeljeni, ni izključena niti možnost etnobiznisa, saj se lahko vsak madžarski državljan z volilno pravico samo na podlagi samoizjave in brez dejanske povezanosti opredeli za pripadnika določene narodnosti in glasuje za njeno listo (Chronowski 2019; Erdős 2013). Z narodno pripadnostjo je povezano še eno pomembno volilno načelo, ki ga je v svoji sodbi navedlo tudi ESČP, in sicer kako zagotoviti tajnost glasovanja v primerih, ko je v nekem volilnem okraju kot pripadnica narodnosti vpisana in glasuje le ena oseba ali zelo malo njih (Bodnár 2012, 43).[9]

Vprašljivo je tudi, v kolikšni meri so v primeru pridobitve preferenčnega mandata kršeni enakost in splošnost volilne pravice (Kiss 2022) ter načelo predstavništva. Prav tako se poraja vprašanje, kako prednostno izvoljeni poslanec vpliva na enakost in svobodo mandata (Erdős 2013). Delovanje predstavnika narodnosti vključuje namreč tveganje, da postane politično angažiran, zaradi česar lahko njegove odločitve mečejo slabo luč na celotno skupnost, v primeru zaostrenih razmerij pa se lahko znajde celo v vlogi jezička na tehtnici (Erdős 2013; Kurunczi 2015; Móré 2016).

Če se želi narodnostni volivec v tej vlogi udeležiti parlamentarnih volitev, mora v to vložiti nekaj dodatnega napora in podati posebno izjavo. Ta obveznost pa ima lahko tudi zadrževalni učinek oziroma lahko osebo, ki je registraciji ali opredelitvi svoje pripadnosti na parlamentarnih volitvah nenaklonjena, celo odvrača. Po drugi strani pa je prisiljen izbrati in se opredeliti, ali bo dal prednost svoji narodnostni identiteti ali politični preferenci z glasovanjem za strankarsko listo. Na ta način torej nima možnosti izraziti dvojne, najpogosteje narodnostne in madžarske identitete, kar je značilno za večino pripadnikov narodnosti na Madžarskem, niti ne more podpreti več kot ene narodnostne liste ali ene

skupne, ki ima morda večje možnosti. Ustavno sodišče je možnost pluralne volilne pravice, tj. možnost, da bi pripadniki manjšin oziroma narodnosti lahko hkrati glasovali za narodnostno in strankarsko listo, izključilo v svojem sklepu (22/2005 (VI. 17.) Alkatoménybírósági határozat, 2005).

Narodnostni volivec se mora torej odpovedati glasovanju za strankarsko listo, kadar glasuje za listo svoje narodnosti, saj drugih alternativ nima, ob tem pa večina narodnosti nima realne možnosti za pridobitev preferenčnega ali prednostnega mandata. Ker lahko liste sestavljajo le državne narodnostne samouprave, je mogoče domnevati, da je določena skupnost homogena enota, čeprav so v številnih primerih razdeljene že same samouprave in je v njih zastopanih več organizacij. Obstoj le ene narodnostne liste na manjšino izključuje morebitno politično konkurenco znotraj skupnosti, narodnostni volivci pa jo, namesto da bi izbirali med alternativami, samo odobrijo, zato je ta sistem bližje delegatnemu modelu (Erdős 2013). Še toliko bolj, ker na glasovnici ni podane možnosti za morebitno prednostno razvrščanje kandidatov. Dejstvo, da ni možnosti izbire in so volitve večinoma brez prave teže, lahko negativno vpliva na pripravljenost volivcev za registracijo in glasovanje, v primeru razdeljenih skupnosti pa se lahko celo zgodi, da se javna podpora organizaciji, ki ima v samoupravi v času sestavljanja liste večino mandatov, medtem zniža in je opozicija med pripadniki narodnosti že bolj priljubljena. Poleg tega volivci na volitvah v narodnostne samouprave leta 2010, ko so bili izvoljeni tudi državni organi, še niso vedeli, da so s svojimi odločitvami hkrati vplivali tudi na sestavo narodnostne liste za naslednje parlamentarne volitve leta 2014 (Tar 2015, 33). Nerazjasnjene ali celo škandalozne okoliščine pri sestavi nekaterih list na predhodnih parlamentarnih volitvah so privedle do tega, da je poleti 2021 v veljavo stopila sprememba zakona, ki določa natančna pravila za sestavo narodnostnih list in zagotavlja, da lista nedvoumno temelji na legitimni odločitvi skupščine državne (narodnostne) samouprave (2021. évi XCVII. Törvény …, 2021). Po nekaterih poročilih naj bi na primer pred volitvami leta 2018 armensko listo, ki jo je sestavil predsednik, pripravili »na podlagi odločitve in ne glasovanja« (Kállai 2020, 27).

Tudi ESČP je v svoji sodbi opozorilo, da narodnostna lista, kljub zagotovljenim preferencam (odprava 5-odstotnega praga za pridobitev mandata, četrtinska kvota za vodjo liste), pri oblikovanju političnega predstavništva dejansko omogoča le omejeno udeležbo, saj večina narodnosti zaradi števila svojih pripadnikov nima niti matematične možnosti za pridobitev preferenčnega mandata in so zanj oddani glasovi praktično izgubljeni (Chronowski 2019; Tar 2015, 33). Leta 2014 je preferenčna kvota znašala 22.022, leta 2018 23.831 in leta 2022 23.085 glasov, zviševala pa se je z rastjo števila glasov narodnostnih volivcev in višjo volilno udeležbo, kar je hkrati zmanjšalo možnost za pridobitev prednostnega ali preferenčnega mandata. Z drugimi besedami, če se volitev kljub zgoraj navedenemu udeleži več narodnostnih volivcev, se bo preferenčna kvota zaradi višje udeležbe še dodatno povišala. Narodnostni zagovornik, ki je za

večino narodnosti bolj realen od polnopravnega parlamentarnega mandata, pa bo brez enega samega veljavnega glasu postal prvi kandidat na listi, kar pomeni, da za pridobitev položaja niti kandidatu samemu ni treba glasovati zase. Če ne upoštevamo uspešne mobilizacije nemške manjšine leta 2018 in 2022, je bilo število glasov, oddanih za narodnostno listo na zadnjih volitvah, daleč pod preferenčno kvoto (Preglednica 2).

Preglednica 2: Število veljavnih glasov za narodnostne liste (2014–2022)

Narodnost	2014	2018	2022
nemška	11.415	26.477	24.630
romska	4.048	5.703	-
hrvaška	1.212	1.743	1.760
slovaška	995	1.245	1.208
rusinska	463	539	645
romunska	362	428	526
ukrajinska	293	270	396
srbska	236	296	418
slovenska	134	199	219
armenska	110	159	163
grška	102	159	232
poljska	99	210	281
bolgarska	74	104	157

Vir: Nemzeti választási iroda (2014; 2018; 2022).

Če analiziramo z vidika državnih narodnostnih samouprav kot predlagateljic, je prav tako vprašljivo, v kolikšni meri so same zainteresirane za to, da se volivci registrirajo in udeležijo volitev. Samouprave so s ciljem, da ima določena narodnost v parlamentu vsaj zagovornika, prisiljene sestaviti liste, za katere pa je pri večini manjšin običajno zadoščalo že, če so predlagali največ pet oseb, v številnih primerih pa samo eno. Če samouprava meni, da narodnost zaradi števila svojih pripadnikov nima možnosti doseči preferenčne kvote, potrebne za polnopravni državnozborski mandat, se očitno lahko zadovolji tudi z majhnim številom svojih podpornikov. Vendar pa lahko proti narodnostni demobilizaciji poleg legitimnosti in prestiža zagovornika deluje tudi dejstvo, da narodnostne liste v skladu z zakonom o financiranju volilnih kampanj sredstva za kampanjo prejemajo sorazmerno s številom registriranih volivcev. Za samouprave lahko to pomeni določeno finančno spodbudo za zagotavljanje vsaj ozke baze volivcev, da njihovi zagovorniki ne bi bili izvoljeni le z zanemarljivim številom glasov, kot so se tega sicer mnogi bali. Kljub temu je izpis iz narodnostnega volilnega seznama mogoč tudi po dodelitvi in nakazilu sredstev za kampanjo.

3. Volitve narodnostnih poslancev in zagovornikov v praksi (2014–2022)

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V skladu s predhodnimi pričakovanji je bilo število volivcev, ki so ob zadnjih volitvah pri vpisu v narodnostni volilni imenik zaprosili tudi za udeležbo na parlamentarnih volitvah, precej nižje od števila, ki so jih narodnosti zabeležile ob popisu prebivalstva in na volitvah v narodnostne samouprave (Preglednica 3). Med že omenjenimi razlogi za vzdržanost od parlamentarnih volitev je lahko predvsem dejstvo, da se mnogim izraziti svoje politične preference in glasovati za strankarsko listo zdi pomembneje kot glasovati za narodnost, številne pa je morda odvrnilo tudi to, da pri narodnostnih volitvah ni konkurence, saj lahko volivci glasujejo le za eno narodnostno listo, pri čemer je zagovornika mogoče izvoliti že s samo enim veljavnim glasom.

Preglednica 3: Gibanje števila registriranih narodnostnih volivcev (2014–2022)

Narodnost	2014			2018			2022		
	Skupaj*	Parla-mentarne volitve **	%	Skupaj*	Parla-mentarne volitve **	%	Skupaj*	Parla-mentarne volitve **	%
bolgarska	232	104	45 %	1.312	156	12 %	1.343	218	16 %
grška	483	140	29 %	1.727	235	14 %	2.743	355	13 %
hrvaška	3.727	1.623	44 %	10.163	2.269	22 %	10.930	2.268	21 %
poljska	711	133	19 %	2.172	259	12 %	3.351	369	11 %
nemška	23.543	15.209	65 %	49.200	33.010	67 %	53.901	31.856	59 %
armenska	455	184	40 %	2.276	264	12 %	3.035	278	9 %
romska	25.498	14.271	56 %	151.578	18.490	12 %	202.865	32.665	16 %
romunska	1.852	647	35 %	4.802	794	17 %	6.630	966	15 %
rusinska	993	611	62 %	2.985	893	30 %	4.025	1.044	26 %
srbska	673	349	52 %	1.609	424	26 %	2.290	641	28 %
slovaška	3.120	1.317	42 %	11.585	1.641	14 %	11.655	1.563	13 %
slovenska	461	199	43 %	687	252	37 %	832	280	34 %
ukrajinska	1.012	502	50 %	959	549	57 %	1.782	732	41 %

Vir: Nemzeti választási iroda (2014; 2018; 2022).

* Pod Skupaj je navedeno število vseh registriranih narodnostnih volivcev za volitve v narodnostne samouprave v letih 2014, 2018 in 2022.

** Pod Parlamentarne volitve je navedeno število narodnostnih volivcev, ki so se registrirali za parlamentarne oziroma parlamentarne volitve v letih 2014, 2018 in 2022.

Stalni in sprotno vodeni narodnostni volilni imenik je leta 2014 veljal še za novo institucijo. Od leta 2006 so namreč na manjšinskih volitvah imenik sestavili le pred vsakokratnimi volitvami in ga nato po volitvah uničili, zato so se morali volivci vsakič posebej registrirati. Tako je iz preglednice 3 razvidno, da se je leta 2014 pri večini narodnosti precejšnje število registriranih za volitve v narodnostne samouprave odločilo tudi za vpis v imenik parlamentarnih volitev. Žal je, razen redkih izjem, delež tistih, ki so skupaj s svojo narodnostno volilno pravico želeli izkoristiti tudi na parlamentarnih volitvah kasneje močno upadel. Leta 2022 se je za registracijo na parlamentarne volitve v povprečju odločil manj kot vsak četrti volivec dvanajstih narodnosti, ki so sestavljale listo. Je pa treba dodati, da se številni iz različnih vzrokov za registracijo sploh niso odločili: ob popisu prebivalstva leta 2011 so na primer zabeležili 2.232 oseb s slovensko pripadnostjo, starejših od 15 let, na volitvah v narodnostne samouprave leto poprej pa je bilo registriranih le 1.025 slovenskih volivcev. Na naslednjih volitvah leta 2014 se je njihovo število, med drugim tudi zaradi zaostrovanja zakonodaje,[10] zmanjšalo na 519, na parlamentarnih volitvah aprila istega leta pa se jih je za registracijo odločilo manj kot polovica oziroma manj kot 200.

Če število narodnostnih volivcev, registriranih za parlamentarne volitve, primerjamo s strukturo narodnostnih samouprav, vidimo, da večina vpisanih prihaja iz naselij, kjer deluje ali je delovala narodnostna samouprava. To pomeni, da je institucionalni sistem na udeležbo na parlamentarnih volitvah vplival spodbudno, četudi v različnem obsegu glede na posamezno narodnost. Najvišji deleži so zabeleženi pri etničnih skupinah, ki jih sistem samouprav najbolje pokriva, vključno s slovensko narodnostjo, ki živi teritorialno dokaj skoncentrirano v Porabju. Prav tako bi veljalo preučiti, ali se v naseljih z znatnim številom manjšinskega prebivalstva za volitve v narodnostne samouprave registrira več ljudi in ali bo skladno s tem tudi več ljudi, ki bodo na parlamentarnih volitvah želeli glasovati za narodnostno listo. V zvezi s tem kaže primerjava podatkov parlamentarnih volitev in volitev v narodnostne samouprave leta 2014 še zmerno, pri kasnejših volitvah pa že povečano korelacijo. To pomeni, da je tudi s statističnimi podatki mogoče prikazati, da je v naseljih, kjer se volitev v narodnostne samouprave želi udeležiti več ljudi, hkrati tudi več tistih, ki se bodo za parlamentarne volitve registrirali tudi kot narodnostni volivci. Vendar tudi pri skupnostih, kjer sta vrednosti obeh volitev tesnejši, številni primeri kažejo, da na število registracij pomembno vplivajo tudi lokalne razmere, ki jih je treba dodatno raziskati, in je lahko število vpisanih volivcev različno celo v sosednjih naseljih s podobnimi značilnostmi. Leta 2018 so tako v naseljih Železne županije, kjer živijo pripadniki slovenske narodnosti, našteli 650 registriranih slovenskih volivcev, od katerih se je več kot tretjina vpisala tudi za parlamentarne volitve. A medtem ko se je v Dolnjem Seniku tako registrirala skoraj večina, v Števanovcih pa 80 % Slovencev, je na Verici - Ritkarovcih in v Sakalovcih ta delež znašal vsega okrog 5 odstotkov (Preglednica 4).

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Preglednica 4: Število volivcev slovenske narodnosti v pomembnejših naseljih Železne županije, registriranih za parlamentarne volitve, in njihova udeležba (2014–2022)

Naselje	2014		2018		2022	
	Število registriranih oseb	Število udeleženih	Število registriranih oseb	Število udeleženih	Število registriranih oseb	Število udeleženih
Alsószölnök/ Dolnji Senik	20	14	19	14	47	20
Apátistvánfalva/ Števanovci	62	48	65	54	152	68
Felsőszölnök/ Gornji Senik	34	21	52	41	182	63
Kétvölgy/ Verica-Ritkarovci	1	1	2	1	47	1
Orfalu/ Andovci	9	1	6	4	13	6
Szakonyfalu/ Sakalovci	2	2	19	14	82	8
Szentgotthárd/ Monošter	42	36	74	57	187	88
Szombathely/ Sombotel	10	10	12	12	43	13
Skupaj	180	133	238	185	753	267

Vir: Nemzeti választási iroda (2014; 2018; 2022).

Podobna tendenca, se pravi porast števila volivcev le v posameznih naseljih, se je pojavila tudi v primerih, ko primerjamo podatke med posameznimi volitvami. Tako lahko tudi v primeru močnejše korelacije ugotovimo, da so bili narodnostni volivci, ki so se udeležili parlamentarnih volitev, v primerjavi z rezultati popisa prebivalstva in rezultati volitev v narodnostne samouprave skoncentrirani predvsem v nekaj naseljih. Visoka skoncentriranost volivcev lahko odraža pomen lokalnih značilnosti, politične razmere v naselju ali volilni enoti, število lokalnega narodnostnega prebivalstva, moč strankarske pripadnosti in narodnostne identitete ali prek osebnih in organizacijskih omrežij celo mobilizacijo, izvedeno le v nekaterih naseljih in regijah. Z drugimi besedami, za sestavo narodnostne liste in izvolitev zagovornika je zadostovala nekoliko izrazitejša mobilizacija le manjšega dela skupnosti v nekaterih naseljih. Po drugi strani pa lahko dejstvo, da se številni zaradi neučinkovitosti volitev in pomanjkanja alternativ niso odločili za udeležbo na parlamentarnih volitvah, kaže tudi na zaupanje v institucijo, razmerje moči znotraj skupnosti, ugled zagovornika in tudi na simpatije volivcev. Število volivcev slovenske narodnosti, ki so se vpisali v volilni imenik parlamentarnih volitev in so se jih tudi dejansko udeležili, kaže, da se je njihovo število izraziteje povečalo zlasti v naseljih, ki so z Eriko Köles Kissné, v vseh treh primerih izvoljeno zagovornico slovenske narodnosti, tesneje povezana. Tako

je lahko na primer gornjeseniške slovenske volivce spodbudilo dejstvo, da je zagovornica slovenske narodnosti odraščala v njihovi vasi, volivci v Monoštru pa so se z Eriko Köles Kissné morda poistovetili na podlagi njenega kasnejšega poklicnega (izobraževanje) in političnega (občinska svetnica) delovanja (Kissné Köles Erika, b. d.; Molnárné Balázs 2022).

Udeležba pripadnikov narodnosti na parlamentarnih volitvah je leta 2014 nacionalno povprečje presegla za več kot 10 in leta 2018 za nekoliko manj kot 5 odstotkov, vendar je do leta 2022 že padla pod povprečje, saj se je v primeru večine narodnosti udeležba bistveno zmanjšala (Preglednica 5). V zvezi z volilno udeležbo je treba izpostaviti tudi izjemno visoko stopnjo neveljavnih glasovnic, ki krepko presega stopnjo parlamentarnih volitev in je leta 2014 predstavljala 10 odstotkov glasov narodnostnih volivcev, leta 2018 se je z rastjo števila volivcev in večjo udeležbo povzpela na 12 odstotkov, leta 2022 pa upadla pod 10 odstotkov. Leta 2014 in 2018 so bile neveljavne glasovnice, razen v Budimpešti in županiji Pešta, večinoma povezane z romsko listo.

Preglednica 5: Udeležba pripadnikov narodnosti na parlamentarnih volitvah in delež neveljavnih glasovnic, oddanih za narodnostne liste, 2014–2022 (%)

Narodnost	Udeležba (%)	Neveljavni glasovi (%)	Udeležba (%)	Neveljavni glasovi (%)	Udeležba (%)	Neveljavni glasovi (%)
	2014		2018		2022	
bolgarska	75	5	78	15	74	2
grška	84	9	79	16	71	8
hrvaška	79	4	81	6	79	2
poljska	79	3	82	2	81	6
nemška	80	3	84	5	81	5
armenska	59	0	70	15	71	17
romska	46	29	48	35	-	-
romunska	65	12	65	17	65	17
rusinska	78	2	75	19	71	13
srbska	72	1	72	4	71	9
slovaška	82	6	84	9	82	5
slovenska	75	9	82	3	82	5
ukrajinska	63	5	63	23	65	17

Vir: Nemzeti választási iroda (2014; 2018; 2022).

4. Zaključek

V drugem desetletju 21. stoletja se je zastopstvo narodnih manjšin v javnem življenju na Madžarskem obogatilo s še eno institucijo, to je s sistemom poslancev in zagovornikov narodnosti v državnem zboru. S sodelovanjem pri delu parla-

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menta so tudi narodnosti pridobile določene ugodnosti – v primeru zagovornikov brez glasovalne pravice poleg formalnih pravic še možnost neformalnega, tako imenovanega lobiranja in zbiranja sredstev »na hodnikih zakonodajnega organa«, ter stalno parlamentarno komisijo, ki ni samo koristen medetnični forum, temveč je prispeval tudi k bolj slikovitemu prikazu interesov narodnosti. Obenem so si številni elementi sistema protislovni, kar upravičeno kritizira tudi nedavna sodba ESČP, prihodnje spremembe pa so zaradi tega že same po sebi utemeljene. Poleg točk, ki jih očita ESČP, je bistven element kritike dejstvo, da velik del narodnostnih volivcev ni deležen nobene spodbude k uveljavljanju svoje identitete, saj so njihovi glasovi za zagovornika brezpredmetni. Zato je še posebej pomembno temeljiteje raziskati, kakšen odnos imajo zainteresirane strani, to je narodne skupnosti, do novih okvirov že ob njihovem oblikovanju oziroma ob izvolitvi. Zaradi tega smo se s pričujočo študijo odločili, da bomo na podlagi podatkov o volitvah predstavili in analizirali glavne značilnosti udeležbe narodnosti, med njimi predvsem Slovencev, na parlamentarnih volitvah med letoma 2014 in 2022.

Nedvomno tako na nivoju posameznika kot skupnosti obstaja veliko subjektivnih razlogov, motivacij, identifikacij in zunanjih, politično-institucionalnih dejavnikov, spodbud ali ovir za to, da sodelujejo pri izvolitvi te nove oblike narodnostnega zastopstva, ter ocenijo, koliko se jim zdi pomembno in vredno, da svojo narodnostno identiteto tako kot na drugih področjih življenja izrazijo tudi na parlamentarnih volitvah. Kljub temu pa je bilo njihovo število precej nižje od tistega, ki so ga zabeležili ob popisu prebivalstva in na volitvah v narodnostne samouprave. Hkrati je velika večina za registracijo oziroma vpis v narodnostni volilni imenik zaprosila v naseljih, kjer so pred tem uspešno izvolili člane samouprave njihove narodnosti. Po drugi strani pa število in deleži narodnostnih volivcev, ki so se registrirali tudi za parlamentarne volitve, na lokalni ravni nikakor niso nujno usklajeni s podatki volitev v samouprave: v določenih primerih se niso registrirali niti predsedniki in člani samouprav oziroma so se v zelo majhnem številu vpisali celo v naseljih z večinskim narodnostnim prebivalstvom. Medtem je bilo stanje pri nemški narodnosti ravno nasprotno, saj je lista za parlamentarne volitve v številnih naseljih uspela nagovoriti veliko več volivcev kot za volitve v samoupravo. Udeležba pripadnikov narodnosti je bila pogosto skoncentrirana na nekaj naselij, kar lahko odraža pomen lokalnih značilnosti, politične razmere v naselju in volilni enoti, število pripadnikov lokalne manjšine, moč strankarske pripadnosti in narodnostne identitete, zaupanje v institucijo, razmerja moči znotraj skupnosti, ugled zagovornika, zadovoljstvo volivcev ali celo mobilizacijo, osredotočeno le na nekatera naselja. Slednje potrjuje tudi dejstvo, da so se Romi, ki veljajo za najštevilčnejšo narodnost na Madžarskem, v primerjavi z volitvami v samouprave registrirali le v manjšem številu, še manj jih je glasovalo ob izvolitvi zagovornika, leta 2022 pa zaradi razhajanj znotraj Državne romske samouprave in nasprotujočih si političnih interesov niso uspeli niti sestaviti liste. Medtem ko je

bila volilna udeležba narodnostnih volivcev sprva še nad državnim povprečjem, je ta leta 2022 padla pod povprečje oziroma je visoko volilno udeležbo v veliki meri izravnal izjemno visok delež neveljavnih glasovnic.

Da bi bolje razumeli, kakšen odnos imajo pripadniki narodnosti do volilnega sistema in zakaj se registrirajo za parlamentarne volitve oziroma zakaj se jih ne udeležujejo, so potrebne nadaljnje kvalitativne študije, ki vključujejo tudi vprašalnike ter individualne intervjuje in intervjuje fokusnih skupin. Študije lokalnih primerov lahko tudi podrobneje pojasnijo, zakaj so nekatera naselja na volitvah premalo ali preveč zastopana, ter ali se v krajih, kjer ni registriranih narodnostnih volivcev ali jih je zelo malo, razlog za to morda skriva v izginjanju narodnostne skupnosti, šibkejši zavesti o pripadnosti ali v čem drugem.

Na splošno je vzpostavljen precej protisloven sistem za sodelovanje narodnosti na Madžarskem pri delu parlamenta. Po eni strani sicer sistem res zagotavlja sodelovanje predstavnikov narodnosti in zastopanje njihovih interesov, po drugi strani pa narodnostne volivce ne spodbuja k udeležbi. Ta okoliščina in nedavna sodba ESČP kažeta, da je potrebna temeljita sprememba sistema že zaradi zagotovitve tajnosti glasovanja in možnosti izbire med več alternativami. Po drugi strani pa so dosedanji cikli pokazali, da so lahko poslanec nemške narodnosti in narodnostni zagovorniki, predvsem prek njihovega stalnega parlamentarnega odbora, vplivali na zakone, ki jih zadevajo. Sistem je tudi korak naprej za Slovence, eno najmanjših skupnosti, saj omogoča, da se njihov glas sliši v parlamentu, da zastopajo svoje interese in so vsakodnevno v stiku z odločevalci. Za njegovo učinkovito delovanje pa je pomembno tudi to, da slovenska skupnost, za razliko od številnih drugih manjšin, ne spada med ostro razcepljene manjšine, uspešno pa je tudi sodelovanje med zagovornikom slovenske narodnosti v parlamentu in Državno slovensko samoupravo. Bistveno vlogo pri tem imajo dobri odnosi med Madžarsko in Slovenijo in dejstvo, da ju, v nasprotju z na primer Ukrajino, tudi z vidika manjšin ne bremenijo nobeni konflikti.

Dejstvo, da število slovenskih volivcev nenehno narašča, kaže na njihovo svojevrstno zadovoljstvo. K temu najbrž prispeva tudi to, da se je položaj slovenske skupnosti na Madžarskem v obdobju med volitvami 2014 in 2022 na številnih področjih bistveno izboljšal. Tako se je na primer rešilo vprašanje dolgoročnega in sistemskega financiranja manjšinskih ustanov v Porabju, prenove njihovih prostorov, uvedbe institucije narodnostnih štipendij, izvaja se tudi Razvojni program Slovenskega Porabja itd. (cf. Eöry 2022, 3). Na vse to se je osredotočalo delo zagovornice Slovencev na Madžarskem, kar se odraža tudi v njenih mislih pred parlamentarnimi volitvami leta 2022:

> Sistematično smo se trudili za to, da bi vse institucije pod upravljanjem skupnosti dobile, kar potrebujejo. V preteklih štirih letih je ta vsota znašala več sto milijonov forintov. Mislim, da smo najpomembnejše stvari dosegli, madžarska vlada se ukvarja z našimi problemi (dm, 2022, 3).

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Opombe

1   Med uradno priznane narodnosti spadajo: bolgarska, romska, grška, hrvaška, poljska, nemška, armenska, romunska, rusinska, srbska, slovaška, slovenska in ukrajinska.

[2]   Popisni kriterij pripadnost narodnosti zajema vse tiste popisane osebe, ki so pri vprašanju o narodni pripadnosti, maternem jeziku in rabi jezika v družini in med prijatelji označili vsaj enega od naštetih treh kriterijev.

[3]   Podatki o popisu prebivalstva za leto 2022 so bili objavljeni po pripravi študije in pred recenzijskim postopkom. V članku smo podrobno obravnavali popisne podatke iz leta 2011.

[4]   Popisni kriterij pripadnost slovenstvu zajema vse tiste popisane osebe, ki so pri vprašanju o narodni pripadnosti, maternem jeziku in rabi jezika v družini in med prijatelji označili slovensko narodnost oziroma slovenščino vsaj v enem od treh primerov.

[5]   Več o prostorski strukturi Slovencev na Madžarskem glej Kovács (2007).

[6]   Slovensko ves so leta 1983 priključili k Monoštru.

[7]   Vsaka narodnost, ne glede na število pripadnikov, ima pravico voliti le enega zagovornika v Državnem zboru Madžarske.

[8]   Državna armenska samouprava je s svojim sklepom zagovornika armenske narodnosti, ki ga je kandidirala predhodno leto, pozvala k odstopu, pri čemer so med drugim navedli, da je ta samoupravi lažno predstavil svoje poreklo.

[9]   Kar zadeva tajnost glasovanja, obseg problema ponazarja dejstvo, da je bil leta 2022 na 7.005 voliščih od skupno 10.243 vpisan vsaj en narodnostni volivec, približno na polovici teh volišč, to je v 3.460 primerih, pa je posamezno narodnost predstavljal samo en volivec.

[10]   Od leta 2014 se lahko volitve v narodnostne samouprave razpišejo le v tistih naseljih, v katerih po zbirnih podatkih zadnjega popisa prebivalstva živi vsaj 25 pripadnikov zadevne narodnosti.

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Commemorative Signs for Nazi Era Victims across Space and Time – DERLA Kärnten/Koroška

In official narratives, Austria was seen for decades as the first victim of Nazi Germany that had to participate in national socialist felonies. A remembrance of "dutiful" soldiers who gave their lives in the "fight for their fatherland" (Kühnel 2022, 199) is over-represented in public space, while the persecuted victims of national socialism are little remembered. The Austria-wide digital platform DERLA, the Digital Memorial Landscape, established in 2023, makes all memorials to the victims of the Nazi era (as well as didactic material) available on the Internet. The analysis of the information collected on this platform makes it possible to add new findings to academic literature. This article focuses on bilingual Carinthia, provides an insight into new memorials for the victims of national socialism, and compares the Carinthian memorial landscape both spatially and geographically.

Keywords: memory culture, political education, national socialism, digitalisation.

Spominska obeležja za žrtve nacizma skozi prostor in čas – DERLA, avstrijska Koroška

Država Avstrija je desetletja uradno veljala za prvo žrtev nacistične Nemčije, ki je bila v sodelovanje pri nacionalsocialističnih zločinih prisiljena. V javnosti je tako občutno bolj prisoten spomin na vojake, ki so zgolj »opravljali svojo dolžnost« in padli »v boju za domovino« (Kühnel 2022, 199), medtem ko je spomin na žrtve pregona nacionalsocialističnih oblasti precej bolj omejen. Zahvaljujoč digitalni platformi DERLA, t. i. digitalni spominski krajini, vzpostavljeni leta 2023, so vsa obeležja za žrtve nacizma v Avstriji (skupaj z didaktičnim gradivom) sedaj dostopna na spletu. Analiza informacij, zbranih na tej platformi, omogoča vnos novih ugotovitev v znanstveno literaturo. Članek, ki se osredotoča na dvojezično avstrijsko Koroško, ponuja pregled novih spominskih obeležij za žrtve nacionalsocializma in koroško spominsko krajino proučuje z geografskega in prostorskega vidika.

Ključne besede: *kultura spomina, politična vzgoja, nacionalsocializem, digitalizacija.*

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1. The Carinthian Memory Discourse

In Kärnten/Koroška – Carinthia, there is a war memorial in almost every municipality, most of which commemorate the fallen soldiers of the First and Second World Wars and the *Kärntner Abwehrkampf* (the Carinthian defence campaign against SHS troops, 1918–1919). These war memorials are always located in prominent places: they have been erected in market squares, at municipal offices, in the immediate vicinity of or inside churches, and quite frequently at or near cemeteries. As they are often the only signs of remembrance in many communities, they characterise the (local) image and structure the (memorial) space through their prominent location. According to Kühnel (2022, 195), there is no way around them. The First and Second World Wars became dates in the German nationalist Carinthian memory discourse that were legitimised and given meaning by the *Abwehrkampf* and held together by the ideological cement of heroism and loyalty to the homeland. Peter Gstettner described this remarkable interweaving of discourses by coining the term the Carinthian "troika of memory" (Gstettner 2012, 105). This situation in the southern bilingual province of Carinthia is naturally intertwined with the related discourse in Austria as a whole, where two narratives predominated for a long time, reinforcing each other. One narrative emphasised the victim status of Austria. In official narratives, Austria was seen as the first victim of Nazi Germany, having to spinelessly participate in national socialist felonies. The second commemorated the "dutiful" soldiers who gave their lives in the "fight for their fatherland" (Kühnel 2022, 199). Although the "victim thesis" and its related duty fulfilment postulate have seen a decline in legitimacy since the 1980s due to internal contradictions and historical research refutations, a prevailing culture of remembrance in Carinthia still portrays Austria as a victim of Nazi occupation. This culture uncritically engages with contentious content found on omnipresent war memorials and other Second World War commemorative symbols (Kühnel 2022, 200). Furthermore, Kühnel asserts that these war memorials serve primarily as symbols for the rehabilitation of former *Wehrmacht* soldiers, referencing Uhl's work on the shift from the victim myth to a co-responsibility thesis (Kühnel 2022, 201). However, it could be different: if the memorials to the fallen were to critically examine the role of the *Wehrmacht* and its soldiers, they could even enrich the historical-political discourse, but in the form of a website, they merely perpetuate a narrative of the past that trivialises persecuted victims and exculpates the perpetrators (Kühnel 2022, 201).

According to Heidemarie Uhl (2003), a "hierarchy of memories" in Austrian "landscapes of remembrance" can be recognised, for example, by the fact that memorials to the fallen in the First and Second World Wars are mostly present in the centre of towns and villages. If, according to Heidmarie Uhl, a "hierarchy of memories" in Austrian memorial landscapes can be recognised by the fact that memorials to the fallen of the First and Second World Wars are mostly

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present in the centre of towns and villages, while the memory of the victims of resistance and persecution can often only be found on the peripheries of public space, at remote crime scenes or in cemeteries (Uhl 2003, 5), this also applies in particular to bilingual Carinthia with its minority of Carinthian Slovenes. However, the presence of this – in many ways resistant – minority brought with it its own dynamic: in the 1970s, the Association of Carinthian Partisans (*Zveza koroških partizanov*) initiated almost 40 monuments in memory of fallen partisans – mostly in cemeteries in southern Carinthia. These have been described in detail in several publications in recent decades (see, for example, Sturm 1987; Rettl 2006; Linasi 2010; Mohar 2018). After this "remembrance offensive" by the Association of Carinthian Partisans, it took until the 2010s for various organisations of the ethnic group to erect memorials for "their" group of victims again – a time when other groups of victims in Carinthia were also (belatedly, but nevertheless) increasingly granted public commemorative space. The hierarchy of remembrance regarding the presence of memorials to the fallen and defence fighters compared to memorials to persecuted victims of national socialism nevertheless remains clear in Carinthia.

The victims' specific life stories were also pushed into the background for decades; their memories and stories were only shared in private. These stories were not compatible with the societally superimposed narrative that Austria had been the victim of a Nazi invasion and national socialism had been forced upon it (Wutti 2017, 18). The biographies of victims of national socialism remained outside the perception of the majority society in Carinthia for decades; only in the last 25 years have publications been dedicated to them. These address Nazi history in different regions and victim groups (for example, Lauritsch 2000 for Jews in Wolfsberg; an overview of Nazi victims by Baum et al. 2010; Pirker & Profunser 2012 for the victims in the Upper Drau valley; or Entner 2014 for Carinthian Slovenes) and have slowly brought public attention and recognition to the painful experiences of Nazi victims. However, as Gerald Lamprecht underscores, "For ever larger sections of society, digital media are [now] the central window into the world; what is not seen, read, heard or remembered there remains outside of perception, it is forgotten" (Lamprecht 2024, 7). In this respect, we need a digital platform to bring together all the extensive knowledge already available about memorial sites and victim biographies in Carinthia and beyond, thus counteracting the inequality in the discourse on remembrance. At the same time, the digital processing of the memorial landscape, its places, and actors offers new possibilities for analysis.

2. DERLA – The Digital Memorial Landscape

The Digital Memorial Landscape (DERLA) is an Austria-wide documentation and mediation project the aim of which is to document all signs of victim

remembrance and the terror of national socialism in Austria by means of text and photographs, thus making the development of the Nazi culture of remembrance from 1945 to the present day visible and comprehensible on the following website: www.erinnerungslandschaft.at (as of now, the platform's content is only available in German).

The concept for DERLA originated at the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz and was developed in cooperation with ERINNERN:AT under the direction of Gerald Lamprecht. The starting point for the project was the realisation that many aspects of Austria's Nazi history have been researched in the last 30 years and that more and more civil society initiatives are committed to keeping the memory of national socialist tyranny and its victims alive. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the accumulated knowledge on the historical events and the associated memories will also be comprehensible for the next generation if real encounters with contemporary witnesses are no longer possible. The idea of making the memory landscape that has been developing since 1945 accessible via the Internet arose from considerations about new and contemporary forms of historical-political educational work on the history and culture of remembrance of national socialism. The project pursues two parallel goals: firstly, to provide documentation of all manifest signs of remembrance of Nazi victims, including a description of how these have changed over the decades; secondly, to offer educational modules on the same website that encourage a (school-based) discussion of these memorials.

The digital memorial landscape of the province of Carinthia as realised in this project comprises around 240 memorials to resistance and persecution in Carinthia, which are described in their history and documented photographically. The platform for Carinthia went online in May 2023. Each place of remembrance is described in its historical context: the online platform provides information about the initiators of each memorial, any redesigns or remodelling and associated controversies, and has biographies of Nazi victims associated with the site. Photos of all the memorials, one close-up and one of the surrounding area, give an impression of the design and the surroundings. The address and GPS data enable easy access. Each of the documented memorial signs has been categorised according to victim group and type of memorial sign. This enables users to use the filter and search functions to browse the website according to their specific area of focus.

In addition to the documentation of all memorial signs for victims of national socialism, DERLA also offers an Archive of Names. This section of the website is a collection of biographical data and short biographies of those who are mentioned by name on the memorials. The Archive of Names therefore has an informative function, but it can also be categorised as a virtual memorial. For Carinthia, 782 short biographies have been uploaded to the website so far, which means that only some of the province's victims of national socialism are

represented here for the time being, but the digital archive can and should be expanded in the near future.

DERLA also offers a mediation portal that provides a range of options for educational work. There are two types of educational modules: those that involve taking groups of learners to individual memorials and engaging with them and their surroundings on site, and those that can be used in the classroom or other learning spaces. Both share an educational approach that seeks to promote learning through discovery and aims to enable people (and explicitly not just students) to develop individual approaches to the regional and national culture of remembrance. The mediation modules invite people to familiarise themselves with the memorial landscape through site visits and exploration, thus enabling them to take steps towards understanding the development of remembrance since 1945. DERLA thus offers concrete assistance in dealing with Nazi history and its aftermath, moving beyond learning from history books. It encourages the individual reconstruction of history, critical scrutiny, and the adoption of multiple perspectives. In concrete figures, there are 16 Carinthia-specific educational modules available at www.erinnerungslandschaft.at, as well as six without a specific local reference that can be used across provinces. Together with the programmes that have been and are currently being developed in other federal states, DERLA forms an accessible educational platform for teachers.

Furthermore, Paths of Remembrance were also created specifically for DERLA, which make the memorial landscape of individual victim groups comprehensible and digitally accessible. Six Paths of Remembrance are available for Carinthia. These paths focus on the late remembrance of euthanasia victims, memorials to Carinthian Slovenes, and memorials to the destruction of Jews, making the associated memorial landscape comprehensible.

3. The Diversity of Commemorative Signs

The memorial landscape of Nazi victims also manifests itself in artistic interventions, street names, gravestones, stumbling blocks, memorial plaques, and even summit crosses on mountains, making the memorial landscape particularly diverse. All these signs of remembrance are part of the public way of dealing with the Nazi past and analysing them provides information on the development of the public attention that has been paid to individual groups of victims in various phases since 1945. These signs of remembrance are not static but are subject to constant change. This is reflected on the one hand in the remodelling of and additions to existing memorials, and on the other hand, in newly unveiled memorials. In this respect, the website DERLA platform is regularly added to and updated.[1]

The variety of memorial signs revealed by DERLA offers a wide range of starting points for research and mediation. The digital memorial landscape makes

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it possible to compare a multitude of data and facts alongside aesthetic, temporal and spatial factors in a digital space. This enables pedagogical work to provide in-depth learning experiences through discovery and research. The memorials in Carinthia have already been well researched in specialised scientific texts (see, for example, Fein 1975; Sturm 1987; Rettl 2006; Danglmaier & Stromberger 2009; Mohar 2018). Something similar will be attempted here, with a focus on spatial and temporal factors.

4. The Carinthian Memorial Landscape after 2010

Digital data processing also enables new analyses. By the end of 2023, a total of 232 memorial signs in Carinthia had been entered into the DERLA platform. The extensive data shows that 100 of these memorials were erected after 2010. If the numerous individual stumbling blocks (*Stolpersteine*)[2] are disregarded, this leaves 55 memorials that have been newly erected in Carinthia since 2010.[3] In terms of the quality of these memorials, a distinction can be made, for example, between memorial plaques, memorial sites, artistic interventions, streets, or public squares named after victims, monuments, and memorial stones.

4.1 Memorial Plaques

Of 55 commemorative signs, which have characterised the memorial landscape in Carinthia since 2010, 22 belong to the memorial plaques category, which is the largest category in terms of number. Memorial plaques are simple plaques, e.g., informational boards, which are attached to walls. Two of them are portraits by the artist Manfred Bockelmann with informative text: a portrait of Otto Zeichner, a Jewish student at the HAK Klagenfurt/Celovec, and a portrait of Terezija Mičej, a Carinthian Slovene who supported the resistance, at the Carinthian Provincial Archives.

4.2 Memorial Sites

Five new memorial sites were set up after 2010, although these are of a very different nature in terms of quality: the Bleiburg/Pliberk Place of Remembrance, where several monuments to various historical events from different places in Bleiburg/Pliberk were brought together at this location and placed on pedestals of different heights. In this way, they were all brought to one level, with the added motive of removing the hierarchisation of the memory of different groups of people. A memorial to the resettled Carinthian Slovene families and other victims of national socialism in the municipality of Bleiburg/Pliberk was also created. Four empty plinths on the square are a reminder to preserve peace in the future. This memorial site is not without controversy: although the new

memorial site with the empty plinths is a forward-looking initiative in the name of peace, it should be noted that peace can by no means be achieved by equalising perpetrators and victims and concealing their roles. As Hajnalka Nagy and Julia Hammer have commented, this promotes the Austrian population's defence of its historical responsibility and strengthens the victim myth, which determined Austria's official approach to the Nazi era for many decades.

The memorial site for Elisabeth Fritz in Petschnitzen/Pečnica falls into this category (for detail, see section 5.3 below), as do the partisan bunker at Arich-wand/Arihova peč and the Stalag XVIIIA Wolfsberg camp road memorial:

> An information board was erected on the site in 2013, displaying historical photos, a map of the former camp and a text introducing the historical context in German, French, English and Russian. In 2022, the area was completely remodelled into a larger and more eye-catching memorial with seating. The information board from 2013 was integrated into the memorial ensemble.

In 2022, the Memorial Kärnten/Koroška Association, together with the Kärntner Landeskrankenanstalten-Betriebsgesellschaft, also erected a memorial for euthanasia victims in the Klagenfurt/Celovec Geriatric Day Clinic's park, in the immediate vicinity of the former rear building of the infirmary of the *Gaukrankenhaus* Klagenfurt, where murders took place from 1939 as part of the so-called Nazi euthanasia programme.

Seven rooms, mostly lecture halls or seminar rooms, in the Diocesan House in Klagenfurt/Celovec, which were named after victims of national socialism in 2014 by the Catholic Church of Carinthia and the then director of the house, Dr. Josef Marketz, can be categorised as religious resistance.

4.3 Memorial Crosses

The memorial crosses for civilian bombing victims at the old Vorderberg/Blače cemetery constitute a special group among the new memorials erected after 2010: the Austrian Black Cross placed a memorial plaque on the rear wall of the old Vorderberg/Blače cemetery in 2018. It reminds us that the village cemetery was located there until 1977 and that 6 civilian bomb victims from the Second World War are also buried there. They died on 8 February 1945 and are mentioned by name on five metal crosses in various places in the cemetery.

4.4 Permanent Artistic Interventions

Four memorial signs can be categorised as permanent artistic interventions in terms of their aesthetic form. Three of these are located on the site of the former Loibl North concentration camp: the names of the victims sprayed in black letters on the concrete shell of the wash barracks at the former Loibl/Ljubelj

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North concentration camp, The Return of the Stones art installation by Georg Planer, and the sculpture by Seiji Kimoto in memory of the Loibl North concentration camp. The Memorial Clock, designed by Marko Lipuš, is located in Bad Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla.

4.5 Public Places

Since 2010, five streets or public squares in Carinthia have been named after victims of national socialism: three of them in Villach (a square and a street named after Maria Peskoller and a path named after Gisela Tschofenig, two women in the resistance), a street in Spittal/Drau was named after Walter Porges, a Jew, and a street in St. Kanzian/Škocjan was named after Anton Kutej, a Carinthian-Slovene priest.

4.6 Monuments

Nine new monuments have been erected since 2010. These include the 20-metre-long walk-in sculpture by artist Hans Peter Profunser as a memorial to the victims of national socialism in the Upper Drau Valley, which was erected by the kuland Association in 2012, the memorial to murdered Jehovah's Witnesses in Techelsberg/Teholica ob Vrbskem jezeru, as well as seven memorials initiated by Slovene and bilingual associations as a reminder of the history of Carinthian Slovenes' suffering. These include: the memorial to the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes at Klagenfurt Ebenthal railway station (*Zveza slovenskih izseljencev* (Association of Resettled Slovenes), 2012), the memorial in memory of the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes at Lake Aichwald/Dobniško jezero (Jepa-Baško jezero Slovene Cultural Association, 2022), the memorial to victims of war and violence in Latschach/Loče (a work of art by Valentin Oman, 2010), the memorial to victims of national socialism from the municipality of Rosegg/Rožek Association (*Erinnern Rosegg/Rožek se spominja*, 2011), the memorial dedicated to victims of national socialism from Zell Pfarre/Sele fara (Initiative group Hlipovčnik/KPD Planina Sele, 2015), the memorial for victims of national socialism in Feistritz im Rosental/Bistrica v Rožu (Slovene Cultural Association (*Slovensko prosvetno društvo Kočna*), 2010), and the stela for the victims of national socialist justice for the courthouse in Klagenfurt/Celovec (Memorial Kärnten-Koroška Association, 2013).

4.7 Memorial Stones

Since 2010, two new memorial stones have been erected in memory of the victims of Nazi euthanasia. After a long discussion, there was a proposal to rename Dr.-Franz-Palla-Gasse and Hiessgasse in Klagenfurt/Celovec or to install additional

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plaques. These plaques would provide information on the role of the streets' namesakes during the Nazi regime. Both *Primarius* Dr. Franz Palla, head of the surgical department, and his colleague from the gynaecology department, *Primarius* Dr. Viktor Hieß, were advocates of the German legacy and supported the German euthanasia program between 1940 and 1945. However, the city of Klagenfurt decided to take a different, third path in 2022: it unveiled memorial stones in Dr.-Franz-Palla-Gasse as well as in Hiessgasse, both in the immediate vicinity of the clinic, the former crime scene. The memorial stones are aesthetically reminiscent of information boards but are monolithic blocks in their form and draw attention to the problematic street names under the heading "In memory of the victims of medicine without humanity". They are similar in content but focus on the person in question. The last paragraph on the memorial stone in Dr.-Franz-Palla-Gasse reads:

> The City of Klagenfurt regrets the naming of the streets after Franz Palla and Viktor Hieß and, with this memorial stone, is making a public apology for the previous concealment of this shameful and punishable medical practice. In memory of the victims who suffered physically and emotionally from these medical interventions throughout their lives, the perpetrators of such crimes should never again be honoured, and the victims should never again be forgotten.

4.8 Resistance Memorials since 2010

Since 2010, five memorials have been dedicated to political resistance, two of which concern street names (the Maria-Peskoller-Weg and the Gisela-Tschofenig-Weg in Villach/Beljak). This category also includes a memorial plaque at the Klagenfurt *Landhaus*:

> In 2014, a memorial plaque was placed in the arcade of the Carinthian *Landhaus* in front of the large coat of arms hall in memory of six former members of the *Landtag* and National Council who were murdered because of their political activities during national socialism. The Carinthian governor Peter Kaiser and the president of the provincial parliament Reinhard Rohr unveiled the memorial plaque together.

A memorial plaque to Dr. Alois Karisch was erected in Wolfsberg:

> Born in 1901, the law graduate became secretary of the Christian Social Party of Carinthia. Due to his activities in the Fatherland Front, he was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp during the Nazi regime. Alois Karisch survived the national socialist era and was later district governor of Wolfsberg and a member of the provincial parliament.

His quote on the memorial plaque reads: "I never bowed to national socialist terror". Political resistance has apparently been granted publicity since 2010,

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and the number of prominently placed and publicly visible memorials in this category is above average.

Six memorials that have been erected since 2010 also showcase victims of national socialism who supported the Carinthian partisan resistance:

— Two memorial plaques commemorate Terezija Mičej, her portrait on the outer wall of the Carinthian Provincial Archives, clearly visible to the public, and the memorial plaque for her and her mother in St. Veit im Jauntal/Šentvid v Podjuni. The young woman supported the partisan resistance with medical supplies, writing utensils, and information – she was a very active member until 1944 and acted as a courier under the code name Jelka. She and her mother were arrested and brutally interrogated in June 1944. In January 1945, the 22-year-old was sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out a few days later (Entner 2014, 326).

— At the end of April 2015, a three-part memorial made of white marble was erected in front of the vicarage to commemorate the more than 40 victims of national socialism in the municipality of Zell/Sele. The victims' names, along with their birth and death dates, were engraved on a horizontal block, while a bronze sculpture by Valentin Oman was placed on a vertical marble block. Beneath it, a bronze plaque reads: "*Posvečeno selskim žrtvam nemškega nacionalnega socializma*" (Dedicated to the Nazi victims from Zell/Sele).

— In 2010, an artistic memorial to victims of national socialism was erected in Feistritz im Rosental/Bistrica v Rožu at the instigation of the initiative *Geben wir ihnen einen Namen* (Let's give them a name). It consists of two figures in front of an outline of these figures; below is an information board with the inscription: "In memoriam Aleksander-Lekš Einspieler *17. 7. 1912 + 6. 5. 1944, Florijan-Flora Križnar *14. 5. 1914 + 6. 5. 1944, Žrtvi nacizma" (Victims of the Nazi regime). The memorial is one of the newest partisan memorials in Carinthia and one of the few to stand in a public space outside a cemetery. Here, however, only the partisan names – Lekš and Flora –, imply that the individuals in question were active in the resistance.

— On 8 May 2010, the partisan bunker on Arichwand/Arihova peč was renovated to mark the 65th anniversary of the liberation. It is a place of remembrance in the middle of southern Carinthian nature, accessible only by foot.

— In 2014, seven rooms in the diocesan centre in Klagenfurt were named after people who were murdered by the national socialists because of their Christian beliefs. One meeting room is named after Josefa Sumper, who was a parish housekeeper in St. Egyden/Šentilj. The information board in the meeting room directly mentions that Josefa Sumper was active in the partisan resistance. In conclusion, it should be mentioned that this is the only one of the five memorials erected in inhabited areas since 2010 that openly mentions partisan resistance.

5. The Carinthian Memorial Landscape in Geographical Space

The memorial landscape of victims of national socialism manifests itself in artistic interventions, street names, gravestones, stumbling blocks, memorial plaques, and even summit crosses on mountains – the memorial landscape is diverse.

5.1 Commemoration of the Persecution of Jews

The analysis of the memorials for Jewish victims of national socialism entered in DERLA shows that Jews in Carinthia are commemorated almost exclusively in larger towns: in Klagenfurt/Celovec, Wolfsberg, Spittal, Hermagor/Šmohor, and Wolfsberg. The small town of Sankt Andrä im Lavanttal is the only outlier, where a memorial plaque for three Jewish citizens in the community has been in the Generation Park in the town centre since 2022; it commemorates the married couple Lothar and Hildegard Auerbach and their trainee Gerhard Gadiel, who ran a remote farm. With the *Anschluss* in 1938, the farm was aryanised – Lothar Auerbach and Gerhard Gadiel were taken into Gestapo custody in Klagenfurt during the November pogrom and deported from there to the Dachau concentration camp. After his release in Dachau, Lothar Auerbach was able to reach England with his wife and three children, and the family survived the Holocaust. Gerhard Gadiel, on the other hand, was later arrested again, deported to the East, and murdered (DERLA 2023a).

The map of remembrance also shows stumbling blocks for Jewish victims of national socialism in Klagenfurt/Celovec and Wolfsberg. The provincial capital of Klagenfurt/Celovec stands out with memorials at the site of two (former) Jewish institutions. Firstly, there is a memorial at the site of the former Jewish prayer house. It was located in Platzgasse and was vandalised during the November pogroms of 1938. DERLA tells us that nobody was interested in reactivating it after 1945. The building was provisionally used as a residential building and later as a car repair shop until it was finally demolished. In 1987, a group formed who wanted to commemorate the extermination of the Jewish community in Klagenfurt. After much hesitation, the city supported the project and unveiled a memorial stone on the site of the Jewish prayer house on the 50th anniversary of the November pogrom in 1988. In 2015, two stelae with photos and information were added to the left and right of the stone in an extension to the memorial, and a square was created in front of the memorial with a Star of David embedded in the ground for better visibility (DERLA 2023b). DERLA also provides information on changes to memorials, extensions, and new contextualisation over time. The second Jewish institution in Klagenfurt documented in DERLA is the Jewish cemetery in St. Ruprecht. There are two memorials to Nazi victims: a memorial plaque on the outer wall next to the entrance and a grave inscription in memory of five murdered family members of Adolf Preis.

5.2 Commemorative Signs for Fallen Allied Soldiers

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Memorials to fallen Allied soldiers in Carinthia are concentrated in the towns of Klagenfurt/Celovec, Spittal an der Drau, and Wolfsberg. In the west of Klagenfurt/Celovec, near the university, is the only independent British military cemetery in Austria, where around 600 British Allied soldiers are buried. At the Annabichl cemetery in Klagenfurt, there is a British military cemetery with 50 graves, and there is also a memorial to Soviet soldiers at this cemetery. There were Stalag camps in Spittal an der Drau and Wolfsberg, where the mortality rate of Soviet prisoners of war was strikingly high. The Soviet prisoners of war who died in Wolfsberg were buried in mass graves at the St. Johann camp cemetery, while those who died in Spittal an der Drau were buried in two mass graves in Aich and Tangern near the town. These burial sites were later marked with memorials. Another memorial to Soviet prisoners of war can be found in Villach's central cemetery. The bodies of 114 Soviet citizens who died as prisoners of war and forced labourers are buried here. Initiated by the Soviet occupation authorities, the memorial in the form of an obelisk made of dark stone with a golden Soviet star and an inscription is similar in form and aesthetics to the obelisks on the mass graves in Aich and Tangern near Spittal an der Drau and at the St. Johann military cemetery near Wolfsberg.

It is indicative of the hierarchy in the Carinthian memorial landscape described above that although deserters are commemorated on individual monuments, there is no specific memorial sign for deserters and victims of Wehrmacht justice in Carinthia.

5.3 Commemorative Signs at Sites of Nazi Terror

In the last two decades, various memorials have been erected at sites of Nazi terror. Previously, the burdened Nazi history of these places had mostly been concealed. Since 2008, the Memorial Kärnten/Koroška Association has commemorated the victims of Nazi justice in Klagenfurt/Celovec at an annual memorial event. In 2013, a stela for them was unveiled directly in front of the side entrance to the provincial court in Klagenfurt/Celovec, commemorating 47 people who were sentenced to death during national socialism for their resistance activities in this building. The names of the 47 people murdered can be found on a 2.30-metre-high serpentine stone, which symbolises a guillotine. The last line refers to other victims who are as of yet unidentified (DERLA 2023c). Since 2015, a memorial plaque has commemorated the former headquarters of the *Gestapo* in Klagenfurt Castle; before, this central Nazi crime scene had not been publicly marked as such. Both memorials were erected on the initiative of the Memorial Kärnten/Koroška Association and are inscribed in the two national languages, German and Slovene. However, there is no memorial sign at the site of the former execution site at Kreuzbergl, an execution site of military

justice in Klagenfurt/Celovec, so the crime scene there can be described as an unmarked memorial site (DERLA 2023d).

Several memorials in Carinthia are categorised on the DERLA platform as places of remembrance for concentration camp victims. One is a memorial plaque for victims of the Dachau concentration camp at the Bad Bleiberg cemetery, which since 1998 has commemorated three citizens of the municipality who were murdered in the Dachau concentration camp. Another is a memorial to Elisabeth Fritz in Petschnitzen/Pečnica near Finkenstein/Bekštanj. This memorial consists of a wooden bench with *Kauz-Kreuz/Kauzov Križ* carved in large letters and a large carved *Marterl* – a covered wooden cross with a statue of Jesus, to which two information boards are attached. On the upper one, in the gable of the cross, is written (in German): "In Petschnitzen, Mrs Fritz told a Hitler joke. It took her to Ravensbrück, from where she never returned." The information plaque below reads in German and Slovene:

> Memorial plaque on the cross: in memory and remembrance of Elisabeth Fritz (4 July 1880 – 15 September 1943). The last owner of the *Kauz-Keusche* in Petschnitzen. She was denounced by close relatives, subsequently deported and murdered by the Nazis in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp near Berlin in September 1943 (DERLA 2023e).

This memorial sign was therefore placed at the home of a person who was murdered in a concentration camp following denunciation, the initiative for which came from a private individual.

There were also two concentration camps in Carinthia, both of which were subcamps of the main Mauthausen camp in Upper Austria. One of them, the Lendorf/Dhovše concentration camp, was set up on the outskirts of Klagenfurt, the other on the Loibl Pass to provide labour for the construction of the Loibl Tunnel. On the outer wall of today's Khevenhüller Austrian army barracks, on the site of which the Lendorf/Dhovše concentration camp was located, there is now a memorial plaque commemorating the concentration camp at this location. There are several memorial plaques, artistic interventions, and installations on the site of the former concentration camp at Loibl/Ljubelj on the Austrian-Slovene border.

5.4 Commemorative Signs for Specific Groups of Victims

The hierarchy in the memorial landscape in Carinthia is also evident in the fact that there are no signs of remembrance for some groups of victims and their history of persecution is therefore not visible. This gap affects Roma/Romnija and Sinti/Sintize, for example, but also homosexual victims of national socialism. The names of individual victims in these groups are commemorated on collective name memorials, such as the Memorial of Names in Villach or the

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Memorial to the Nazi Victims of the Upper Drau Valley at Greifenburg railway station.

With regard to memorials to forced labourers, it is significant that these are increasingly to be found on Carinthia's geographical outskirts: a symbolic burial site for Ukrainian forced labourers at the Feffernitz cemetery in Feistritz an der Drau, a memorial plaque for Soviet forced labourers at the Bad Bleiberg cemetery, a memorial stone for deceased prisoners of war in the Malta Valley, or two information boards on forced labour during the construction of the Drau power plants in Lavamünd – these memorials were created at places where forced labourers were deployed. A huge forced labour camp directly in Klagenfurt/Celovec, in the Waidmannsdorf district, is still an unmarked place of remembrance. Excavation work for the planned new indoor swimming pool in Klagenfurt/Celovec is currently taking place at the former camp site, and historical relics have also been found. It remains to be seen whether and how the history of the site will be commemorated in the area of the new indoor swimming pool.

In contrast to those for forced labourers, memorials for the victims of Nazi euthanasia focus on the central region of Klagenfurt/Celovec – these came from all regions of Carinthia and are commemorated where they were murdered or deported to extermination, in the provincial capital.

5.5 Collective Signs of Remembrance

Collective memorials can be found predominantly in the northern parts of the traditionally Slovene-speaking region of Carinthia – the northernmost of these memorials is the memorial to the victims who fell for the cause of a free Austria at the Annabichl cemetery in Klagenfurt/Celovec, which has been expanded in recent years with decentralised elements at the cemetery. Significantly more than half of these memorials were erected by Carinthian-Slovene or bilingual associations and initiatives: for example, a bilingual project group invited artist Valentin Oman to create a memorial for all victims of war and violence as an appeal for international understanding in Latschach/Loče; it was erected at the cemetery there in 2010. The *Rosegg erinnert/Rožek se spominja* Association erected a memorial to all victims of national socialism from the municipality of Rosegg/Rožek in 2011. In Bad Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla, a memorial clock was recently erected in 2022, which lists the names of the Nazi victims of the municipality in a continuous loop on the clock face. This was created in cooperation between the Zarja Bilingual Cultural Association Forum and the artist Marko Lipuš. In Greifenburg, the kuland Association has created a memorial that commemorates Nazi victims in the Upper Drau Valley by name. The Monument to the Names in Villach is certainly special: it was originally set up as a temporary memorial as part of a school project and only later took on a permanent form opposite the town museum.

5.6 Signs Commemorating Resistance by Carinthian Partisans

Memorials to the partisan resistance are mainly located in the bilingual south of Carinthia, where the resistance was strong and battles were fought. Most of them were initiated in the early 1970s by the Association of Carinthian Partisans (*Zveza koroških partizanov*), an organisation made up of descendants of former partisans.

Looking at the digital map of Carinthia as a whole, it is noticeable that the memorials to the partisan resistance in this province are by far the most numerous. Spatially, however, they are in the periphery, in larger and smaller towns in the rural bilingual area of southern Carinthia, in the vast majority of cases in cemeteries, sometimes on private land on farms and in wooded areas. Some, such as the partisan bunker on the Arichwand/Arihova peč, can only be reached on foot after a long hike. Because of their location, it is hardly surprising that the presence of the Carinthian partisans in the southern Carinthian memorial landscape is not well known outside of this region.

5.7 Commemorative Signs for Carinthian Slovenes

The Carinthian Slovene artist Valentin Oman has created several monuments that can be categorised as collective memorials, but also monuments that clearly refer solely to the Carinthian Slovene victim group. For example, the memorial in memory of the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes at Lake Aichwald/Dobniško jezero in 2022 or the memorial to the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes at Ebenthal/Žrelec railway station in 2012, which was initiated directly by the Association of Resettled Slovenes (*Zveza slovenskih izseljencev*), as well as the memorial to the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes at Radsberg/Radiše in 1996. Other memorials specifically commemorate individuals from the minority, such as the memorial plaque for Angela Piskernik in Klagenfurt/Celovec or the memorial plaque for Maks Černic at the Augsdorf/Loga vas cemetery. The memorial plaque commemorating the deportation of Carinthian Slovenes from Ferlach/Borovlje was initiated by a municipality and its mayor, which is still very rare.

6. Summary

With the DERLA platform, the memorial landscape is available at a low threshold and offers a variety of approaches for (scientific) analysis and educational work. The memorial landscape of victims of national socialism manifests itself in artistic interventions, street names, gravestones, stumbling blocks and memorial plaques. Nevertheless, a hierarchy of memories is clearly evident when it comes

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to incorporating spatial dimensions: monuments of soldiers as heroes are still over-represented in public and highly visible places, while the memorials to the victims of national socialism have only moved into Carinthia's centres since 2010. Of the 55 memorials that have characterised the memorial landscape in Carinthia since 2010, 22 belong to the memorial plaques category, which is the largest category in terms of numbers. Other categories of memorials erected since 2010 vary in quality. It should be mentioned here that only one of the five memorials erected in inhabited areas since 2010 openly mentions partisan resistance – in all the others, there is no indication of armed resistance by the partisans. DERLA offers not only temporal analyses, but it also makes spatial analyses possible: while commemoration of Jewish victims of national socialism in Carinthia can only be found in cities, collective memorials are predominantly found in the north of the traditionally Slovene-speaking region of Carinthia – and more than half of them were erected by Carinthian-Slovene or bilingual associations and initiatives. Memorials to the partisan resistance are mainly located in the bilingual south of Carinthia, where the resistance was strong and battles were fought. Most of them were initiated by the Association of Carinthian Partisans (*Zveza koroških partizanov*) in the early 1970s. Commemorative signes in memory of victims in whose installation the public sector, e.g. municipalities, played a significant role, are still very rare. At this point, development continues, and it remains to be seen how the landscape of remembrance will change in the next decade, who will organise events, and in what form. Only concrete activities surrounding the memorial signs bring them to life and promote public discourse about historical events and their significance in the present.

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Notes

[1] The webside of DERLA platform (www.erinnerungslandschaft.at).

[2] The artist Gunter Demnig commemorates the victims of the Nazi era by placing brass memorial plaques in the pavement in front of their last chosen place of residence. These *Stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) have been placed in twenty-one European countries so far, including Austria/Carinthia.

[3] For exactly 50 of the 232, it has not yet been possible to determine the exact year of installation. However, it is highly likely that these are all much older memorials and were not placed after 2010.

Jadranka Cergol

Ekokritika slovenskih literarnih ustvarjalcev iz Italije

Namen pričujočega prispevka je uporabiti ekokritiški literarnovedni pristop za analizo izbranih odlomkov nekaterih slovenskih manjšinskih ustvarjalcev v Italiji. Na temeljnih izhodiščih ekokritiškega diskurza avtorica predstavi raznoliko pojmovanje bivanjskega prostora, svoje zanimanje pa nato usmeri v analizo izbranih odlomkov, prek katerih poskuša dokazati, da se pri manjšinskih literarnih ustvarjalcih okoljska problematika tesno prepleta z identitetnim vprašanjem: pojem ogroženosti prostora je tesno povezan tudi z ogroženostjo etnične skupnosti. To je še posebej razvidno na primeru literarnih ustvarjalcev iz Beneške Slovenije. Svojo obravnavo avtorica zaključi z analizo literarnih del najmlajših slovenskih avtorjev iz Italije, pri katerih je še posebej opazno zanimanje za ekološko tematiko, ki ni omejena le na bivanjski prostor slovenske manjšine v Italiji, temveč obravnava tudi globalno ekološko krizo.

Ključne besede: ekokritika, prostorska zaznamovanost, identiteta, Slovenci v Italiji, književnost.

Ecocriticism of Slovene Literary Authors from Italy

The aim of this paper is to apply an ecocritical approach to the analysis of selected literary passages by Slovene minority authors from Italy. Drawing from ecocritical discourse, the author presents a diverse conception of living space before delving into the analysis of selected passages, through which she aims to demonstrate that, in the case of minority literary authors, environmental issues intertwine with questions of identity, as threats to the environment as a living space are closely associated with threats to the ethnic community. This is particularly evident in the case of literary authors from Beneška Slovenia. The author concludes her views with an analysis of literary works by the youngest Slovene authors from Italy, who notably engage with ecological themes extending beyond the confines of the living space of the Slovene minority in Italy to address the global ecological crisis.

Keywords: ecocriticism, space-based identity, identity, Slovenes in Italy, literature.

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1. Uvod

V literarni vedi in, širše, humanistiki se je v zadnjih desetletjih močno razvila veja raziskovanja, ki je sčasoma dobila ime ekokritika. Njen glavni cilj je prepoznati, razumeti in analizirati tesno povezavo med književnostjo kot ustvarjalnim produktom človeške vrste in okoljem. Podobno kot v primeru samega okoljskega gibanja lahko rojstvo in razvoj literarne ekologije pripišemo ameriškemu kulturnemu okolju, kjer je nastala v okviru novih hermenevtičnih obzorij kot kritični odziv na novo kritiko (*new criticism*) (Salvadori 2016, 673). Ekokritika se je nato razširila še na druga evropska literarna okolja ter se začela prav tako razvijati v različne smeri, ki pa imajo kot skupni imenovalec spoznanje, »da je človek določen ne le z družbenimi razmerji, marveč v enaki meri tudi z naravnim okoljem« (Čeh Steger 2012, 199).

Svojo tesno povezanost s prostorom izkazujejo tudi slovenski literarni ustvarjalci, ki svoja dela večinoma pišejo in objavljajo tako v Avstriji kot v Italiji in Sloveniji. »V najtesnejši zvezi z narodnostno pogojuje, usmerja in razločuje tukajšnje pisce tudi prostorska zaznamovanost, ujetost v primorsko-alpsko pokrajino med Miljami, Gorico, Špetrom, Rezijo in Žabnicami« (Košuta 1995, 387). V nekaterih razpravah je že bila dokazana tesna vez med prostorsko, jezikovno ter etnično zaznamovanostjo pri manjšinskih ustvarjalcih (Košuta 2006; 2008; Bandelj 2009; Cergol 2016; Purič 2016; Smotlak 2016; Cergol 2021), najnovejše raziskave pa dokazujejo, da je vprašanje etničnosti pri literarnih ustvarjalcih na obrobju slovenskega naselitvenega prostora izredno aktualno (Leben & Kohl 2023). Namen pričujočega prispevka je nadgraditi te ugotovitve še z analizo izbranih odlomkov z zornega kota ekokritiškega pristopa ter pri tem dokazati, da se tudi okoljska problematika tesno prepleta z identitetnim vprašanjem: v primeru manjšinskega literarnega ustvarjanja je pojem ogroženosti prostora tesno povezan tudi z ogroženostjo etnične skupnosti.

2. Teoretična izhodišča

Povezanost med človekom in naravo je bila skozi celotno literarno zgodovino jasno izražena: nešteto je literarnih odlomkov ali celotnih del, ki opevajo lepoto narave, obravnavajo človekovo vlogo znotraj ekosistema ter raziskujejo odnos med človekom in okoljem. Temelji za raziskovanje te povezanosti pa so bili postavljeni šele v zadnjih desetletjih, ko je začelo postajati ekološko vprašanje bolj pereče in se je povezalo tudi z drugimi področji človeške dejavnosti, ki niso strogo omejena na naravoslovje ali okoljevarstvo. Prvo znanstveno besedilo, ki obravnava povezanost med literarnim področjem in ekološkimi vsebinami, je zbornik *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996), v katerem Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) v uvodniku opredeljuje ekokritiko kot študij odnosov med literaturo in fizičnim okoljem v smislu ekološko usmerjenega pristopa k literarni

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analizi. Delo ponuja tudi izhodišče za nadaljnje interdisciplinarne študije, ki omogočajo globlje razumevanje in širše vpoglede v vpetost človeka in literature v več-kot-človeško okolje.

Ker gre za relativno novo vejo raziskovanja, terminologija še ni povsem ustaljena:

> Čeprav je oznaka ekokritika (*ecocriticism*), ki jo je že leta 1978 uvedel Američan William Rueckert v članku Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism, tista, ki se je za raziskovanje literature z vidika okoljskega angažmaja oziroma v povezavi s kontekstom onesnaževanja in degradacije okolja daleč najbolj uveljavila, verjetno zato, ker je v primerjavi z alternativami uporabno kratka, se zdi marsikomu to poimenovanje nejasno (Jurša Potocco 2022, 181).

Ameriški raziskovalec Lawrence Buell (2005) jo je definiral kot interdisciplinarni pogovor (*cross-disciplinary conversation*) in predlagal tudi termine okoljska literarna veda / okoljski kulturni študiji (*environmental criticism*) oziroma literarni okoljski študiji (*literary environmental studies*).

V svoji začetni fazi so ekokritiki želeli predvsem izpostaviti pomen narave v raznih literarnih sistemih. Zanimajo jih »različne, pogosto stereotipne upodobitve narave (arkade, raj, divjina, Mati Zemlja) v književnem kanonu kakor tudi v besedilih z njegovega obrobja, mesto narave v razvoju književnosti« (Čeh Steger 2012, 205). V svojem nadaljevanju se je ekokritika predvsem oprla na ameriško polliterarno zvrst pisanja o naravi (*nature writing*), katere glavni predstavnik je ameriški filozof in antropolog iz 19. stoletja Henry David Thoreau. »Ta hibridna zvrst, v kateri se prepleta terapevtsko-dnevniški in religiozno-mistični diskurz s poljudnoznanstvenimi vpogledi v geologijo, botaniko in zoologijo, se osredinja na individualno izkustvo začasnega človeškega naseljevanja neposeljenih prostorov, ki so koncipirani kot 'divjina'« (Jurša Potocco 2022, 183).

V nadaljnjem razvoju, med drugim valom, pa so ekokritiki čutili potrebo razširiti razlagalno obzorje, ne le z lokalnega na globalno raven, temveč predvsem preseči primere neleposlovja in pisanja o naravi. Ekokritika je v naslednji fazi svojega razvoja tako našla nove spodbude in sprejela sociocentrično perspektivo, katere cilj je bil okolje obravnavati ne le kot naravo, temveč predvsem kot resnično konstruirano telo. »Na drugi stopnji se tako ekokritika ukvarja z besedili, vrstami in žanri o naravi (npr. s poezijo narave, s pastoralnim romanom, z bukoličnim pesništvom, z idilo […]« (Čeh Steger 2012, 205).

V sklopu drugega, družbeno osredinjenega vala, je za potrebe pričujoče raziskave najbolj zanimiv doprinos Joni Adamson in Scotta Slovica, ki sta leta 2009 uredila monografsko številko revije MELUS, posvečeno temi *Ethnicity and Ecocriticism*. Urednika monografske publikacije sta si zadala kot cilj preučiti »vse plati človeške izkušnje z okoljskega vidika« (Adamson & Slovic 2009, 7), kar je predvidevalo razširitev in poglobitev etno- in nacionalne tematike: to je posledično pomenilo, da so raziskovalci dajali več prostora postkolonialnim

študijam, ekoantropologiji staroselskih in etnografskih študij ter razpravam o ekokozmopolitizmu:

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> Literary expression of environmental experience is as diverse as any other body of writing, of course. Yet until recently the community of ecocritics has been relatively non-diverse and also has been constrained by a perhaps overly narrow construing of 'white' and 'non-white' as the primary categories of ethnicity. Therefore, this issue will explore what seems to be a new third wave of ecocriticism, which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries; this third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint (Adamson & Slovic 2009, 5–7).

Za Slovica je tretji val ekokritike (ki se je začel pojavljati leta 2000) deloval po več interpretativnih poteh: po eni strani je bilo pojem prostora mogoče razumeti v globalnem smislu in ga reinterpretirati v luči bioregionalnosti, po drugi strani pa se je zastavljalo vprašanje o možnosti človekovega etničnega doživljanja okolja, pri čemer je bilo treba upoštevati tudi vlogo lokalnih identitet in njihovo bližino obmejnim območjem: spol, etnična pripadnost in prostor so med kategorijami, ki so bile v zadnjem desetletju vključene v preučevanje narave v sodobni literaturi. S to povezavo med ekološkimi in kulturološkimi kategorijami je ekokritika postala »po obsegu bolj globalna« (Glotfelty 1996, XXV). Za potrebe naše raziskave bodo prišle v poštev ravno ugotovitve raziskovalcev, ki so se posvetili temu vprašanju.

V okviru ameriških študij je bilo doslej objavljenih sicer malo tovrstnih raziskav, večinoma pa so se v okviru postkolonialnih študij posvečale primerom etničnega doživljanja prostora ameriških staroselcev. Ta veja raziskovanja se je v zadnjih letih razširila še z nekaterimi dodatnimi študijami, povezanimi z vprašanjem migracij in doživljanja prostora v diaspori. Dokazano je bilo, da je etnična pripadnost tesno povezana tudi s prostorsko dimenzijo in z ekološko skrbjo za okolje. V prispevku Emana Mukattasha (2020) je, denimo, analiziran primer kratke zgodbe *My Name is Salma*, v katerem je jasno predstavljeno, da protagonistkine spreminjajoče se izkušnje v različnih naravnih okoljih izven domačega kažejo na neločljivo povezanost med naravo in odzivi likov nanjo. Različni žanri čeznarodne književnosti, kot so priseljenska literatura, literatura diaspore in etnična literatura, predstavljajo dragocene vire za raziskovanje stičišč med ekokritiškim in etničnim pristopom in bi zato bilo treba priključiti naravi tudi druge kritiške kategorije, kot so spol in etnična pripadnost. V arabskih študijah je ta pristop še posebej izrazit zaradi številnih in pogostih migracij in spreminjanja prostora ter njegovega doživljanja. Cilj te veje raziskovanja je ravno v sprejemanju in interakcijah migrantov v novem naravnem okolju (Mukattash 2020, 198). S tesno povezavo med prostorom, spreminjajočo se pokrajino in identiteto se je na Slovenskem ukvarjala tudi Mimi Urbanc, ki trdi, da

> [r]avno zaradi časovne dimenzije pokrajina odseva vzajemno dogajanje v sedanjosti in preteklosti ter omogoča oblikovanje identitete na osebni, krajevni, regionalni in državni ravni. Pokrajine so večplastne in vsebujejo spomin na pretekla obdobja človekovega delovanja na Zemlji (Urbanc 2011, 11).

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Po mnenju raziskovalcev je tako pojem okolja in njenega spreminjanja tesno povezan z identiteto ljudi, družbenim sestavom in kulturno tradicijo: okolje je vsekakor družbeni konstrukt in kot takega ga je treba proučiti tudi z antropološkega zornega kota. Tako kot se spreminja pokrajina, se z njo spreminjajo ljudje v časovnem, prostorskem in zgodovinskem kontekstu (Tucovič 2013, 15–19). Nekoč so se seveda pokrajine spreminjale veliko počasneje, danes so spremembe hitrejše, zato pa je na pokrajino danes treba gledati kot na nekaj, kar ni zgolj materialna stvarnost, ampak družbeni in kulturni dokument, katerega branje omogoča razkritje pomenskih slojev in procesov, ki ta dokument sestavljajo (Urbanc 2011, 119). Na podlagi svojih analiz na besedilih, ki so vezana na prostor slovenske Istre, je Mimi Urbanc razdelila odnos do prostora v tri večje sklope, in sicer a) pokrajina kot naravno okolje in vir preživetja, b) pripadnost in odtujenost od pokrajine, c) pokrajina kot kraj stikanja med sosednjimi območji, kar zaobjema tudi dihotomijo med mestom in podeželjem (Urbanc 2011). Nekatere od teh značilnosti bo mogoče zaslediti tudi pri analizi literarnih odlomkov med Slovenci v Italiji.

Nekaj let kasneje je ekokritika doživela še dodaten preobrat, ko je leta 2014 izšla monografija *Material Ecocriticism* urednic Serenelle Iovino in Serpil Oppermann, v kateri stopi v ospredje zanimanje za materialni svet, kemične sestavine in snovi. »Če je v prvem valu ekokritike človek še razumljen kot zunanji opazovalec narave in če postane v njeni drugi fazi družbeno konstruirana kategorija, je v tretji že določeno posthumanistíčen – ekokritika je namreč postala diskurz o (ne)človeškem« (Jurša Potocco 2022, 185).

Ob zaključku teoretičnih izhodišč naj dodamo še nekaj ugotovitev teoretične narave oziroma ekološke funkcije književnosti, upoštevajoč, da je ekokritika postala pomembno raziskovalno področje tudi slovenske literarne vede. Raziskovalci so se v različnih literarnih sistemih spraševali, katera je pravzaprav družbena vloga literarne ekokritike, upoštevajoč, da ne more dajati praktičnih nasvetov za ekološko krizo.

> Družbena vloga ekološke književnosti je lahko najbrž le v tem, po čemer se književnost bistveno loči od znanstvenega, moralnega, praktičnega in drugih oblik diskurza, to je, da v patriarhalni in potrošniško usmerjeni družbi odpira v estetsko zakodirani obliki raznovrstne možnosti človekovega sobivanja z živo in neživo naravo ter ponuja ob prevladujočem antropocentrizmu vrednostno drugačne poglede na naravno okolje (Čeh Steger 2012, 209).

V luči te vloge ekokritiškega pristopa v literarnih vedah bo zato naše zanimanje v nadaljevanju posvečeno analizi primerjalnega odnosa do naravnega prostora in

identitete na študiji primera literarnega ustvarjanja Slovencev v Italiji. V okviru evropskih in manjšinskih študij še namreč ni bilo zaslediti podobnih primerov analiz in raziskav znotraj povezovanja med odnosom do prostora in identiteto, tudi ker se trenutno stroka znotraj ekokritiškega diskurza bolj poglobljeno posveča migrantskim vprašanjem.

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3. Ekokritika prostora pri zamejskih avtorjih iz Italije

Navezanost na domačo zemljo, opisi okoliške pokrajine, povezava med izgubo prostora in jezika ter različna razumevanja pojmovanja domovine so zelo pogoste teme tako v prozi kot v poeziji slovenskih manjšinskih ustvarjalcev v Italiji. Da je prostorska zaznamovanost ena ključnih opredelitev manjšinskih literarnih ustvarjalcev, je bilo izpostavljeno že v marsikateri razpravi (Košuta 1995; Bandelj 2009; Smotlak 2016; Cergol 2016):

> Pesniki, ki se v svojem ustvarjanju naslanjajo na eno izmed petih tipoloških zaznamovanosti slovenske literature v Italiji – po delitvi Mirana Košute – na t. i. prostorsko zaznamovanost, so v svojem najglobljem bistvu nosilci vrednot, ki segajo globoko v korenine lastnega bivanja. V njihovi poeziji je to bivanje opredeljeno s prostorom, kjer so-bivajo in ta prostor preveva njihovo poezijo po dolgem in počez, jo odpira in zapira in v vsakem izmed njih ustvarja novo prostorsko recepcijo ali zaznamuje posvečenost njihovih korenin, najsi bodo ukleščene ali izruvane (Bandelj 2009, 375).

Iz analize nekaterih izbranih odlomkov slovenskih avtorjev v Italiji smo izluščili tiste tematske sklope, ki se nam zdijo najbolj markantni in izstopajoči znotraj ekokritiškega pristopa v literarni vedi. Najprej bomo izpostavili raznolik odnos, ki ga imajo slovenski pisci do prostora, kateri prostor pravzaprav pojmujejo kot svojo domovino in kakšen odnos imajo do svojega bivanjskega prostora. Nadalje bomo izpostavili tiste avtorje, ki so opisovali svoj odnos do prostora v povezavi z identitetnim vprašanjem. V tretjem razdelku pa bo posebna pozornost posvečena položaju v Beneški Sloveniji, ki je že desetletja nazaj doživela močno izseljevanje, predvsem zaradi razlogov, ki so tesno povezani z bivanjem v gioratem območju. V zaključku se bomo osredotočili še na analizo nekaterih odlomkov najmlajših slovenskih literarnih ustvarjalcev v Italiji.

3.1 Raznoliki odnosi do prostora: kateri je moj bivanjski prostor?

Pri obravnavi navezanosti manjšinskih avtorjev na prostor je treba izpostaviti še en vidik, ki ni zanemarljiv in je bil natančno opredeljen v raziskavi o narodni identiteti v sodobnem slovenskem romanu v Italiji (Smotlak 2016). Smotlak je namreč romane, ki so izšli v slovenščini, razdelila na podlagi identitetnih značilnosti v enonarodno, večnarodno in nadnarodno usmerjene, znotraj te klasi-

fikacije pa je opredelila tudi navezanost na prostor. Izkazalo se je, da sloven-ski avtorji zelo različno pojmujejo svoj bivanjski prostor: tako npr. enonarodno usmerjeni romani »izpostavljajo kot sestavino slovenske narodne identitete celotno slovensko ozemlje, pri čemer poudarjajo čustveno navezanost sloven-skih likov nanj in lepoto njegovih naravnih danosti« (Smotak 2016, 117). V teh romanih gre predvsem za opevanje lepot slovenskega ozemlja, pri čemer avtorji jasno izpričujejo svojo navezanost in vpetost v celotno slovensko etnično nase-litveno območje:

> Vidim sebe v toplem puhu naše besede, zrcalim se v Muri, diham sončni zrak vrh Triglava, otipavam dolenjski mir v Pleterjih, dražijo me morske vonjave in opojni sok Brd, slepi me belina Višarij. To, to je prostor, to je vesolje, ki ga moram ponujati svetu, to je naše srce, njegov ritem mora v zapredo univerzalnosti Zemlje. Samostojno, avtentično, močno. Tu je smisel, tu je vsa vsebina našega bivanja in usode, ki nas je naselila na izjemno radodaren prostor stikov, prepletanja, obrazov, fonemov, duha. Tu moramo napisati svojo življenjsko nalogo, sestaviti mozaik povsem enakovrednih kamenčkov, ki so vsi lepi, vsi s svojo funkcijo, vsi (Čuk 1998, 42–43).

Ta navezanost je posebej izrazita v romanih, ki obravnavajo tematiko druge svetovne vojne, predvsem pa fašistično obdobje, ko sta bili slovenska beseda in slovenska kultura prepovedani in ogroženi, zato pa so se jih Slovenci še toliko bolj oklenili. V nekaterih romanih Alojza Rebule, Borisa Pahorja in Marija Čuka je posebej izpostavljena navezanost na slovensko Primorsko, ki je doživela več kot dvajsetletno zatiranje jezika, zato pa ravno primorski avtorji toliko bolj goreče »dokazujejo zgodovinsko prisotnost Slovencev v Furlaniji-Julijski krajini, zlasti v mestu Trst kot tudi na tržaškem podeželju« (Smotlak 2016, 179).

Pojmovanje prostora pa se deloma spremeni v večnarodno usmerjenih romanih, kjer se osebni prostor bivanja zoži: medtem ko je prej domovino predstavljala celotna Slovenija, »v večnarodno usmerjenih romanih Slovenci v Italiji naseljujejo bodisi mesto Trst kot tudi bližnje, največkrat kraško podeželje« (Smotlak 2016, 180). Po mnenju Smotlakove romanopisci večnarodno usmer-jenih romanov sicer vztrajno dokazujejo slovensko prisotnost v mestu Trst, tako da iščejo simbole njene prisotnosti v tržaškem mestnem prostoru ali prek poimenovanja slovenskih krajev ali z zgodovinskimi povezavami z dogodki in ljudmi v mestu. Vprašanje pojmovanja bivanjskega prostora zelo dobro ponazori Marko Sosič v odlomku romana *Tito, amor mijo*, v katerem se glavni junak sprašuje, katera je pravzaprav njegova domovina, saj jo je slišal opredeljevati z različnimi pojmi:

> Stori, da me vzamejo na šolski izlet, če bom izdelal, da bom lahko videl Republiko Slovenijo, za katero vsi pravijo, da je moja domovina. Majhna domovina v veliki domovini, Socialistični federativni republiki Jugoslaviji, tam čez mejo, v Sežani. Stori, da bom razumel, kaj je domovina, ker stric Albert pravi, da je naša domovina cela Jugoslavija, gospa Slapnik pa pravi, da je naša domovina samo Slovenija, mama pa

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pravi, da smo mi Slovenci, ki živimo v Italiji, in da nas je malo, da bomo izginili, če ne bo otrok, in pravi, da imamo dva predsednika, gospoda Saragata in maršala Tita, ki ni gospod, ampak tovariš (Sosič 2005, 15).

Če torej nacionalna država za te pisatelje ni domovina, obstaja oprijemljiva navezanost na domačo zemljo, ki pripada drugi državi. »V večnarodno usmerjenih romanih se pri nekaterih literarnih likih izrazito poglobi občutek oddaljenosti od osrednjeslovenskega prostora« (Smotlak 2016, 182).

V isto smer grejo nazadnje še nadnarodno usmerjeni romani, v katerih se izkazuje izrazita mobilnost, pri kateri se junaki oddaljijo od domačega kraja in ga le redkokdaj pogrešajo: kar nekaj je takih pripovedi, pri katerih gre pravzaprav za potopis in za opis lepot sveta, ki je oddaljen od slovenskega etničnega naselitvenega prostora. V teh delih se skorajda ne opazi več opisov domačega kraja in domačih lepot, tako da se v bistvu navezanost nanje počasi razblinja.

Nekoliko različen pogled na prostorsko zaznamovanost predstavi raziskovalka Vilma Purič v svoji monografiji o sodobnih tržaških pesnicah, ki ob zelo poglobljeni analizi ženske ustvarjalnosti v tržaški pokrajini izpostavi »mobilne prikaze prostorskega dogajanja« (Purič 2020, 313), pri čemer se posebno pozornost namenja gibljivosti in spreminjajoči se podobi obmejnega prostora. Puričeva poudarja, da so tradicionalne ločnice in statične definicije prostora zamenjali tranzitorni procesi med različnimi položaji, pri čemer so izpostavljeni pojavi, ki delujejo sočasno, ter elementi prostora, ki se prenašajo med različnimi prizorišči (Purič 2020, 314). Poleg tega Purič osvetljuje tudi nekatere vidike, ki so povezani z negativnimi učinki etnične razmejitve; ugotavlja namreč, da so ti procesi izgube bivanjskega prostora privedli tudi do procesov zatajitve, asimilacije, odstopanja od lastne etnije, kot bo v nadaljevanju natančneje opisano.

Pojmovanje lastnega bivanjskega prostora pri slovenskih ustvarjalcih v Italiji je dokaj raznoliko in razslojeno: medtem ko nekateri pojmujejo za svojo domovino celotno slovensko etnično ozemlje, se drugi nagibajo k opredeljevanju svojega prostora na ožji obmejni pas v Italiji, ki ga naseljujejo Slovenci, spet tretji pa ne kažejo posebne navezanosti na domači bivanjski prostor. V okviru ekokritiškega pristopa bodo za potrebe argumentacije v tem prispevku še posebej pomembni tisti avtorji, ki spadajo v prvo, še bolj pa v drugo skupino.

3.2 Navezanost na domačo zemljo v povezavi s procesom raznarodovanja

Da je prostor bivanja ključnega pomena za večino slovenskih ustvarjalcev v Italiji, kažejo raznoliki pristopi, ki ga imajo le-ti v svojih delih. Čeprav se koncept bivanjskega prostora spreminja, ostaja prisoten vse od prvih povojnih let, ko je npr. pesnik Filibert Benedetič v svoji pesmi z naslovom *Molitev* zapisal: »Kako bi potem mogel še sanjati, / brez tega odseva, / ki me vsak dan tolaži? // Vidite, / to je moja zemlja, / in zemlja je življenje« (Benedetič 1966, 34). Literarni ustvar-

jalci izražajo raznolike občutke glede tega prostora – nekateri so prežeti z otožno melanholijo, drugi pa občutijo bolečino in žalost:

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> Ogenj kraške burje in sonca / je oblizal dušo / – morje Soča Benečija Brda – / rana naših razsekanih dreves / je postala ocean. // Da bi ti rekel vse prav vse / kar v srcu joče in poje / zemlja mati / bi moral izjokati nerazrešljivo pesem / samote (Benedetič 1966, 45).

Opisi pokrajin, domačih vasi in poznanih okolij ter še marsikaj drugega prihajajo v ospredje zlasti pri lirskih subjektih v poeziji, kjer je ta navezanost še bolj očitna. O taki navezanosti priča Boris Pangerc, pesnik Brega in oljk, ki svojo domačo pokrajino opisuje takole:

> Vse moje bogastvo / je eno samo / veliko in sončno / prgišče zemlje, / ki ga niti s kamenjem / ne izpleveš. // Tu so pisani ogelniki / moje trde mladosti, / tod se razpredajo / viharna polja moje duše, / tu bodo pognale trave in rože / iz hraniva mojega telesa. // Vate – Breg – se zajedajo / moje pohlepne korenine, / tihe in večne kot smrt (Pangerc 1991, 33).

Pri obravnavi svojega bivanjskega prostora lahko v odlomkih posameznih avtorjev opazimo raznolike poglede na njihov bivanjski prostor. Te različne podobe prostora vključujejo po eni strani pojmovanje tržaškega mestnega središča, po drugi pa okolice, v kateri so v preteklosti pretežno prebivali Slovenci.

Če je bilo torej mestno središče v očeh Slovencev vedno prostor, v katerem je prebivalo več jezikov in kultur, je bila okolica kraj, kjer je prevladoval slovenski jezik. Slovenski pisatelji pa so vsekakor pogosto poudarjali, da tudi v mestnem središču prebivajo Slovenci. Tako je npr. Irena Žerjal prikazovala Trst kot zelo živahno mesto, ki svojo moč črpa iz tesne povezanosti s slovensko tržaško skupnostjo (Toroš 2021, 477). Podobno velja tudi za Marijo Mijot, ki je s svojo sočno narečno govorico

> [...] ustvarila enkraten spoj ljudsko-narodnih motivnih prvin z globljimi osebnimi doživetji ob pronicanju Trsta kot urbanega okolja v svetoivansko predmestje (Bandelj 2009, 376).

S širjenjem urbanega sveta na podeželje pa je povezana tudi tematika izgube domače zemlje in z njo povezanega jezika. Tako npr. Primož Sturman v zgodbi *Anna in jaz* iz zbirke *Gorica je naša* ugotavlja:

> Mi smo se morali preseliti, in sicer pred dvema letoma, ko so tata razlastili in mu vzeli mandrijo na Kolonkovcu. Anna je takrat postala moja rešilna bilka. V Trstu namreč še vedno vladajo fašisti, ki nam jemljejo zemljo, čeprav so se po vojni preoblekli v demokrate in kristjane (Sturman 2018, 25).

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Hkratno spreminjanje podeželskega prostora, ki je obenem povezano tudi z etnično podobo okolja, je v ospredju tudi v poeziji Borisa Pangerca, »njegov lirski subjekt je namreč opazovalec krutega spreminjanja nekoč vaškega podeželja v brezosebno industrijsko naftno postajališče« (Bandelj 2009, 377). Tako npr. Pangerc v svoji pesmi *Moja vas* opisuje svoj rodni kraj, umirjenost in spokojnost vaških kotičkov, kjer pa tudi opazuje, kako se izgublja slovenska beseda:

> Moja vas – / so nove hiše ob starem trgu, / so drobni klanci, / sklesan zvonik / in pohlevno rumena cerkev. / Čez brajde / nad vasjo / se kamnite steze razvejajo / v mrzle groblje. / O, ko bi le te melanholije ne bilo, / te črno vsesane žalosti, / ki ubija – / bi bilo lepo živet tam, // kjer moj rod umira (Pangerc 1991, 25).

Tudi v zbirki *Črno zlato* pesnik žalostno ugotavlja, da hiše v vasi želijo odkupiti samo ljudje, ki prihajajo iz mesta in ne znajo slovenskega jezika. Pesnik bi rad hišo prodal domačinu iz soseske, ki pa si je ne more privoščiti, medtem ko hiša še naprej razpada. V njej

> […] se bohoti zdaj bujen grm pelina / razbitine šip na pajčevinastih telerjih / mi režejo žile / pokleknem // ta hiša je moja / ta zemlja je moja / ta beseda je moja / tu je še vse gorko / od naše krvi (Pangerc 1997, 29).

Iz analize številnih verzov in odlomkov je najbolj pogost odgovor in odziv na urbanizacijo in posledično etnično spreminjanje prostora melanholija in žalost zaradi nemoči, ki spremlja te ekološke, socialne in politične spremembe. Vendar pa velja med pesniki omeniti tudi primer Atilija Kralja, ki isto tematiko pospremi v svojem narečnem izražanju z ironijo:

> Z anim m'tkam s'n piju kafe / une dan u bar pr France / k'r slučajno pride uan / an diškorđ uat minorance! // Ja! Da kaj? Da tu … da uno … / čujte Viii … Vi ste med tisti / ki ne zna da muj pranuono / jemo je grunt na Via Battisti! // In t'n dual u Campo Marzo / k'mr uabrni tranvaj / obdelavo suaj trte / in si rihto suj tokaj! // Ma … la sa?! Mi, no savevo! / Zdej ki znaste, lohko greste / naše mesto je biu prej Trst / puatle Triest in … zdaj Trieste!!![1] (Kralj 1996, 18).

Iz analize izbranih odlomkov je torej razvidno, da se tematika novogradenj in širjenja urbanega okolja na podeželje prepleta z motiviko spreminjanja etnične podobe pokrajine: s priseljevanjem ljudi, ki ne poznajo slovenskega jezika, se izgublja tudi njegova raba, kar ima za posledico, da v očeh literarnih ustvarjalcev slovenska beseda, kultura in jezik izumirajo.

3.3 Položaj Slovencev v Beneški Sloveniji

Pri obravnavi povezanosti zamejskega človeka z domačo zemljo gre izpostaviti poseben položaj, ki ga imajo v literarnem sistemu Slovencev v Italiji Beneški

Slovenci, kot so npr. rezijanska pesnica Silvana Paletti ali Benečani Valentin Birtig, Miha Obid in Marina Cernetig. Rezijanska govorica je dobila s Silvano Paletti, dobitnico zlatnika poezije leta 2023, svojo glasnico, ki se prepusti narečnemu pisanju za opis svojih domačih zelenih dolin pod Kaninom, hkrati pa svojo misel usmerja tudi v tematiko uporabljenega jezika, tistega, ki ji ga je mati položila v zibelko in ki ga bo ona hranila, ker predstavlja glas njene doline, njene zemlje in njenih ljudi. V njeni poeziji je jasno razvidna povezanost med prostorom in identiteto, ki pa zadobiva tudi širše obrise: »Njena navezanost na zemljo tudi ni več krajevna, ampak vseobsežna. Ko si namreč 'ujet' v svoje (rezijanske) korenine, postaja zemlja nosilka edinih pozitivnih vrednot, pred sočlovekom in pred Absolutnostjo« (Bandelj 2009, 377). Poezija Silvane Paletti je prav poseben primer prepletanja jezikovnih, prostorskih in socioloških prvin, ki so kovale usodo Beneških Slovencev:

> Njena poezija je v svoji neposredni pripadnosti rezijanski skupnosti in specifičnemu govornemu položaju, s katerega se izreka, izrazito singularna, a je obenem tudi nesporno univerzalna, kar se kaže najprej v njeni zvočni – glasbeni uprizorljivosti, nič manj pa tudi v njeni etični in poetični naravnanosti do vsega obstoječega. Je tematsko in motivno zelo aktualna (pojav izseljenstva in bolečina, ki jo to povzroča, migracije, novodobno nomadstvo), a je hkrati že od daleč opaziti, da je drugačna od večjega dela sodobne slovenske literarne produkcije. Je občuteno domoljubna, vendar absolutno tuja slehernemu nacionalizmu ali lokalizmu (Jelka Kernev Štrajn, citirano v Veronikina nagrada 2023).

Pri beneških pesnikih se poleg že omenjene povezanosti prostora z jezikovno identiteto pojavi tudi poziv, naj se Beneške doline ne izpraznijo, saj z odhodom beneških ljudi iz vasi ne gre le za fizično praznjenje prostorov, temveč predvsem za izgubo in osiromašenje identitete prostora. Tako poje Silvana Paletti v svoji poeziji *Te rozajanski glas*: »Iti je glas, Rozajanski, / ki od vište od sunca, / skryt, ni moren … / Zakoj, iti, je glas / od me duline … / od me zamje… / od meh samih judi«[2] (Paletti 2003, 23).

V zanimivi analizi literarnega diskurza Senjama beneške piesmi je Ana Toroš (2022) izpostavila razvoj motivike v poeziji, ki je bila predstavljena na festivalu: v zgodnjem obdobju festivala je bil poudarek predvsem na motiviki asimilacije in migracij iz dolin Beneške Slovenije, v zadnjih desetletjih pa se je težišče premaknilo na težke razmere bivanja v Benečiji, ki opisujejo izumirajoče vasi, zapuščena kmetijska zemljišča, prazne hiše in s tem postopno propadanje slovenske kulture in jezika na tem območju (Toroš 2022, 63). Je pa pri literarnih ustvarjalcih iz Beneške Slovenije opaziti tudi nekatere možnosti pozitivnih odgovorov na nastalo situacijo. Tako npr. »najbolj naprej gledajoči avtor« (Bandelj 2009, 379) Miha Obid »pušča odprto pot zanimivemu internacionalizmu prihodnosti, kjer bi se jeziki, kulture in narodi prepletali v soobstajanju« (Bandelj 2009). Na podoben način razmišlja tudi Marina Cernetig, ki pravi, da »vsak jizik je dobar

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/ za veseje dopoviedat«[3] (Cernetig 2007, 31). Tudi beneška pesnica vidi svetlo prihodnost v čezmejnem povezovanju in vizionarsko sanja o prostoru, v katerem bi tako Slovenci kot Italijani živeli korenine preteklosti, iz katere bi rasle krošnje prihodnosti, kjer bodo lahko vsi ohranjali in razvijali dediščino in bogastvo prostora.

3.4 Novi pristopi najmlajših ustvarjalcev

Pri analizi del najmlajših slovenskih ustvarjalcev v Italiji se kaže neko navidezno nasprotujoče si pojmovanje bivanjskega prostora. Po eni strani se zdi, da pri številnih pripovednih in pesniških delih ne moremo natančno definirati kraja in prostora, na katerega se nanašajo, kar je razvidno že iz Bandljevega romana *Grad in čas* (2016). Ta nejasna prostorska identifikacija se je nekoliko okrepila, pa čeprav ponekod avtorji ohranjajo tudi svojo jasno navezanost na domači prostor. Ta dvojnost je tudi v skladu z nekaterimi sociološkimi raziskavami, ki so pokazale, da so »mladi slovenski anketiranci v Italiji predvsem obmejni (75 %) in evropsko naravnani ljudje (68 %), ki so hkrati navezani na svoja izvorna vaška okolja ali mestne četrti« (Vidau 2018, 56). To npr. jasno dokazuje Alex Kama Devetak s svojo zbirko kratkih zgodb *Nedaleč* (2022a), ki so napisane tako, da bi se lahko pravzaprav dogajale kjerkoli na svetu, jih pa obenem zaznamuje edinole en skupen motiv, ki je prisoten v domala vseh zgodbah, in sicer motiv pečin nad morjem, ki bralca iz zamejstva v Italiji zelo spominjajo na Devinske stene, kjer se kraški kamen strmo spušča vse do morske gladine. Devinske stene niso sicer nikjer poimensko predstavljene, značilnosti, ki jih imajo, pa lahko nakazujejo tudi na možnost, da se velik del dogajalnega časa odvija ravno okoli teh pečin. Tudi drugi opisi krajev spominjajo na nekatere kraje v okolici Trsta in Gorice, vendar pa ti ostajajo vselej neimenovani in so zato geografsko nedoločeni.

Mojca Petaros je, po drugi strani, eno od svojih zgodb (*Tržaška pravljica*) jasno postavila v Tržaški zaliv, kjer že nekaj dni neizprosno divja silna burja, ki celo oblikuje značajske poteze Tržačanov: »Tržačani se tako radi ponašamo z njo, no, seveda predvsem z lastno trdoživostjo […], ker nas razlikuje od ostalih italijanskih mest« (Petaros 2021). V tej zgodbi je namigov na tržaško okolje še nekaj (nepomembno kraško okrožje, Pomol Audace ipd.), kar torej daje jasno vedeti, kje se zgodba odvija in katere značilnosti so izpostavljene. Na svojo rodno vas je navezana tudi Ester Gomisel, ki skozi motiv prahu sicer razmišlja o svoji usodi in izvoru (»počival je / in mi izrekel dobrodošlico / v rodni vasi«) (Gomisel 2022).

Pri prostorski zaznamovanosti je torej prišlo do pomembnega premika, in sicer po eni strani v smer nejasne definiranosti dogajalnega prostora, po drugi pa do bolj subtilne in delno prikrite, a vseeno izražene navezanosti na domači kraj.

Pri analizi izbranih literarnih del najmlajših avtorjev gre izpostaviti ekološko tematiko oz. tematiko varstva okolja, za katero kaže, da bi lahko postala v bodoče

še bolj prisotna, a je dosedanje literarnozgodovinske raziskave še niso omenjale. Prav tako se vanjo niso poglobile niti sociološke raziskave, ki jo sicer obrobno omenjajo. V sociološki analizi vrednostnega sistema mladih Slovencev v Italiji je ta tema samo našteta skupaj z drugimi: »Slovenska mladina je še posebej dejavna v prostovoljnih dejavnostih, povezanih z varnostjo in urejenostjo kraja bivanja, mladinskimi interesi in varstvom okolja […]« (Jagodic 2018, 38).

Ekološka tematika pride zelo jasno do izraza v Devetakovi kratki zgodbi *Kolona črnih dežnikov,* objavljeni v literarni reviji *November.* Pripoved postavlja v ospredje tematiko rušilne moči narave, ki, ko se razbesni, močno poseže v človekovo delovanje: »Jez se je zrušil in umazana reka je preplavila velik del mesteca. Požirala je vse, kar je našla na svoji poti: hiše, kmetije, polja, živali, avtomobile in ljudi« (Devetak 2022b). Na problematiko naravnih ujm opozarja s svojimi literarnimi besedili tudi Mojca Petaros. Moč narave zelo nazorno in s kančkom otroške naivnosti opisuje v *Tržaški pravljici,* v kateri igra glavno vlogo burja, ki po Tržaškem zalivu razsaja že zelo dolgo in za katero se mestni gospodje sprašujejo, kako bi jo lahko ustavili: »Nihče pa ni našel rešitve: človek pač ne more kar ustaviti sile narave« (Petaros 2021).

4. Zaključek

V pričujočem prispevku smo se osredotočili na razumevanje bivanjskega prostora, kot ga podajajo v svojih delih slovenski literarni ustvarjalci v Italiji. Na podlagi temeljnih izhodišč ekokritike, ki je na eni od svojih mnogoterih razvojnih poti povezala ekocentrična stališča z etničnimi in identitetnimi vprašanji, smo analizirali izbrane odlomke iz pesništva in pripovedništva sodobnih slovenskih avtorjev iz Italije. Posebej smo se posvetili vprašanju, kaj Slovenci v Italiji dojemajo kot svoj bivanjski prostor, in pri tem pokazali na bogastvo raznolikih doživetij in občutij, izpričanih v njihovi literaturi. Omejili smo se na skupino avtorjev, ki svoj bivanjski prostor razumejo kot ožji etnični pas naselitve Slovencev v Italiji od Milj do Trbiža. Opazili smo, da mnogi med njimi z melanholijo in ironijo opazujejo spremembe v svojem bivanjskem okolju, ki vključujejo postopno urbanizacijo podeželja in širjenje mestnega območja. Te spremembe pogosto povezujejo z naglim spreminjanjem etnične in jezikovne podobe pokrajine, zlasti z izgubo slovenskega jezika in kulture. Ta trend je še posebej izrazit pri avtorjih iz Beneške Slovenije, ki so bili v preteklih desetletjih priča množičnemu izseljevanju iz podeželskih vasic v mesta: izumiranje vasi in podeželskega prostora je v tem kontekstu prav tako tesno povezano z izgubo domačega jezika. Kljub temu lahko v tem okolju opazimo tudi glasove, ki svetleje zrejo v bodočnost in upajo, da se bo to območje razvijalo na podlagi tvornega sobivanja med obema etničnima skupnostma.

Na koncu smo se osredotočili na najmlajšo generacijo literarnih ustvarjalcev v Italiji. Ti avtorji pogosto postavljajo svoje zgodbe v nedoločen prostor in čas,

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vendar še vedno izražajo pomembno povezanost s svojimi domačimi kraji in ljudmi. Posebej opazno postaja njihovo zanimanje za ekološko tematiko, ki ni omejena le na bivanjski prostor slovenske manjšine v Italiji, temveč obravnava tudi globalno ekološko krizo.

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Notes

[1] Tujec doma: »Z nekim stricem sem pil kavo / oni dan, v baru pri Francetu, / ko slučajno je prišel na dan / pogovor o manjšini. // Ja … da kaj … da to in oni / Poslušajte, Vi, vi ste med tistimi, / ki ne ve, da moj pranono, / imel je grunt na ulici Battisti!// In tam doli, na Campo Marzio, / kjer obrača zdaj tramvaj, / obdeloval je svoje trte / in prideloval svoj tokaj! / Ma … la sa'!? Mi no savevo! / Zdaj, ko veste, lahko greste! / Naše mesto je bil prej Trst, / potem Triest, šele zdaj … Trieste!!!!«.

[2] »Ta glas je rezijanski, / ki ga pod sončnim obličjem / skriti ne morem. / Saj to je glas / moje doline, / moje zemlje, / samo mojih ljudi.«

[3] »Vsak jezik je dober, da izrazi veselje.«

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Metka Kuhar, Irena Bolko, Rok Zupančič

Polyvagal Perspective on Ethnic Distance and Well-Being in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Mediating Effects of Physiological Reactivity and Body Awareness

In this study, the responses of 182 Bosniaks were analysed to examine the interplay between previous adversity (past challenging or traumatic experiences a person has faced), mental well-being, and ethnic distance in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the lens of polyvagal theory, which emphasises the role of physiological reactivity and body awareness. The results show that there is no direct association between past adversity and well-being or ethnic distance. However, previous adversity is a significant predictor of autonomic reactivity and body awareness, which serve as mediators of well-being and ethnic distance. These findings point to the potential benefits of trauma-informed interventions to improve social cohesion in post-conflict settings.

Keywords: polyvagal theory, ethnic distance, mental well-being, adversity, autonomic reactivity, body awareness, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Polivagalna perspektiva etnične distance in blagostanja v Bosni in Hercegovini: mediacijski učinek fiziološke reaktivnosti in telesnega zavedanja

V študiji na vzorcu 182 Bošnjakinj in Bošnjakov proučujemo medsebojen vpliv preteklih obremenjujočih izkušenj (težkih ali travmatičnih izkušenj, s katerimi se je posameznik soočil v preteklosti), duševnega blagostanja in etnične distance v Bosni in Hercegovini skozi prizmo polivagalne teorije, ki poudarja vlogo fiziološke reaktivnosti in telesnega zavedanja. Rezultati kažejo, da med preteklimi obremenjujočimi izkušnjami, duševnim blagostanjem ali etnično distanco ni neposredne povezave, so pa pretekle obremenjujoče izkušnje pomemben napovednik avtonomne reaktivnosti in telesnega zavedanja kot mediatorjev blagostanja in etnične distance. Ugotovitve študije kažejo, da so intervencije, utemeljene na razumevanju travme, lahko potencialno koristne za izboljšanje družbene kohezivnosti v pokonfliktnih okoljih.

Ključne besede: *polivagalna teorija, etnična distanca, duševno blagostanje, stiska, avtonomna reaktivnost, telesno zavedanje, Bosna in Hercegovina.*

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1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the complex and nuanced effects of adversity on individuals and whole communities, especially in regions recovering from armed conflict, require careful study and understanding. The impact of significant adversity lasts for decades and often severely affects the survivors and subsequent generations (Bayar 2023; Wirth 2023). Bosniak communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) are a compelling example of this, having endured great turmoil and instability not only during the 1992–1995 war but also in the post-conflict period. This ongoing adversity encompasses a wide range of political, economic, social, psychological and other problems that remain unresolved (Zupančič et al. 2021; Kočan et al. 2024). This study aims to explore the intricate dynamics of how accumulated adversity, beyond just war-related trauma, affects mental well-being and shapes ethnic relationships.

Our aim is to shed light on the role of the autonomic threat response sensitivity and how it may mediate the intricate relationships between adversity, mental well-being and ethnic distance. Previous research, including work by Cabrera et al. (2018), Jokić et al. (2023), and Kolacz et al. (2020a), has greatly enhanced our understanding of the complex interplay between body awareness, autonomic reactivity and mental health in the face of past adversities. However, these studies focused predominantly on the dimension of mental health.

Our study proposes to broaden the analytical lens to include the concept of ethnic distance. We aim to explore how these established correlates may manifest in unique and complex ways in ethnic relationships, especially in the specific context of post-conflict Bosniak communities, who live in a country facing severe conventional and unconventional security threats that go beyond interethnic issues (Mikac et al. 2022). By including ethnic distance in our study, we aim to decipher the complex interactions between these variables and how they influence each other.

This comprehensive approach aims not only to enrich the existing knowledge base and provide a broader perspective on the repercussions of various forms of adversity but also to identify specific factors that could assist people from different communities in BiH and beyond on their path to recovery and resilience. We aim to open new opportunities to improve social harmony, enhance mental well-being, and contribute to the long-term stability and thriving of these communities, laying the foundation for a more resilient future (Kočan & Zupančič 2024). We also aim to contribute to the existing scholarship of peacebuilding; namely, this academic field, which primarily focuses on political, economic, sociological, cultural and other forms of interventions, which, with a few exceptions (Brom et al. 2017; Mansfield 2020; Močnik 2020), do not tap into the potential that trauma-informed interventions could yield for the practice and theory of peacebuilding.

2. Understanding the Role of Polyvagal Theory in Mental Well-Being and Ethnic Distance

Traditionally, the consequences of conflict have been managed through psycho-social support for people with severe mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Miller & Rasmussen 2010; Wessels 2007). However, this approach offers a limited perspective because it does not consider the wide-ranging effects of stress on those who do not meet the criteria for PTSD but still experience significant psychological and social disturbances (Blanco et al. 2016). In post-conflict societies, such as BiH, where people have faced various forms of adversity, such traumatic experiences solidify ethnic identities, anchor them in group narratives and collective memory, and subsequently influence attitudes and relationships with other ethnic groups (Bar-Tal et al. 2009; Djordjević & Zupančič 2024; Hirschberger 2018; Volkan 2001). These narratives, laden with stereotypes and emotions, play a crucial role in public discourse, self-definition, and expression. They reflect deep-seated fears and perceived threats to identity that fuel ethnic conflict (Džuverović 2018; Solymari & Gibarti 2023; Toroš 2021).

Against this backdrop, manifestations of past adversities are not limited to psychological symptoms but extend to challenges to mental well-being and strained interethnic relationships. This brings us to our first hypothesis: individuals with higher levels of previous adversities are more likely to exhibit reduced mental well-being and greater ethnic distance. In this context, ethnic distance encompasses the emotional and social distance that individuals maintain with members of different ethnic groups. It serves as a quantifiable measure of attitude towards and comfort level with people from different ethnic backgrounds, a concept that has been used extensively in studies of intergroup relations in various countries to measure attitudes towards numerous groups (Parrillo & Donoghue 2013; Wark & Galliher 2007).

In recent decades, our understanding of the neurobiological underpinnings of trauma has improved considerably, particularly regarding the role of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and changes in brain structure and function (Frewen & Lanius 2015; Porges 2011; Schore 1994; 2019). These findings have prompted a shift in trauma care toward body-based interventions and high-lighted their effectiveness (Kearney & Lanius 2022; Kuhfuß et al. 2021; Levine 1997; 2010; 2015; Ogden et al. 2006; Payne et al. 2015; van der Kolk 2014).

Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory stands out and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the effects of trauma and stress on the ANS and the resulting consequences they have on emotional regulation, social engagement and overall well-being (Porges 2001; 2003; 2009; 2017). The ANS forms a complex network of motor and sensory connections integrated with the brain-

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stem, spinal cord, and organs that coordinates various physical functions, such as cardiac output, sweating, breathing and digestion. In the face of danger, the ANS promotes defensive bio-behavioral reactions, and its state can influence cognitive and emotional processes via pathways that connect higher-level brain regions to the brainstem.

This theory systematically categorises human responses to threats into distinct physiological pathways. These pathways correlate physiological states with psychological traits, social behaviors, and responses to perceived risk. When faced with a threat, the physiological state influences the range of emotional traits and behaviors available to a person. A sense of safety fostered by the dominance of the ventral vagal complex promotes flexible engagement, prosocial behaviors and feelings of connectedness, as outlined by Porges (2011; 2021). Conversely, a sympathetic nervous system response puts us in fight-or-flight mode, while a dorsal vagal response leads to numbness and withdrawal (Porges 2022).

Polyvagal theory emphasises the crucial role of a regulated ANS in achieving and maintaining a balanced state of body awareness and autonomic reactivity to stressors. A dysregulated ANS, often due to chronic stress or trauma, can significantly hinder an individual's ability to connect with their bodily sensations and lead to diminished body awareness (Levine 1997; 2010; Ogden et al. 2006; Payne et al. 2015; Rothschild 2000; van der Kolk 2014). Sensitivity to the body's own signals is a multi-layered concept that goes beyond a simple categorisation of more is better or less is better. In clinical contexts, heightened body awareness and somatosensory amplification are often observed in conditions such as anxiety and panic disorders. This heightened sensitivity can sometimes prove unfavourable and lead to an excessive focus on bodily sensations. Conversely, a weakened or diminished perception of body signals is a characteristic feature of eating disorders, where there is a disconnection or misinterpretation of internal cues. In addition, maladaptive rumination about interoceptive signals is frequently observed in depression, indicating a complex relationship between body awareness and mental health conditions (Jokić et al. 2023).

The concept of autonomic reactivity, as explained in polyvagal theory, sheds light on how past adversity can prime the ANS to overreact to perceived danger. This heightened reactivity is linked to an increased sensitivity to stressors, profoundly influencing an individual's perception and response to threats. Cabrera et al. (2018) demonstrated that individual perceptions of autonomic reactivity are best described in terms of distinct responses in the subdiaphragmatic and supradiaphragmatic regions. Individuals with adverse histories exhibit this increased autonomic reactivity, often accompanied by reduced flexibility in regulating the ventral vagal parasympathetic system and the sympathetic nervous system (Kolacz et al. 2020a). Consequently, these individuals are prone to intense reactions to stressors, elevating their risk for various mental health problems and diminishing their overall mental well-being (Kolacz et al. 2020b).

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In situations, such as those experienced by the people of BiH, the ANS is heavily burdened by constant stress factors, ranging from war-related trauma to economic instability and political uncertainty. Various forms of adversity affect the ANS by keeping it in a heightened state of alertness, causing individuals to overreact to perceived threats (McCrory et al. 2011). Ongoing economic challenges contribute to chronic stress. Living in an environment of political uncertainty and instability further exacerbates the stress response, which can lead to long-term changes in ANS function. The combined effect of these stressors leads to a distorted perception of threats. Individuals can become hypersensitive to potential danger and perceive threats even in safe situations (Sukhera & Watling 2018). This can lead to maladaptive defensive behaviours and a general state of hyperarousal, which is often observed in individuals from post-conflict areas (López Castaneda & Myrttinen 2022; Zupančič 2019). Thus, our second hypothesis is as follows: individuals who have encountered higher levels of previous adversity are likely to exhibit either hyper- or hyposensitive body awareness, accompanied by increased autonomic reactivity.

Furthermore, based on polyvagal theory, we can postulate that there is an intricate interconnectedness between ANS responses, emotions, and prejudices, including ethnic prejudices. This theory suggests that the physiological state dictated by the ANS can unconsciously influence emotional reactions and potentially predispose people to certain biases (Porges 2017; 2021b). Studies have shown that these biases, which are embedded in our unconscious emotional responses, subtly influence our reactions and interactions (Lueke & Gibson 2014; Storbeck & Clore 2008; Tan & Yip 2018). In this context, ethnic bias means an often unconscious inclination towards or against a particular ethnic group. Far from being temporary or superficial, these biases are burned into our neural networks and affect our sense of safety when interacting with those perceived as the others. This dynamic is crucial in environments characterised by historical conflict, where past adversities are not only personal but interwoven with collective ethnic narratives. This interplay of past adversities, ANS reactions and biases brings us to our third hypothesis: previous adversity predicts mental well-being and ethnic distance both directly and indirectly through increased autonomic reactivity and body awareness.

However, it is crucial to emphasise that our theoretical framework, anchored in polyvagal theory, argues for a broader interpretation of the impact of previous adversity on ANS dysregulation. Polyvagal theory highlights how physiological responses to stress, characterised by both trauma and resilience, can manifest in different contexts, including ethnic relationships. In our study, we treat previous adversity as a holistic variable, rather than distinguishing between specific sources, such as war trauma or other adversities, since adversity, regardless of its origin, contributes to a common pathway of ANS dysregulation. This physiological dysregulation has profound implications not only on individual mental well-

being but also on the dynamics of interethnic relationships in the post-conflict recovery phase. Particularly in post-conflict areas, the frequency and ongoing nature of these adversities further contribute to dysregulation. By examining previous adversity as a unitary construct, we aim to capture the cumulative impact of all forms of adversity on the body's regulatory mechanisms, thereby revealing how these changes may influence both psychological well-being and the ethnic distance perceived by people in post-conflict societies.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were recruited on an online survey panel run by a Slovenian research agency that has an established office in BiH, ensuring a well-organised and easily accessible recruitment process. The panel consists of individuals who have proactively given their informed consent to participate in online surveys and receive modest financial compensation for their contributions in line with the regular policy of the public opinion poll agency, which conducted the survey. For the purposes of our study, a computer-assisted web interview (CAWI) was employed.

Our data collection relied on a pre-consented panel of participants. Nevertheless, the participants were again asked for consent to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and to confirm their voluntary participation in this study.

The survey was conducted in April 2023. We applied quota sampling and collected data from a panel. Quota cells were established as a combination of gender and age group. The survey was taken by 280 people, and the final sample size resulted in 182 Bosniaks from the following cantons in the Federation of BiH: Tuzla Canton (25.3%), Sarajevo Canton (21.4%), Zenica-Doboj Canton (17.6%), Central Bosnia Canton and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (both 10.4%), Una-Sana Canton (9.3%), Canton 10 (3.3%), and Bosnia-Podrinje Canton (2.2%). Of the participants, 98 were excluded for various reasons before starting the survey: for not representing the Bosniak community (n = 88) or being younger than 18 years (n = 1), while others did not complete the survey (n = 9, of whom some did not answer any questions and others only answered first few questions).

The sample was gender balanced, with 49.5% of women and 50.5% of men. The mean participant age was 44.02 years (*SD* = 14.23, *Min* = 18, *Max* = 74). Regarding their education, 10.9% of participants had completed primary school or professional/vocational training, 44.5 % had attained high school, and 43.1% had had a post-secondary education or graduate degree. Among the participants, 64.8% described their current place of residence as urban, 24.2% as suburban, and 11.0% as rural.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Previous Adversity

We utilized the Adverse and Traumatic Experiences Scale to assess previous adversity (Kolacz et al. 2020a). This scale integrates elements from various measures, including the ACES, Trauma History Questionnaire, Life Events Checklist for DSM-5, and Brief Trauma Questionnaire. The scale consists of 19 items. It encompasses categories like childhood adversities, maltreatment, life-threatening situations, and sudden deaths, among others. Notably, the scale includes items such as Physical assault (e.g., being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up) and Assault with a weapon (e.g., being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, or bomb). These elements are combined to formulate an adversity score. The answers are rated on a binary scale (0 = no, 1 = yes), with the total score ranging from 0 to 19 to indicate the extent of the adverse experience. The Kuder-Richardson 20 was 0.72.

3.2.2. The Body Perception Questionnaire Short Form (BPQ-SF)

The BPQ-SF, developed by Cabrera et al. (2018), is a psychometric instrument that assesses two components related to a person's awareness and responsiveness to bodily signals: Body Awareness and Autonomic Reactivity.

Body Awareness measures a person's awareness of internal bodily functions, such as muscle tension in the face or sweating palms. Following Cabrera et al. (2018), who conducted a study validating body awareness as a single factor, we used body awareness as a single variable in our analysis. It comprises 26 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. Higher scores indicate a heightened sensitivity or hypersensitivity, reflecting an acute awareness of bodily changes and reactions. Conversely, lower values indicate a diminished sensitivity or hyposensitivity, i.e., a less pronounced awareness of bodily sensations. After excluding three items because of low component loading, a single component explained 34.3% of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

Autonomic Reactivity focuses on self-reported experiences of reactivity in organs and tissues controlled by the ANS. Following other researchers, such as Kolacz et al. (2020a), we used an autonomic reactivity subscale of 20 items that assess typical responses of functions both above the diaphragm, such as sweating in the armpits, and below the diaphragm, particularly gastrointestinal functions, such as constipation and indigestion. Higher scores on this subscale indicate impaired autonomic reactivity, characterised by reduced parasympathetic activity and reduced flexibility of parasympathetic and sympathetic responses to challenges (Kolacz et al. 2020a). The responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from never to always. We excluded one item because of low

component loading, and a single component explained 38.6% of the variance. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

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3.2.3 Ethnic Distance

We adapted Bogardus' (1925) social distance scale to assess respondents' attitudes towards Croats. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with seven statements on a 5-point Likert scale that depict their attitude toward the other ethnic group, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. We applied a recently proposed social distance intensity score (Mather et al. 2017), which combines the Bogardus-Guttman cumulative scale with the Likert scale. The items were as follows: "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a close relative by marriage", "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a close personal friend", "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a neighbour in the same street", "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a coworker", "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a citizen of my country", "I would be willing to accept a Croat as a visitor in my country", "I would not exclude a Croat from my country". A single component explained 67.0% of the variance and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.86.

3.2.4 Mental Well-Being

Building on the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes 2002; Lamers et al. 2011), we developed an extended instrument that captures more comprehensive aspects of mental well-being. Our modification is grounded in the biopsychosocial model of health, which integrates biological, psychological and social factors (Engel 1977). Although the original MHC-SF already includes comprehensive dimensions of well-being based on Ryff's model – such as personal growth, meaning in life, autonomy and life satisfaction (Ryff 1989; Ryff & Keyes 1995) – it is important to us that these dimensions are well represented and relevant in the context of our study. Therefore, our extended instrument also includes items that capture physical states, such as feeling calm and relaxed, having energy, and the ability to concentrate. These items were added to gain a holistic understanding of well-being, particularly under stressful conditions and following trauma. In addition, elements of personal growth, such as experiencing life as meaningful and feeling authentic in one's identity, are emphasised to reflect the principles of positive psychology, which highlights life satisfaction and personal development as key components of mental health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). These elements are particularly important following trauma, as recovery involves not only the alleviation of symptoms but also the rebuilding of a meaningful life.

The scale comprised 14 items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. Exploratory factor analysis suggested one common factor.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure confirmed the sampling adequacy (0.95), and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(136) = 1916,940$, $p < 0.001$) indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large. Owing to small factor loading, we excluded one of the items and tested a new component solution, explaining the 53.9% variance. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.94.

3.3 Data Analysis

In the first step, we examined Pearson's correlations between age and the following study outcomes: previous adversity (PA), body awareness (BA), autonomic reactivity (AR), ethnic distance (ED), and mental well-being (MW). We also checked for any gender differences in the outcomes by applying independent sample t-tests.

In the second step, we performed the mediation analysis where we tested for the possible association of PA on one hand and ED and MW on the other, as well as for a possible mediation effect of body perception, where BA and AR were applied as mediators. Hence, we tested the following models: (1) PA – BA – ED, (2) PA – AR – ED, (3) PA – BA – MW, and (4) PA – AR – MW. In all four models, we controlled for age and gender. By holding these two variables constant, we tried to better understand the direct relationship between independent and dependent variables, as well as to assess the mediation effect after accounting for age and gender.

We followed Baron and Kenny's method (1986), applying a combination of linear and multiple regression to describe the mediation effect. In the first step, we estimated the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, followed by the estimation of the relationship between the independent variable and mediator, on one hand, and the mediator and the dependent variable on the other, while controlling for the independent variable. Finally, we estimated the relationship between the dependent variable on the independent variable while controlling for the mediator. We tested the significance with the bootstrapping approach to determine nonparametric Bootstrap Confidence Intervals with the Percentile Method based on 500 bootstrap samples (Imai et al. 2010; Preacher & Hayes 2004). The bootstrapping approach was conducted to increase the power of testing. We obtained the following three indicators: total effect, estimating the total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable; average causal mediation effect (ACME), estimating indirect effect through the mediator variable (this is the product of the effect of the independent variable on the mediator and the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable); and average direct effect (ADE), estimating the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable after controlling for the mediator. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics 25) and R software, namely the mediation (Tingey et al. 2014) and stargazer (Hlavac 2022) packages.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The descriptive statistics and correlations between all the variables are presented in Table 1. We can observe statistically significant gender differences in body awareness ($t(180) = -3.22$, $p = 0.002$) and autonomic reactivity ($t(180) = -3.82$, $p<0.001$), as well as in ethnic distance ($t(180) = -2.25$, $p = 0.025$), with women scoring higher on all three scales (see Table 1). There are few significant correlations between the observed variables, and they are all low. Age is positively correlated with ethnic distance, previous adversity is positively correlated with both body awareness and autonomic reactivity. Body awareness and autonomic reactivity are both negatively correlated with mental well-being, while autonomic reactivity is also negatively correlated with ethinic distance (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations of the outcome variables

		Previous Adversity	Body Awareness**	Autonomic Reactivity**	Ethnic Distance*	Mental Well-Being
Total sample N = 182	M (SD)	2.84 (2.63)	56.40 (14.11)	34.91 (10.78)	128.74 (14.95)	57. 61 (15.20)
Female n = 90	M (SD)	2.70 (2.73)	59.65 (14.27)	37.82 (11.49)	131.18 (12.15)	55. 91 (15.55)
Male n = 92	M (SD)	2.98 (2.51)	53.08 (13.21)	31.93 (9.14)	126.24 (17.06)	59. 34 (14.73)
Pearson's r						
Age		0.04	–0.10	0.04	0.20*	–0.01
PA			0.21**	26**	–0.04	–0.14
BA				0.79**	–0.13	–0.32**
AR					–0.17*	–0.32**
ED						0.14

Source: Data obtained from the authors' research.

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

4.2 Mediation Analysis

In the first step, we estimated the direct effect of previous adversity on ethnic distance and mental well-being. The results are presented in Table 2. No significant association was found between previous adversity and ethnic distance (p = 0.56), but there was a significant negative association between previous adversity and mental well-being (p = 0.05). In both cases, we controlled for age and gender.

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Table 2: Testing the direct effect of previous adversity on ethnic distance and mental health

	Dependent variable	
	Ethnic Distance	**Mental Well-Being**
	Estimate (SE)	**Estimate (SE)**
Control variables		
Gender	4.54* (2.17)	−3.68 (2.24)
Age	0.19* (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)
Predictors		
Previous Adversity	−0.24 (0.41)	−0.85* (0.43)
Adjusted R	0.05	0.02

Source: Data obtained from the authors' research.

*p<0.05

Although we did not find a significant association between previous adversity and ethnic distance, we still tested for the possible mediation effect of both body perception dimensions, namely, body perception and autonomic reactivity. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Previous adversity was a significant predictor of both body awareness (p = 0.001) and autonomic reactivity (p<0.001) when controlling for age and gender (see Table 3). Body awareness was significantly associated with ethnic distance (p = 0.04) and mental well-being (p = 0.002). Similarly, autonomic reactivity was also significantly associated with both constructs – ethnic distance (p<0.001) and mental well-being (p<0.001). In both cases, we controlled for the independent variable – previous adversity – as well as for age and gender (see Table 4).

Table 3: Testing the effect of previous adversity on the two mediating variables, body awareness and autonomic reactivity, when controlling for gender and age

	Dependent variable	
	Body Awareness	**Autonomic Reactivity**
	Estimate (SE)	**Estimate (SE)**
Control variables		
Gender	7.13*** (1.99)	6.19*** (1.49)
Age	−0.12 (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)
Predictors		
Previous Adversity	1.24** (0.38)	1.14*** (0.28)
Adjusted R	0.10	0.14

Source: Data obtained from the authors' research.

**p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4: Testing the effect of previous adversity and the two mediating variables, body awareness and autonomic reactivity, on the two dependent variables, ethnic distance and mental health, when controlling for gender and age

	Dependent variable			
	Ethnic Distance		Well-Being	
	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)
Control variables				
Gender	5.74* (2.23)	6.61** (2.22)	–1.46 (2.24)	–1.08 (2.26)
Age	0.17*(0.08)	0.20** (0.07)	–0.03 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)
Predictors				
Previous Adversity	–0.03 (0.42)	0.14 (0.42)	–0.47 (0.42)	–0.37 (0.43)
Body Awareness	–0.17*(0.08)		–0.31*** (0.08)	
Autonomic Reactivity		–0.33** (0.11)		–0.42*** (0.11)
Adjusted R	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.09

Source: Data obtained from the authors' research.

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

In total, we tested four models (see Table 5). The bootstrapping approach showed that in the first model, PA – BA – ED, we found a significant indirect mediation effect of body awareness (ACME) but no direct effect of previous adversity (ADE), and the total effect was also not significant (Total Effect). In the second model, PA – AR – ED, similar outcomes were observed. We found a significant mediation effect of autonomic reactivity (ACME), but no significant direct effect (ADE) and no total effect.

Table 5: Mediation models indicator estimates based on the boothstrapping method

Model	Indicator	Estimate	95 % CI [lower, upper]		p
PA – BA – ED	ACME	–0.2083	–0.5149,	–0.01	0.048
	ADE	0.0325	–0.7904,	0.64	0.956
	Total Effect	–0.2407	–1.1358,	0.49	0.568
PA – AR – ED	ACME	–0.382	–0.800,	–0.10	0.008
	ADE	–0.141	–0.657,	0.91	0.612
	Total Effect	–0.241	–1.199,	0.56	0.568
PA – BA – MW	ACME	–0.3860	–0.6722,	–0.12	<0.001
	ADE	–0.4668	–1.2048,	0.23	0.208
	Total Effect	–0.8528	–1.6090,	–0.05	0.048
PA – AR – MW	ACME	–0.480	–0.8566,	–0.18	<0.001
	ADE	–0.372	–1.217,	0.40	0.324
	Total Effect	–0.853	–1.710,	–0.04	0.032

Source: Data obtained from the authors' research.

In the third model, PA – BA – MW, we again found a significant mediation effect of body awareness (ACME). Again, we did not find a significant direct effect (ADE), but in this model the total effect was significant. In the fourth model, PA – AR – MW, the mediation effect of autonomic reactivity was also significant (ACME), while the direct effect was not (ADE), but again we found a significant total effect.

5. Discussion

The connection between previous adversity and its multiple associations with individuals' physiological responses, mental well-being, and social perceptions formed the core of our investigation.

Contrary to our expectations, the first hypothesis, which postulated an association between previous adversity and ethnic distance, was not confirmed. However, we did find a negative association between previous adversity and mental well-being, and the bootstrapping approach confirmed the total effect of previous adversity on mental well-being.

In this study, we acknowledge the multifaceted nature of mental well-being, as well as the heterogeneity of trauma responses. We have recognised that, particularly in post-conflict areas, context has a pronounced influence on the overall well-being of individuals. The well-being of people in these areas is not only closely linked to their personal trauma history, but it is also significantly influenced by the prevailing social conditions. The association between cumulative adversity and mental well-being is further nuanced by numerous factors, such as individual resilience and availability of social support, both of which are well-established as central in moderating the effects of trauma (Kuhar & Zager Kocjan 2021).

Our findings, which did not substantiate the hypothesized link between previous adversity and ethnic distance, may reflect the intricate nature of ethnic distance. This is a layered construct, influenced by an array of factors, not solely personal traumatic experiences. It intertwines with societal influences and perceptions, as well as broader personal experience, such as the quantity and quality of contact with outgroup members.

Furthermore, the measurement instrument we used for investigating prior trauma – the Adverse and Traumatic Experiences Scale – was originally developed to capture a broad spectrum of traumatic experiences, ranging from intimate personal assaults to widespread environmental disasters. Even though this scale effectively captures the range of adverse experiences, it cannot specifically capture or isolate the ethnic components of adversity that may have a direct impact on ethnic distance.

The central thrust of our study was to capture the impact of cumulative adversity using self-reported measures of physiological responses, which encompass

often-overlooked inherited traumas. In this way, we aimed to explore the effects of trauma manifest in present-day physiological patterns and, consequently, in psychological and social patterns. Consistent with our second hypothesis, we found that previous adversity was a significant predictor of increased body awareness and increased autonomic reactivity, supporting the claims of Porges' polyvagal theory (Porges 2001; 2003; 2009; 2017; 2021; Porges & Dana 2018). Given the empirical evidence presented in previous studies, including those by Jokić et al. (2023) and Kolacz et al. (2020a; 2020b), and corroborated by our research findings, it is evident that past adversity can leave lasting physiological effects. These effects significantly alter the way individuals perceive their own bodies and modulate their physiological responses to stressors, providing further empirical support for the somatic legacy of past adversity on the human body and nervous system (Grabbe & Miller-Karas 2018; Kearney & Lanius 2022; Levine 1997; 2010; 2015; Ogden et al. 2006; Payne et al. 2015; van der Kolk 2014).

Our third hypothesis was partially confirmed. Although the results suggest an indirect, mediating effect of either body awareness or autonomic reactivity on ethnic distance and mental well-being, we did not find any direct effect of previous adversity on either ethnic distance or mental well-being when controlling for body perception, autonomic reactivity, and for gender and age.

While our findings suggest that cumulative adversity could potentially change a person's body awareness and autonomic reactivity, subsequently affecting their mental well-being and ethnic distance, it is important to note the modest nature of these effects. In line with existing studies (Jokić et al. 2023; Kolacz et al. 2020a), our findings suggest that body awareness and autonomic reactivity may act as mediators between previous adversity and mental well-being. This indicates the potential for physiological responses also to shape sociocultural perceptions and relationships, and it could suggest that while the physiological imprint of adversity is not a robust predictor of ethnic distance alone, it may still play a role in a broader mosaic of factors.

Given the small magnitude of the observed effects, especially those related to ethnic distance, any suggestions for interventions should be taken with caution. Our findings suggest that while interventions targeting body awareness and autonomic reactivity offer some potential to affect ethnic distance, such effects are likely to be subtle and need to be considered as one component within a comprehensive approach to reconciliation and peacebuilding (Kuhar et al. 2023). This aligns with suggestions by other researchers, such as Brett et al. (2024), who have, although not directly as we do in this paper, proposed that future research should be more focused on the body and embodied interventions. This could not only have profound implications for healing in societies struggling with the legacies of historical trauma, but it could also lead the actors involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives to readjust their

programmes to incorporate trauma-informed approaches in post-conflict societies. However, the application of our findings in post-conflict situations should be carefully weighed against the modesty of impact and the complex dynamics of historical trauma. Furthermore, it should be noted that our observations are based on regression models, hence predicting the outcomes and by no means implying a causal relationship between the observed phenomena. Nevertheless, we are merely discussing potential effects, which should, of course, be experimentally proven in further research attempts.

5.1 Limitations

Research into war traumatisation is a challenge because of the complex interplay of personal, historical and cultural factors that characterise the processing and memory of these experiences. This includes understanding how these experiences, which are influenced by the socio-political environment and community narratives, are internalised and transmitted across generations.

A key limitation to our current research is the challenge of distinguishing the specific effects of war traumatisation from the broader spectrum of cumulative adversity. It would be important to understand how war-related traumas are internalised and the impact they have on ethnic relations, especially as they can have different implications compared to other adversities. Therefore, future studies should aim to isolate the specific effects of war-related trauma from other adverse experiences to improve understanding of the unique contributions to autonomic dysregulation, mental well-being, and interethnic dynamics.

In addition, a specific measurement tool needs to be developed, tailored to assess war traumatisation in the general population decades after conflict, similar to that used with veterans (e.g., Keane et al. 1988). While there are currently established instruments for assessing PTSD in military veterans, there is a gap in instruments suitable for non-military populations who continue to experience the effects of war trauma long after the end of the conflict. The development of such tools would address this gap and enable a more accurate assessment of the long-term impact of war-related adversity on the affected populations.

Additionally, in future research, we must also focus on resilience – how people bounce back after traumatic events. Emphasising resilience would enrich understanding of the mechanisms that enable individuals to recover and succeed despite facing significant adversity in the past. Furthermore, future studies could include additional groups, such as Serbs, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of interethnic relationships in the region.

We also acknowledge the relatively small sample size that our conclusions are based on. Due to several resource limitations, we were unable to provide a larger sample size, which might have resulted in different outcomes should more comprehensive models have been tested. Our realized sample size only allowed

us to account for medium effect sizes of the tested mediation models with boot-strapping on a power level of 0.80 (Fritz & MacKinnon 2007). Nevertheless, we believe that our findings, albeit modestly featured, can still steer us in a promising direction for further research in the field.

6. Conclusion

Our study addressed the complex interplay between previous adversity, physiological responses, socio-psychological outcomes, mental well-being, and ethnic distance, in a post-conflict setting. The study shows that the effects of previous adversity on mental well-being and interethnic attitudes are multifaceted, with previous adversity being linked to autonomic reactivity and body awareness. The findings also show that body awareness and autonomic reactivity serve as mechanisms linking past traumatisation and both mental well-being and ethnic distance.

Our findings suggest potential pathways for developing interventions aimed at modulating physiological responses to indirectly reduce ethnic distance, particularly in post-conflict settings. While the observed effects were modest, and in some cases only marginally significant, they provide an initial indication that improving body awareness and autonomic reactivity could help to reduce ethnic tensions and improve mental well-being. Given the preliminary nature of these results, further research is needed to substantiate these findings and refine approaches for interventions. It is important to acknowledge that while our study may point in a promising direction for trauma-informed interventions, the actual impact in post-conflict situations should be evaluated with caution because of the small magnitude of the observed effects.

By tentatively exploring these relationships, our research paves the way for future studies to further investigate how physiological interventions can promote reconciliation and healing within communities. This approach could add a new dimension to peacebuilding programmes, especially in environments where autonomic dysregulation is widespread.

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Visualising War / Peace Photographs: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Asian News Sites' Coverage of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

This study analyses the visual coverage of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict on Asian news sites, utilising the frameworks of war and peace journalism. Conducting a content analysis of 397 images from seven leading Asian news sites, we contribute to the literature on visual coverage, particularly from online platforms. Our analysis identifies the predominant visual narratives employed by these news sites and offers insights into variations in coverage intensity, regional and ethnic focuses, portrayal of age groups, and depiction of harm. The study extends the understanding of framing theory by analysing visual frames, providing valuable implications for future visual studies and contributing to a deeper understanding of conflict portrayal in online news media.

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian conflict, media representation, Asian news sites, visual coverage, war journalism, peace journalism, conflict coverage.

Vizualizacija vojne in mirovne fotografije: primerjalna analiza pokritosti rusko-ukrajinskega konflikta v letu 2022 na izbranih azijskih novičarskih spletnih straneh

Študija analizira vizualno pokritost rusko-ukrajinskega konflikta v letu 2022 na azijskih novičarskih spletnih straneh v okviru vojnega in mirovnega novinarstva. Z vsebinsko analizo 397 slik s sedmih vodilnih azijskih novičarskih spletnih strani dopolnjuje literaturo o vizualni pokritosti, zlasti na spletnih platformah. Analiza opredeljuje vizualno naracijo, ki prevladuje na omenjenih spletnih straneh, ter ponuja vpogled v razlike v intenzivnosti pokrivanja, regionalnih in etničnih usmeritvah, prikazovanju starostnih skupin in prikazovanju škode. Študija širi razumevanje teorije uokvirjanja z analizo vizualnih okvirov, zagotavlja dragoceno podlago za prihodnje vizualne študije in prispeva k globljemu razumevanju prikazovanja konfliktov v spletnih novičarskih medijih.

Ključne besede: *rusko-ukrajinski konflikt, medijska reprezentacija, azijske novičarske spletne strani, vizualna pokritost, vojno novinarstvo, mirovno novinarstvo, pokrivanje konfliktov.*

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1. Background

The Russian-Ukrainian war that began in February 2022 was not the first in the history of conflict between the two countries (Papanikos 2022b; Quintanal et al. 2023; Tamilina 2022). It is a complex and ongoing geopolitical dispute rooted in historical, cultural, and political factors. The current conflict dates back to 2014, when Russia took control of the Crimean Peninsula after carrying out a number of Russian military operations in Ukrainian territory (Papanikos 2022a). Although Ukraine gained independence in 1991, Russia views Ukraine as part of its logistical and strategic sphere of influence (Götz & Staun 2022). As a result, conflicts arose between the two nations in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2022. These tensions stem from Ukraine's expressed interest in joining NATO, which is perceived as a threat to Russia's territorial integrity and regional security (Elayah & Al Majdhoub 2022; Mudrov 2022; Papanikos 2022b). Additionally, this conflict has led to humanitarian crises, displacing populations and causing economic hardships that impact millions in the area.

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched an air attack on Ukraine's military facilities and called it a special military operation. The Russian ground forces advanced into Ukraine from three different directions (East, South, and North). The military intervention led to fierce battles and intense fighting in various regions of Ukraine. Cities and towns were hit by heavy bombardment, causing significant casualties among civilians and soldiers and leading to a mass exodus of refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries. The conflict quickly drew international attention and condemnation, with calls for an immediate ceasefire and diplomatic resolution echoing from global leaders and international organisations. This has led many countries in Europe and globally to support Ukraine politically and socially. For example, sanctions against Russia were combined with increased arms supply to Ukraine. Ukraine's neighbouring countries provided full support to all Ukrainians (Mudrov 2022). Although it is unclear how the war will end, its global impact has been observed, and it has deepened the humanitarian crisis, causing widespread devastation and leaving a lasting impact on the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe.

In the past, traditional media held the forefront in news reporting, e.g., the Iraqi 2003 war, with satellite broadcasting services such as Al Jazeera TV, BBC TV and CNN TV standing out as prominent examples. However, the landscape has evolved with the rise of online news sites (including social media), which have become increasingly influential platforms in disseminating / breaking news. This shift is especially notable in wars and conflicts (Elareshi et al. 2023), e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (in Gaza) and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Western and non-Western online news sites have actively covered this conflict, showcasing diverse perspectives and approaches. While journalists may not directly resolve conflicts, their role in raising awareness and promoting peace is

crucial. As Neumann and Fahmy (2012, 170) indicate, journalists possess the power to deepen global understanding of regional conflicts, contributing to peace-building. Galtung's (1986) concept of war and peace journalism provides a framework for examining how conflicts are portrayed in the media. This is particularly relevant, as online news sites in Asia, such as China Daily, Dawn, The Times of India, Inquirer, The Japan Times, Khaleej Times, and Malaysiakini, offer unique perspectives shaped by their respective cultural frameworks and editorial policies (Hunter 2022). Understanding how these news sites report on war and conflict is essential for contemporary media research. However, there is dearth research on this matter, e.g., the perceptions of online news framing the war; their trends; and their strategies to support their news frame. Therefore, this article examines war and peace journalism to understand certain leading Asian news sites' perceptions of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war (from 24 February to 26 June 2022) and their news frames, focusing only on the visual frames (photography analysis frames) through a quantitative content analysis of photographs using MAXQDA software. Theoretically, photographs serve as visual documentation of events, capturing moments, actions, and emotions that may not be fully conveyed through text alone (see, e.g., Fahmy & Neumann 2012). This is also a crucial aspect for contemporary media research and the public for several reasons. These frames would have: (1) the ability to capture attention and engage audiences more effectively than text alone, (2) the capacity to evoke strong emotions and empathy in viewers, (3) the ability to go beyond language barriers and cross-cultural understanding, and (4) the capacity to provide critical analysis of media representations and narratives.

Going beyond previous research, our intention is to provide an opportunity for cross-national comparative analysis. Yet, we do not claim the universality of our findings or that they are applicable to other media systems. Instead, our data can be extrapolated to provide insightful analyses of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This article contributes to the existing literature by identifying aspects that shed light on how peace and war are perceived and framed by online news sites. The following section reviews the literature on the peace and war journalism, the visual media representation of the military and armed conflict, the Russia-Ukraine war, and online news and the dissemination of news photographs, followed by the research questions. This is followed by the methodology section, which presents the data collection, coding items, and coder reliability. Next, we disclose our findings concerning the frameworks of war and peace journalism with eight categories as shown in the coding section. Finally, we provide a discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Peace and War Journalism

The term peace and war journalism is used by existing research that deals with how news stories are framed by the media (Ha et al. 2020; Perez de Fransius 2014). It was developed as a response to traditional conflict-oriented reporting, which often emphasised the dramatic aspects of conflicts, such as violence and confrontation, and tended to perpetuate and escalate conflicts (Gouse et al. 2019). It also seeks to provide a more nuanced and constructive approach to reporting on conflicts. It is based on two key principles: war journalism and peace journalism (Hussain 2020; Perez de Fransius 2014). While the former focuses on emphasising the dramatic and violent aspects of conflicts (Fahmy & Neumann 2012), e.g., the immediate events and confrontations and the escalation of conflicts by sensationalising violence, it highlights divisions and differences between parties involved in the conflict and may overlook potential solutions or paths to peace. The latter aims to provide a more balanced and constructive view of conflicts, e.g., focusing on the underlying causes and potential solutions, highlighting the human cost, emphasising the suffering of civilians, promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution, and encouraging journalists to be critical of official narratives and to question the motives and actions of all parties involved in the conflict. Peace journalism also seeks to create a more informed public by presenting a broader perspective on conflicts (Ha et al. 2020), giving a voice to marginalised or underrepresented groups, and promoting understanding and empathy (Shin & Biocca 2018). It does not mean avoiding reporting on conflict, but rather reporting on conflicts in a way that helps reduce violence and contributes to peacebuilding efforts (Neumann & Fahmy 2012).

Overall, the model provides a framework for journalists and media to consider the ethical and social implications of their reporting on conflicts and to strive for a more responsible and peace-oriented approach to journalism (Gouse et al. 2019). It also recognises that the way conflicts are portrayed in the media can have a significant impact on public perception and the course of the conflict itself. For example, Perez de Fransius (2014) used the US media coverage of the Iraq war as a case study and tested Galtung's (1986) peace and security discourses model. The conflict was framed as the US versus Iraq, so it is likely that the US media used a war frame, and, in addition, they tended to dehumanise their coverage when describing Iraqis as insurgents and terrorists. Anti-war protestors and peace voices were not given much coverage. Also, they focused on American suffering and American parents' losses, while they did not pay much attention to the Iraqis' suffering.

In their study, Neumann and Fahmy (2012) linked the visual coverage of three Western news wires on the Sri Lankan civil war, using the war and peace journalism frameworks. They revealed that the Western newswires served different purposes, e.g., while AP and AFP focused on external events, highlighting a peace journalism

frame orientation, Reuters focused on internal events, preferring a war journalism frame. Furthermore, the findings indicated differences in visual representation of physical harm between the two parties. For example, Tamil people's photographs focused on their losses, while Sinhalese civilians' photographs showed their daily lives without damage. Tamils were also presented emotionally and negatively, through sadness, grieving and frustration, while Sinhalese were presented with optimism and expressing the feeling of hope and confidence.

2.2 Visual Media Representation of the Military and Armed Conflict

Visual media representation refers to how the conflict is portrayed, depicted, or conveyed through visual means using photography, video, art, and other visual media forms (Makhortykh & Sydorova 2017). This representation can greatly influence public perception and understanding of the conflict, as well as shape opinions and emotions related to it (Fahmy & Neumann 2012). It may include news photographs and videos, since news organisations often use photographs and videos to cover conflicts (Neumann & Fahmy 2012). These photographs can capture dramatic moments, such as protests, battles, or the aftermath of an event. Their aim is to inform the public about the situation. News organisations may also use documentary films that can provide an in-depth and often critical analysis of conflicts. They can explore the root causes, consequences, and human stories behind the conflict. For example, Ojala et al. (2017) analysed 402 photographs from four national daily newspapers (from the UK, Germany, Sweden and Finland) on the Ukraine conflict. The Ukrainians were the most frequently depicted in visual coverage of the conflict in all newspapers. They were positively represented compared to non-Ukrainian civilians. In addition, to show the human cost of the war, the visual analysis focused on photographs of material destruction. The Russian intervention and the Ukrainian victimhood frameworks were most often emphasised in media coverage to represent the negative Russian intervention in other affairs and tended to equate Russia with the former Soviet Union and describe it as an aggressor.

Al-Hadi (2022) analysed 281 posts on Arabic-language accounts on Instagram about the Russian-Ukrainian crisis (Russia Today Arabic, Alhurra News Channel, al-Arabiya Channel). The results indicated that for visual analysis, the news websites focused on photos accompanied with a comment, followed by videos. Personal photos were the most widely circulated, followed by news photos. Most of these posts included only one photo (90%), and the rest have two photos in the same post. The case-specific frame was the most used frame, followed by the conflict frame, then the economic one; however, the negotiation and the ethical frames were the least used.

Furthermore, addressing the military and armed conflict within the context of media representation, particularly within the journalistic landscapes of Aisa,

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is essential. The media representation of war, especially in digital journalism, requires understanding how the military and armed conflict are presented and portrayed in the media. The existing research emphasises heroic narratives, victimisation, protest, demonisation of enemies, etc. (Desa et al. 2022). For example, Schwalbe and Dougherty (2015) explored how major US news magazines visually presented the 2006 Lebanon war, analysing 186 photos published in three US news magazines. Human interest and military frames (e.g., heroic narratives) were found to have appeared most frequently. The protest frame was the least prominent in their coverage. The three magazines published almost twice as many photographs of Lebanese civilians as they did Israeli civilians, and this is because the greatest damage occurred on the Lebanese side. The images of Hezbollah fighters and the injured and dead received little attention from the visuals, and children and women were prominently featured in these photos.

Makhortykh and Sydorova (2017) examined visual framing of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian online users/communities. The findings indicated that there was a profound difference in the framing of the conflict between the two groups in Eastern Ukraine. The pro-Ukrainian users tended to present the conflict as a small military action against local rebels, while the pro-Russian users interpreted the conflict as an all-out war against Russian land and its people. The pro-Ukrainian users used the photographs to emphasise the patriotic view of the conflict. Thus, they focused on sharing photographs of military machines, combatants, and captured trophies; additionally, the pro-Ukrainian users did not focus on photographs that showed destruction or civilians. In contrast, pro-Russian users tended to select photographs to show the destruction and suffering of civilians to highlight the humanitarian crisis for which the Ukrainian government was responsible. Furthermore, Bhandari et al. (2023) studied how both Ukraine and Russia employed text-enhanced photographs on social media platforms during the 2022 conflict. The analysis included 4,723 text-embedded photographs. The findings indicated that both sides used text-embedded photographs extensively to spread hate speech, extremist ideologies, and propaganda. The analysis revealed that more than half (56.43%) were labelled as hate, while fewer (43.57%) of these photographs were labelled as containing no hate.

El-Khouly (2022) analysed 618 journalistic articles from four American, Russian, Egyptian, and Saudi Arabian newspapers using the war in a military frame, then in a political and humanitarian frame. More than half of the coverage (55%) focused on logical appeals and then emotional appeals. More than two-thirds (67%) included news photos of the event, and more than a quarter (28%) used personal photos in the news stories. Most of these photos were related to military strikes and attacks launched by the Russian army in Ukraine. Musa and Mansoori (2023) examined how the Arab Gulf press presented the Russia-Ukraine conflict through content analysis of four Arabic-language newspapers

from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Kuwait, using a systematic random sample of 328 news stories. They found that most of the Gulf newspapers focused on the political framework of the conflict, while only Al Qabas, the Kuwaiti newspaper, framed the conflict in a military perspective and framed Ukrainians as a victim and Russia as an aggressive state. Interestingly, it appeared that while Saudi and Kuwaiti newspapers were pro-Ukrainian in their coverage, Qatari and Emirati newspapers were more pro-Russian.

Moreover, Omoera and Nwaoboli (2023) analysed 428 news stories published in two African daily online newspapers covering the Russian-Ukrainian war (The Sahara Reporters and Premium Times). The effect frame was the most used (44%), followed by the economic frame (20%), and the diplomatic frame was the least present in the African media coverage (7%). Overall, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine was covered in a negative way. Abdul Latif (2023) analysed 5,180 news stories that had been published on three international websites, directed in Arabic. The results showed that the military conflict frame dominated news coverage, e.g., where the parties to the conflict and Russian military progress in Ukraine were monitored. This was followed by the political frame. The economic consequences frame came in third place, and the humanitarian frame came last, as the state of suffering of Ukrainian civilians and the state of asylum and flight to neighbouring countries in Europe, America and others were monitored. Regarding visual elements, videos were the most prominent materials accompanying the news (52%), followed by photographs (32%).

2.3 Online News and the Dissemination of News Photographs and Images

The role of online news platforms in disseminating news photographs/images has revolutionised the way stories are presented and consumed (Mortensen 2011). In the digital age, these platforms serve as the primary gateway for audiences to access breaking news and visual narratives. Through mobile devices, online news portals deliver news almost instantaneously, making them an integral part of storytelling (Carcamo Ulloa et al. 2015). This immediacy allows global audiences to witness events unfolding, offering a first-hand visual perspective that transcends geographical boundaries. With just one click, audiences can immerse themselves in the visual documentation of events/news and connect to the stories.

Online news platforms provide journalists with a broad platform to exhibit their work. Within these platforms, they, subject to their editorial policies, have the opportunity to share their visual narratives with a wide audience, thereby magnifying the influence of their storytelling (Neumann & Fahmy 2012). These online news sites have reinforced prevailing social relations. Furthermore, the instantaneous nature of online news facilitates the viral spread of powerful and

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impactful images. Compelling photographs/images shared through online news portals have the potential to become iconic representations of significant moments in history (Brennen & Brennen 2017). These images often transcend language barriers, evoking universal emotions and sparking discussions on social, political, and humanitarian issues. In other words, whether documenting a crisis, celebrating a triumph, or portraying the everyday lives of people around the world, news photographs disseminated via online platforms have the power to shape perceptions, mobilise action, and foster a collective global consciousness (Lough & Mortensen 2023).

3. Research Questions

Based on the above discussion on how selected Asian online news sites (China Daily (China), Dawn (Pakistan), The Times of India (India), Inquirer (the Philippines), The Japan Times (Japan), Khaleej Times (UAE), Malaysiakini (Malaysia)) cover the Russian-Ukrainian war and their perceptions, we aim to address the following key questions: How do the selected news sites differ in their use of visual (image) coverage of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict? Based on the war and peace journalism concept, what so these photographs/images emphasise?

4. Methods

4.1 Data Collection

This study analyses visual frames (photography) found in seven leading Asian news site outlets (named in Table 1) that covered the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022, using the content analysis method (Hansen et al. 1998) and following the conceptual framework of war and peace journalism (Fahmy & Neumann 2012; Galtung 1986; Neumann & Fahmy 2012). Data were collected from stories (news) published on the selected news sites between May and July 2022. These news sites were selected based on their number of website visits to provide news for their readers in the region (including Arabs). These news sites proved to be an appropriate subject for examining the Russia-Ukraine war. The data were collected mainly during a five-month period (24 February – 26 June 2022) (from the fourth day after news breaking about the conflict to the date of the G7 Summit in Germany). This timeframe was chosen for several reasons: (1) it captures a critical phase of the conflict (the initial days following a significant event often witness heightened public engagement), (2) starting from the fourth day, it would ensure that the data encompass initial reactions and media narratives as the situation unfolds, (3) its contextual relevance to significant international event (G7 Summit). In addition, within this period, most news agencies had reported on the topic and had fostered intense online discussions.

Table 1: The news sites' sample sizes

News site	Country	Founded	Visits	No. of photographs	%
japantimes.co.jp	Japan	1897	3.3M	116	29.2
khaleejtimes.com	UAE	1978	14.7M	107	27.0
indiatimes.com	India	1999	265.4M	70	17.6
malaysiakini.com	Malaysia	1999	16.9M	37	9.3
inquirer.net	Philippine	-	13.5M	24	6.0
dawn.com	Pakistan	-	13.3M	23	5.8
chinadaily.com.cn	China	1981	4.6M	20	5.0
Total				397	100.0

Source: Own data.

In selecting the visuals, we used the respective search engines provided by each news site; we used the English language and searched for keywords, such as Russia-Ukraine war, Russian-Ukrainian war, Russian-Ukraine conflict, Russian-Ukrainian conflict, while focusing on editorial news content only. The search results from all news sites combined let to the retrieval of more than 1,529 news photographs/images. For transparency, we removed images that were related to other subjects, e.g., business, travel, etc. We selected visuals that had been created/posted within the above-mentioned timeframe. We further filtered the selection with criteria that excluded cartoons, graphics, repeated images, and we randomly chose image No. 1 for each news story. For example, some news sites use one image to accompany a story (the news), while others use more than one image or a repeated image for the same news story. On this basis, the main photo (photo 1) was chosen for each news story where more than one image was used. Here we must note that while identifying and processing the photographs/ images, some were unreadable by the MAXQDA software, as some news sites used an unusual type of image file to share their photographs. We used a third image processing programme (Adobe Photoshop) to convert them to readable files by data analysis software, resulting in a total of 397 photographs/images that were ultimately analysed.

4.2 Coding Items

To code the data (photos) from the selected news sites, the study devised a coding system and list of categories that allowed us to track how these news sites visualised the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. We used a single photograph as a unit of analysis, following Fahmy and Neumann's approach (2012) with certain modifications reflecting our specific aims. The approach was ideal for journalism research, as it revealed the visual representation of war and conflict on the news sites. Following this approach, each image was coded according to the following

categories:

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- **News source:** refers to the source of the image from the news sites.
- **Regional (geographical) focus:** refers to the location in which the event took place. Subcategories include photographs visualised as occurring on Ukrainian territory (cities or geographic sphere), Russian territory (cities or geographic sphere), or elsewhere abroad (e.g., humanitarian conferences in countries of the world, or journalism conferences in the capitals of the world).
- **Ethnic focus:** refers to the focus of the action in the photo: the Russian minority in Ukraine (e.g., civilians and militants), Muslims (e.g., military, civilians) or other ethnic groups (e.g., volunteer foreign leaders).
- **Date:** tracks the development of the war during the entire time frame for a period of 5 months. This category was divided into five variables. Each represents a full month of news coverage, with the exception of February (21–28 February 2022) and June (1–26 June 2022).
- **Roles:** Based on the actions shown in the pictures, this category is divided into four different roles played by individuals: victim, warrior, negotiator, or protester (Neumann & Fahmy 2012).
  - Firstly, an example of victims would be refugees or displaced persons. This also includes photographs depicting subjects of destruction (e.g., aerial views of abandoned cities or ruined lands). Although these do not usually depict humans (performing certain 'roles'), we nonetheless considered them appropriate and worthy of analysis and categorise them as depictions of victimization.
  - Secondly, the warrior is defined as an individual who engages in violence and is therefore not likely to be seen as contributing to peace by a larger audience (e.g., volunteers on both sides, military leaders on both sides, pro-war protesters, or throwing stones at embassies).
  - Thirdly, negotiators are political and organisational leaders (potentially mediators) from countries other than Russia and Ukraine (e.g., UN Secretary-General, European, Arab, Chinese leaders, and any political figures). In cases where foreign leaders were in discussion with one of the parties to the conflict, we decided to identify them as negotiators because attempts at negotiation were present (e.g., a meeting between President Putin and French President Macron).
  - Finally, protesters were coded in situations where people protested peacefully against the war without harming bystanders or security forces (e.g., protesters in Europe, Asia). Based on these roles, we created two specific indices related to war journalism (victims and warriors) and peace journalism (protestors and negotiators). Note that each type consists of one frame aimed at the elite and one aimed at the people.
- **Age:** photographs were only considered for analysis when people appeared in them (thus excluding photographs that only showed destroyed infra-

structure or clouds of smoke, e.g., objective photographs). We specified the age group that dominated the event in the visual frame: children/teens or adults. For example, if a group of Ukrainian refugees were photographed including children, we coded the photograph as focusing primarily on children (regardless of quantity or proportion of minors and adults).

- **Physical harm:** evaluates the extent to which the person(s) shown in the photo had been exposed to any physical harm. This was divided into three subcategories: not severe, severe, and most severe. The photographs were tagged as not severe when there was no apparent physical harm (e.g., people demonstrating against war). Photographs were marked as severe in cases where people had been hurt or seriously injured (for example, people with cuts, bleeding, or those who had suffered the loss of a limb). Finally, the most severe cases showed the dead or dead bodies being transported in body bags (e.g., at funerals or among rubble).
- **Emotional harm:** assesses the degree to which the person(s) in the photo shows any emotion by focusing only on the instances where emotion is intentionally minimised. Angle (close-ups, in particular) again helped define the type of emotion, for example, negative and positive emotions. Examples of negative emotions are anger, frustration, despair, sadness, etc.

4.3. Coder Reliability

In measuring reliability, two coders, one author and an academic researcher, were asked to check intercoder reliability, using a randomly selected sample size (N = 50) of the pictures and using Krippendorff's alpha (2019) for measurement. For all items, the rate of agreement ranged between $\alpha = 1.0$ and 0.78 with an average reliability of 0.898 between variables, achieving acceptable reliability scores consistent with early studies (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability alpha analysis results

Item	Alpha
News source	1.0
Regional focus	1.0
Ethnic focus	0.86
Date	1.0
Roles	0.85
Age	0.80
Physical harm	0.89
Emotional harm	0.78

Source: Own data.

5. Findings

5.1 The Frameworks of War and Peace Journalism

To begin with, the following images are examples representing the framework of war journalism and peace journalism (Figure 1). In selecting these images, we aimed to showcase contrasting narratives commonly associated with these journalistic frames. These specific images were chosen based on their alignment with the thematic elements, as mentioned in our broader analysis. In Photo 1, Ukrainian service members fire a howitzer M119 at a front line near the city of Bakhmut, Ukraine – the photograph portrays military action, conflict escalation, and armed forces engaged in combat.

Figure 1: War journalism vs. peace journalism framework

Photo 1 – An example of a war journalism frame.

Source: japantimes.co.jp, dated: 14-03-2022. Note: In this image, Ukrainian service members fire a howitzer M119 at a front line near the city of Bakhmut, Ukraine on Friday. © REUTERS.

Photo 2 – An example of a peace journalism frame.

Source: parties.chinadaily.com.cn 03-03-2022. Note: Photo shows a view of the talks between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations held in the Gomel region in Belarus on 28 Feb 2022. © Photo/ Xinhua.

Photo 2 is an example of peace journalism. In this picture, the Russian delegation and the Ukrainian delegation meet in the city of Minsk in the Republic of Belarus to negotiate an end to the conflict/war between the two. Furthermore, an analysis of the photographs published by the selected news sites revealed how they used photographs to visualise, present, and frame the war/conflict.

Table 3: Frequency of images of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Asian news sites

Category	China	Dawn	India	Inquirer	Japan	Khaleej	Malay	Total	%
Time frame									
February	3	4	34	0	10	19	5	75	18.9
March	11	9	29	6	29	32	16	132	33.2
April	3	5	7	3	28	23	6	75	18.9
May	1	3	0	4	27	18	3	56	14.1
June	2	2	0	11	22	15	7	59	14.9
Regional focus									
Ukrainian territory	12	20	64	23	102	94	34	349	87.9
Russian territory	2	0	0	0	1	2	1	6	1.5
Elsewhere	4	2	2	0	7	10	1	26	6.5
Ethnic focus									
Ukrainian civilians	6	4	29	0	30	36	12	117	46.1
Ukrainian military	1	3	16	9	30	25	9	93	42.1
Russian military	1	0	4	0	11	6	8	30	21.4
Foreign students	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	4	13.8
Russian minorities in Ukraine	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	4	57.1
Russian-Ukrainian delegation	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0.8
Foreign volunteers for Ukraine	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.5
Russian civilians	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2.3
Turkish delegation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.9
Foreign volunteers for Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Roles									
Victims	13	17	41	12	58	62	18	221	55.7
Warriors	4	5	22	11	46	34	18	140	35.2
Protestors	1	0	7	1	12	8	0	29	7.3
Negotiators	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	7	1.8
Age									
Adults	4	1	17	0	11	26	9	68	17.13
Children/Teens	2	2	10	0	12	14	3	43	10.8
Physical harm									
Not severe/no physical damage	6	3	25	0	21	36	5	96	86.5
Severe	0	0	2	0	5	3	3	13	11.7
Most severe	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1.8
Emotional harm									
Negative	5	2	26	0	20	39	11	103	86.6
Positive	2	1	0	0	5	6	2	16	13.4

Source: Own data.

5.2 Time Frame

The results showed (Table 3) that the two news sites (The Japan Times and Khaleej Times) were the news sites most interested in covering the conflict during the analysed period, and the ones most closely tracking the development of the conflict (29.22% and 26.95%, respectively). The rate was followed by The Times of India (17.6%), while the coverage rate was proportional to the rest. In February, The Times of India and Khaleej Times dominated the war coverage (49%) compared to the other news sites. In fact, the Inquirer did not contain news of the conflict. March (33.2%) saw the highest coverage rate compared to other months.

The Times of India and Khaleej Times did so in February, and Khaleej Times, The Japan Times, and The Times of India dominated the coverage in March, while The Japan Times and Khaleej Times dominated in April. The China Daily, Malaysiakini and Dawn sites were dominant in covering the war, while the others were less interested in such coverage. This could be explained by the fact that this war was a surprise, and its results were unknown at the beginning.

Furthermore, the coverage rate decreased in subsequent periods (April to May) for almost all news sites, except The Japan Times and Dawn (in April), and The Japan Times and Inquirer (in May) compared to other news sites. What was striking was that The Times of India did not publish a single picture to do with the war in May and June. This decrease in visual coverage could have been caused by the news about the end of the student and foreign student crisis in Ukraine.

5.3 Regional Focus

Most of the photos analysed appeared to focus on Ukrainian territory (87%, n = 349), which shows a focus on the development of the war at the place of its occurrence. This increased the percentage of the war frame shown in visual coverage. The other news sites did not care about other places, for example, Russian territory (1.5%, n = 6) as a geographical framework, except China Daily, which devoted 10% of its visual coverage. It also showed a different geographical war framework, for example, elsewhere (6.5%, n = 26) most of them showed pictures of the negotiation sessions between the Russian and Ukrainian sides in Minsk city (Belarus) (Figure 1, Photo 2). The same goes for Khaleej Times, which allocated a few pictures as a framework for peace. It used photographs of Russian-Ukrainian negotiation sessions, as well as a few pictures of demonstrations against the war. China Daily also seemed to be slightly interested in showing Russian territory within the framework of peace, as it included pictures of Russian military and civilians helping Ukrainian refugees.

5.4 Ethnic Focus

The analysis indicated that this category mainly included Ukrainian military personnel and Ukrainian civilians. This confirms the interest of the analysed news sites in focusing on war events in the place where it occurred. The Japan Times, Khaleej Times, and The Times of India were among those who showed these two elements. In contrast, the Russian military was shown subtly by The Japan Times. There was no clear interest in showing other categories, such as foreign volunteers for Ukraine and foreign volunteers for Russia, despite the interest of international news sites and media in general in the participation of foreign volunteers.

5.5 Roles According to Press Coverage

It seems (Table 3) that the selected news sites curated an imbalanced visual coverage of the war frame (in total 90.9%) compared to peace frame (9.1%). For example, the role of warrior (55.7%, n = 221) and victim (35.2%, 140) were the dominant roles in the analysed images. Khaleej Times (n = 66), The Japan Times (n = 58), and The Times of India (n = 41) focused on victimised people, which represented the war frame. However, The Japan Times (n = 12) and Khaleej Times (n = 8) covered more protestors, which emphasised the peace frame. Khaleej Times (n = 3) also allocated some images to negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, whether these were held, within multiple rounds, in the city of Minsk (Belarus) or the Turkish city of Istanbul. Let us note that The Times of India, Inquirer, and The Japan Times, did not publish any images of the negotiations. This could deepen the war frame that emerged through their visual coverage.

5.6 The Age Category

Adults (61.3%) appeared most frequently in visual coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This category was more prominent in Khaleej Times' and The Times of India' visual coverage (n = 26 and n = 17, respectively). Meanwhile, Khaleej Times (n = 14) and The Japan Times (n = 11) had the most visual coverage of children/teens. Interestingly, the Inquirer did not use any pictures of adults or children.

5.7 Physical Harm

The results showed that most of the visual coverage focused on this category was not severe and did not involve physical harm (24.2%). Khaleej Times (n = 36), The Times of India (n = 25), and The Japan Times (n = 21) used this category the most. Malaysiakini and Khaleej Times made more use of serious physical harm, which included pictures of dead people and bodies, compared to others.

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5.8 Emotional Harm

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In this category, we attempted to assess the extent to which the person(s) in the image showed any emotion (positive vs. negative), especially in those rare cases where emotion was clearly emphasised. For example, we looked at the image to determine the type of emotion (negative emotions could include anger, desperation, frustration, fear, etc., while positive emotions could include hope, happiness, confidence etc.). The analysis indicated that negative emotions (86.6%, n = 103) were dominant in almost all news sites except the Inquirer. In comparison to the other news sites, Khaleej Times (n = 39), The Times of India (n = 26), and The Japan Times (n = 20) were the ones that provided the most coverage of negative emotions surrounding the conflict.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study analyses the visual coverage of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict, focusing on Asian news sites (China Daily (China), Dawn (Pakistan), The Times of India (India), Inquirer (Philippines), The Japan Times (Japan), Khaleej Time (UAE), Malaysiakini (Malaysia)) and relying on the war and peace journalism frameworks (Fahmy and Neumann, 2012; Gouse et al., 2019; Neumann and Fahmy, 2012). We conducted a content analysis of images (n = 397) from seven leading Asian news sites. It offered a vital contribution to the literature on the visual coverage of topics, which so far has been little researched, especially on online news sites. Our main contribution lies in the analysis of images in terms of war and peace journalism frames, using the unique MAXQDA software. From a theoretical perspective, we expanded the understanding of framing theory by analysing visual frames. In this sense, we identified the visual narratives employed by these Asian news sites in covering a specific period in a conflict. We hope our findings will be adaptable for future visual studies.

In response to **RQ1**, which explored the variation in visual coverage over five months to understand whether the conflict was primarily characterised by war or peace journalism frames, the analysis indicated a difference in the degree of interest in war, whether in the amount of news published or even in the level of regularity of publishing news related to the event (as detailed in Table 3). In terms of time frame, the analysis revealed that the coverage of the war was most intense in March, with interest gradually declining in the subsequent months. This was likely due to the uncertainty and high-level developments that occurred in the early days of the war. The coverage decreased as the situation stabilised and became less volatile. This pattern is common in media coverage of conflicts, with initial intense interest followed by a decline as the situation unfolds.

For the regional focus of the war, most of the photographs focused on Ukrainian territories, indicating a strong emphasis on the geographical context of the conflict **(RQ2)**. This aligns with the idea that the media often concentrate on

the location of the conflict itself (Gunter & Harrison 1998). Interestingly, some news sites included photographs of negotiation sessions in a different geographic context (Ryan 1973), suggesting a focus on peace efforts (Neumann & Fahmy 2012).

The ethnic focus of the analysed data revealed that Ukrainian civilians and military personnel were prominently featured in the photographs, highlighting the focus on those directly impacted by the war (Al-Rawi 2019). Russian military personnel received less attention, reflecting a tendency to highlight the plight of Ukrainians. This may be due to international sentiment favouring Ukraine in this conflict. The roles according to this coverage indicated a prevalence of the warrior and victim roles, which aligns with the war journalism framework (Oots & Wiegele 1986). This is consistent with the way conflicts are often depicted; with an emphasis on the military and the suffering of civilians (Papanikos 2022b; Quintanal et al. 2023; Tamilina 2022). The negotiator and protester roles, associated with peace journalism, received less coverage, reflecting a greater focus on the conflict itself than on peace. This could be linked to news sites tending to prioritise the sensational or dramatic aspects of a story (Arbaoui et al. 2020), or it could be that negotiation processes often occur behind closed doors with limited media access and visibility (Kew & John 2008).

In terms of age, most of the visual coverage emphasised adults, possibly due to the prevalence of adult civilians and military personnel in conflict zones. Children/teens were less highlighted compared to adults, suggesting variations in the portrayal of different age groups on news sites. Visual coverage focused on the category of adults as part of its interest in the suffering of civilians and the category of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel (Fahmy & Kim 2008). This could be because adults may be more actively involved in various aspects of conflict. The availability of images featuring adults vs. children may also play a role in shaping visual coverage. For example, it may be easier for journalists to access and capture images of adults and military personnel in conflict settings (Makhortykh & Sydorova 2017).

The parameter of physical harm indicated that most photographs depicted physical harm that was not severe, which often included scenes of civilians affected by the conflict (Dawkins 2006). Photographs of more severe physical harm, such as casualties and deaths, were less common. This aligns with the typical focus of the media on human suffering associated with conflicts, which can evoke strong emotional responses. Negative emotions were depicted more frequently, highlighting the distress and anguish associated with the conflict. This is in line with how media coverage often highlights the emotional toll of war on civilians and soldiers (Neumann & Fahmy 2012).

The analysis also revealed that The Japan Times, Khaleej Times, and The Times of India tended to curate their visual coverage within the framework of war journalism, while China Daily, Inquirer, and Malaysiakini tended to veer their visual coverage towards the peace journalism framework.

The comprehensive analysis of the visual representation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on leading Asian news sites contributes significantly to understanding conflict portrayal through the lenses of war and peace journalism. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations to the analysis. First, the research focused mainly on the content analysis of seven Asian news sites during a specific period in the conflict. Although this approach provides valuable information on the perspectives of war and peace journalism, it does not consider potential shifts in news priorities or editorial decisions that might affect coverage intensity or frame choices over time. Second, the study highlights the predominance of war journalism frames across the examined news sites, focusing on aspects such as geographical emphasis, ethnic portrayal, and role characterisation. However, the analysis does not thoroughly investigate the nuanced cultural or political factors that could influence editorial decisions in diverse Asian regions, which could impact frame choices. Third, the study's emphasis on age groups and harm depiction offers insight into how conflict is visually represented. However, it lacks a thorough exploration of the ethical implications of portraying harm in media and the potential impact on audience perceptions and their emotional responses. Finally, while identifying the prevalence of war journalism, the study's assessment of elements of peace journalism is limited. A more comprehensive analysis could reveal the reasons behind the prominence or lack of elements of peace journalism and their potential influence on the reader's perspective. The scope and analysis approach of the study could benefit from a deeper exploration of nuanced regional influences, ethical considerations in conflict portrayal, and a more comprehensive evaluation of the elements of peace journalism.

In conclusion, this study presented a quantitative contribution to visual communication research into coverage of conflicts, particularly in the context of war and peace journalism. Using the unique MAXQD software, it measured how certain leading news sites in Asia (China Daily (China), Dawn (Pakistan), The Times of India (India), Inquirer (Philippines), The Japan Times (Japan), Khaleej Times (UAE), and Malaysiakini (Malaysia)) visualise and represent the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict, with a focus on the geographical location of the conflict, the ethnic groups affected, and the roles of warriors and victims. One of key gaps in existing research is the limited discussion on visual coverage from online news sites, especially based in Asia. As such, our study fills this gap using visual narratives employed by these news sites.

Furthermore, using the MAXQDA software for content analysis allowed us to examine 397 images in detail, providing insight into the perspective on the portrayal of the conflict by Asian news sites. It also shed light on several aspects of visual coverage, including variations in coverage intensity over time and regional and ethic focuses. For example, we noted a decline in coverage intensity as the conflict progressed. Thirdly, our study identified variations in the portrayal of different age groups, with adults prominently featured compared to children, suggesting potential biases among the analysed news sites. Further-

more, the coverage emphasised the negative emotional and physical aspects of the conflict. Although some news sites included elements of peace journalism, it was less prominent. These findings reflect common patterns in media coverage of conflicts and the diverse approaches used by different news outlets to portray such events.

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This study offers several implications from its findings. Theoretically, our work extends the understanding of framing used by online news sites using images only to identify visual narratives employed by Asian news sites in covering a specific period of conflict. This provides new insights into the framing of conflicts by these news sites and contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of online news sites in shaping the public perception of conflicts.

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Improving Human Capital to Support Ethnic Minority Families: The Case of Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

This study analyses the current situation and solutions for supporting minority ethnic households in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, in improving their sustainable poverty alleviation capacity, by interviewing 3,400 representatives from poor and poverty-alleviated households of six ethnic minorities (Thai, Tho, Muong, Hmong, Dao, and Khmu) in Thanh Hoa province. The statistical results describe the number of laborers in the households, the educational level of the head of the household, health capacity, skills, labor production experience of the households, capital mobilization capabilities for business, and proposed solutions for enhancing human capital to leverage sustainable poverty. Minority ethnic households need to participate in training and vocational programs to improve their educational level, knowledge, understanding, and skills to enhance their sustainable poverty alleviation capacity.

Keywords: human capital, poverty alleviation capacity, minority ethnic households, Thanh Hoa.

Izboljšanje človeškega kapitala v podporo družinam pripadnikov etničnih manjšin: primer Thanh Hoa v Vietnamu

Prispevek proučuje trenutne razmere in rešitve v podporo gospodinjstvom pripadnikov etničnih manjšin v vietnamski provinci Thanh Hoa za izboljšanje njihove sposobnosti za trajnostno zmanjševanje revščine. Statistični rezultati, pridobljeni na podlagi intervjujev s 3400 predstavniki revnejših gospodinjstev pripadnikov šestih etničnih manjšin (Thai, Tho, Muong, Hmong, Dao in Khmu), vključuje število delovno aktivnih v gospodinjstvu, stopnjo izobrazbe glave družine, zdravstveno stanje, veščine, delovne izkušnje gospodinjstev, sposobnost mobilizacije kapitala za poslovanje ter predlagane rešitve za povečanje človeškega kapitala s ciljem trajnostnega zmanjševanja revščine. Da bi izboljšala svojo izobrazbeno raven, znanje in spretnosti in tako povečala svojo sposobnost za trajnostno zmanjševanje revščine morajo manjšinska gospodinjstva sodelovati v programih usposabljanja in poklicnega izobraževanja.

Ključne besede: *človeški kapital, sposobnost zmanjševanja revščine, manjšinska gospodinjstva, Thanh Hoa.*

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1. Introduction

Research on development policies for mountainous areas in Vietnam by authors Jamieson et al. (1998), and Paudel et al. (2017) indicates that the underlying cause of their situation stems from a lack of comprehensive understanding of fundamental principles for building sustainable livelihoods. Firstly, it involves the imposition of mechanical perspectives by the Kinh people, along with lowland livelihood models, onto the mountainous regions, without consulting the opinions of indigenous communities. Secondly, it involves a disregard for internal resources, particularly the significance of local knowledge in planning livelihood development policies, which, in reality, is a crucial resource. Poverty can be caused by a lack of access to education, health care, and basic needs (Fuchang et al. 2016; Wang et al. 2004).

In 2005, Joseph Iloabanafor Orji conducted a study evaluating the impact of poverty reduction programs as a development strategy in Niger. The study concluded that for any meaningful poverty reduction program to be successful, it must be implemented well, with the government collaborating with rural residents to facilitate the program's implementation and achieve higher success rates. This, in turn, fosters economic self-reliance, economic growth, and development.

The Asian Development Bank (2009) synthesis report on the Integrated Rural Development Project for ethnic minority areas in the Central region, including Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, presents several key solutions aimed at improving livelihoods and promoting sustainable livelihoods for ethnic minorities. These solutions focus primarily on improving infrastructure systems (physical capital) such as roads, irrigation systems, water supply, sanitation, and markets. A study by authors Michael Cuddy, Liu Hongmei, and Paulos Gutema (2008) examined factors influencing the poverty level of rural households in southern China. The study specifically focused on household income in rural areas and the factors that impact income levels.

The evaluation of human resources among ethnic minority communities is based on three criteria: physical, intellectual, and psychological well-being (Tran Thi Hanh et al. 2010; Tran Thi Minh Chau et al. 2015). The physical well-being of human resources in the ethnic and mountainous regions is assessed based on indicators such as malnutrition rates, child mortality rates, health conditions, and average life expectancy. Results showed that people in these regions often lack mobility and adaptability to the working environment, as well as professional work attitudes and discipline. Several proposals for developing human resources in the ethnic and mountainous regions include focusing on poverty reduction policies, providing social services (healthcare, education, and environmental services), and implementing policies specifically tailored to these regions (Addae-Korankye 2014).

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ActionAid International in Vietnam (AAV) and Oxfam (2013) identified the causes of chronic poverty among ethnic minority communities. These causes include difficulties in accessing education, credit, and land, as well as challenges in finding markets and prevailing stereotypes and prejudices held by the majority Kinh population towards ethnic minorities. Also highlighted is that poverty in these mountainous districts stems from limited access to healthcare, education, and social assistance services, weak infrastructure conditions, low-income levels, and passive and underdeveloped production activities (Alkire & Santos 2014).

Most studies, both domestic and international, evaluate and analyze poverty reduction policies in multiple countries, specifically targeting ethnic minority communities in mountainous regions. However, in developing countries like Vietnam, top-down approaches and direct support often result in passive reliance by the poor on government assistance. As a result, despite the existence of various poverty reduction policies, these have either failed to be fully implemented or presented challenges to implement in practice.

Surveys on poverty and its causes at both national and local levels have mainly applied a general model and have not specifically identified the main and unique causes about each ethnic minority group in different areas of settlement. This is the gap that needs to be addressed and the limitation to be overcome in the current poverty reduction efforts for ethnic minority areas. In Thanh Hoa province, there are 6 main ethnic minorities, including Thai, Tho, Muong, Hmong, Dao, and Kho Mu (accounting for 17% of the province's population); the remaining ethnic groups account for a very small percentage. This research contributes to promoting socio-economic development and moving towards the common development of all ethnic minorities in the province (Alkire & Fang 2019).

Map: *Thanh Hoa in Vietnam*
Source: Wikipedia

2. Analysis Framework

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This study of the poverty escape capacity of households is based on the sustainable livelihoods framework, which identifies several categories of capabilities.[1] According to this framework, the poverty escape capacity of ethnic minority households includes the following capital assets: human capital, natural resource capital, financial capital, physical capital, and social capital.

According to Chambers and Conway (1991) and DFID (1999), livelihood is a diverse set of capabilities, assets, and activities individuals possess and utilize to meet their life needs, including personal, family, community, and societal needs.

Chambers and Conway (1991) proposed the concept of sustainable livelihoods as follows:

> A livelihood is considered sustainable if it has the adaptive capacity and resilience to withstand shocks during difficult times while maintaining and enhancing resources, assets, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods for future generations. A sustainable livelihood will have the capacity to support other livelihoods at the local, national, and global levels, both in the short term and the long term.

Based on the definition provided by Chambers and Conway, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) proposed a widely used definition in global research on sustainable livelihoods: "A livelihood is considered sustainable if it has the adaptive capacity and resilience to withstand shocks and difficult times while maintaining and enhancing capabilities and assets in the present and future without depleting the natural resource base" (DFID, 2000).

Therefore, sustainable poverty escape capabilities, according to the livelihoods approach, include the following: the adaptive capacity to cope with difficulties, risks, and hazards caused by both nature and human activities; the ability to sustain and strengthen the resources utilized by households; the ability to generate positive socioeconomic impact within the social environment, ranging from the immediate social environment to broader social contexts, with a holistic nature; and the capacity to exploit, conserve, and harness natural resources.

Human resources play a central role in the livelihood analysis framework, as these are the determining factors in the utilization of other livelihood resources and the implementation of livelihood activities. The quantity and quality of human resources will determine the livelihood outcomes obtained by households. Within the scope of this study, human capital is limited to dimensions such as the number of laborers in the household, specialized skills possessed by individuals within the household, such as educational attainment, occupational skills, business acumen, access to and utilization of new production technologies, and economic management capabilities within the household.

3. Research Methodology

This research and data analysis involves the provincial project Research on factors affecting the ability of ethnic minority households to escape poverty sustainably in Thanh Hoa province, 2020–2022. Sampling method: Listing all poor households of ethnic minorities (Thai, Tho, Muong, Hmong, Dao, Kho Mu) in the selected sample units. Sampling at intervals of 5 yields one sample, taking enough samples at once. Quantitative interviews with 3,400 household representatives from the 6 main ethnic minority groups: Thai ethnic group: 1,200 respondents; Muong ethnic group: 1,200 respondents; Hmong ethnic group: 400 respondents; Tho ethnic group: 200 respondents; Dao ethnic group: 200 respondents; Khmu ethnic group: 200 respondents (survey subjects: poor households and households escaping poverty).

The survey content focused on human capital including the labor force and its characteristics; educational attainment of household heads; health capacity; skills and experience in the production labor of households; capacity to mobilize borrowed capital for business; market search capacity, and product consumption ability.

A Likert scale questionnaire was used to construct the survey questions. The Likert scale values ranged from 1 to 5, as follows:

Table 1: Likert scale values with 5 levels

Scale values	Meaning of scale			Average assessment level	Meaning of assessment level
1	Not good	1.00 – 1.80	Poor	1.00 – 1.80	Poor
2	Partially good	1.81 – 2.60	Weak	1.81 – 2.60	Weak
3	Partially not good	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
4	Good	3.41 – 4.20	Good	3.41 – 4.20	Good
5	Very good	4.21 – 5.00	Excellent	4.21 – 5.00	Excellent

Source: Author group (2020).

Quantitative information was synthesized, encoded, entered, and analyzed using the specialized statistical software SPSS 22.0. The statistical analyses used in the research report include frequency analysis, correlation analysis between variables, and overall mean testing, etc.

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Table 2: The structure of the survey (%)

Characteristic	Sample size	%
1. Gender of household head		
Male	3,158	92.6
Female	242	7.4
Total	**3,400**	**100**
2. Poor households/those escaping poverty		
Poor households[2]	1,790	52.6
Households escaping poverty[3]	1,610	47.4
Total	**3,400**	**100.0**
3. Age group of household head		
From 20–30 years old	780	22.9
From 31–40 years old	950	27.9
From 41–50 years old	720	21.1
From 51–60 years old	600	17.6
Over age 60	350	10.2
Total	**3,400**	**100.0**
4. Ethnicity		
Muong	1,200	34.2
Thai	1,200	34.2
Hmong	400	11.4
Tho	200	5.7
Dao	200	5.7
Khmu	200	5.7
Total	**3,400**	**100.0**
5. Education level		
No school attendance	700	20.5
Graduated from elementary school	1,420	41.7
Graduated from secondary school	1,050	30.8
High school graduation	315	9.2
Graduated from high school, college, university or higher	35	1.0
Total	**3,400**	**100.0**
6. Occupation		
Farming	2,763	81.2
Planting forests	273	8.0
Crafts, animal husbandry	71	2.0
Trade	48	1.4
Service	88	2.5
Workers and Employees	2	0.05

Hired workers	102	3.0
Combination of work activities	53	1.5
Total	**3,400**	**100.0**

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

Table 2 shows some characteristics of the survey sample expressed by gender, age, household characteristics, occupation, education level, and ethnicity. Among 3,400 households, there are 6 ethnic groups including Muong (34.2%), Thai (34.2%), Hmong (11.4%), Dao (5.7%), Tho (5.7%), and Khmu (5.7%). Information on the gender of the household head shows that most of these households are headed by men (accounting for 92.6%), and most of these heads only attended primary school (accounting for 41.7%). Information on educational attainment also shows that poor households still do not go to school, accounting for 20.5%. The main occupation is farming (81.2%); other occupation types account for a small proportion.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Status of the Human Capital of Ethnic Minority Households in Thanh Hoa

4.1.1 Labour Force, Characteristics of the Workforce

Table 3: Percentage of the labor force in poor households by ethnicity (%)

Number of labourers in the household	Ethnic group											
	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
0	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	0.7	-	4.8	-	-	-
1	10.5	1.4	5.5	1.3	-	6.5	13.6	3.1	14.3	10.8	-	-
2	73.7	62.2	84.9	56.4	86.	67.7	60.9	43.8	57.1	75.7	90.0	57.1
3	7.9	24.3	6.8	17.9	6.8	3.2	5.5	31.3	7.1	10.8	-	28.6
4	3.9	10.8	1.4	16.7	4.5	16.1	9.1	18.8	11.9	2.7	10.0	14.3
5	2.6	-	1.4	5.1	-	3.2	10.1	3.1	4.8	-	-	-
6	-	2.2	-	2.6	2.3	3.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

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According to Table 3, the proportion of households with 2 laborers is highest across all 6 ethnic groups (Khmu: 90%; Hmong: 86.4%; Thai: 84.9%; Muong: 73.7%; Dao: 60.9%; Tho: 57.1%). The next group is households with 3 to 4 laborers (Muong: 11.8%; Thai: 8.2%; Hmong: 11.3%; Dao: 14.6%; Tho: 19%; Khmu: 10%). Furthermore, from Table 3, it can be seen that the number of laborers in poverty-escaping households from all 6 ethnic groups (Muong, Thai, Hmong, Dao, Tho, Khmu) falls into three main categories (2 laborers, 3 laborers, and 4 laborers). This is the primary and decisive capacity that helps these households that have escaped poverty achieve a sustainable liberation from poverty. Table 3 shows a clear difference between the poor household and the poverty-escaping household in the category indicating households without laborers.

However, it is notable that the proportion of households without laborers and with only one laborer is not insignificant among four of these ethnic groups (Muong: 11.8%; Thai: 5.5%; Dao: 14.3%; Tho: 19.1%). For households without laborers, escaping poverty becomes impossible, while a household with only one laborer also faces challenges due to its limited workforce for productive activities. Since labor is a crucial factor that decisively affects the poverty-escaping capacity of households, those households with more laborers who are in good health for work have a greater chance of achieving poverty escape and sustainable poverty alleviation. Additionally, one characteristic of agricultural labor is to be labor-intensive, and having laborers in the household will contribute to better participation in the production process. Moreover, if there are multiple workers, some workers can migrate for work and generate a stable income, with fewer risks compared to agricultural work at home. On the other hand, the labor force of ethnic minority households commonly exhibits a high rate of early school dropout, and a lack of vocational training, resulting in limited specialized skills and the inability to meet the demands of using modern machinery.

Table 4 shows that the number of household members enrolled in school from grade 1 and above is high in all six ethnic groups (Muong, Thai, Hmong, Dao, Tho, Khmu), and it is also high in both poor and poverty-escaping households. Various preferential policies and educational support from government authorities for ethnic minority communities have produced favorable conditions for students from impoverished ethnic minority areas to attend school, with nearly 100 % of children being able to go to school.

It is important to note significant differences between the poor and poverty-escaping households in terms of the indicator of students not attending school from grade 1 and above (Muong: poor households 17.1%, poverty-escaping households 51.4%; Thai: poor households 19.2%, poverty-escaping households 56.4%; Hmong: poor households 25.0%, poverty-escaping households 31.9%; Dao: poor households 36.0%, poverty-escaping households 50.0%; Tho: poor households 33.3%, poverty-escaping households 42.4%; Khmu: poor households 20.0%, poverty-escaping households 57.1%).

Table 4: Number of household members enrolled in school from grade 1 and above by ethnicity (%)

Number of members who are studying from grade 1 and above	Ethnic group											
	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
0	17.1	51.4	19.2	56.4	25.0	31.9	36.4	50.0	33.3	42.4	20.0	57.1
1	27.6	20.3	35.6	11.5	9.1	32.3	18.2	28.1	31.0	21.6	20.0	-
2	46.1	24.3	41.1	29.5	38.6	29.0	27.3	21.9	31.0	30.5	60.0	42.9
3	9.2	4.1	4.1	2.6	25.0	6.9	9.1	-	4.8	2.7	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	-	-	-	2.7	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

This difference can partly explain the reasons for poverty since those households with young children of school age require a portion of the family's income to be allocated for education. Additionally, a higher number of members of school age corresponds to a decrease in the labor force within the household. This is one of the strong pieces of evidence to explain the causes of persistent poverty and the recurrence of poverty within ethnic minority households.

4.1.2 Educational Attainment of Household Heads

Table 5: Educational attainment of household heads (%)

Educational attainment of household heads	Ethnic group											
	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
No formal education	21.1	19.6	15.1	17.9	45.5	35.2	18.2	6.3	4.8	10.1	50.0	28.6
Elementary school graduation	50.0	31.7	35.6	30.8	28.7	45.0	36.4	53.1	47.6	43.2	38.0	68.4
Secondary school graduation	19.7	28.1	46.6	34.6	12.2	6.8	13.6	15.6	40.5	37.8	12.0	11.0
High school graduation	9.2	20.4	2.7	14.1	13.6	12.8	31.8	25.0	7.1	8.7	0	3.0
Vocational school, College, University, or higher graduation	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	0.2	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

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The educational attainment of poor households among ethnic minority groups remains limited, with high rates of non-attendance and elementary school graduation (Muong: 71.1%; Thai: 50.7%; Hmong: 44.2%; Dao: 54.6%; Tho: 52.4%; and Khmu: 88.0%). Next is the group of household heads with maximum educational attainment being secondary school graduation (Muong: 19.6%; Thai: 46.6%; Hmong: 12.2%; Dao: 13.6%; Tho: 40.5%; Khmu: 12.0%), and the group with high school graduation has a modest representation, with the Khmu ethnic group reports no labour force members who graduated from high school or higher educational institutions.

The educational attainment of the poverty-escaping ethnic minority households is high in the two groups of elementary school graduates (Muong: 31.7%; Thai: 30.8%; Hmong: 45.0%; Dao: 31.2%; Tho: 43.2%; Khmu: 68.4%) and secondary school graduates (Muong: 28.1%; Thai: 34.6%; Hmong: 6.8%; Dao: 15.6%; Tho: 37.8%; Khmu: 11.0%). The group with high school graduation among the poverty-escaping group also has a lower representation compared to the non-attendance and elementary school graduation groups, while the educational attainment of vocational school, college, and university graduates is very low and falls within two ethnic groups (Hmong: 0.2%; Dao: 0.2%).

Despite the educational attainment differences between poor and poverty-escaping households, overall, the educational attainment of ethnic minority household heads remains low, significantly impacting their ability to develop economic plans, or acquire scientific and technical knowledge for production, and directly affecting the poverty escape capacity of these households.

Table 6: Correlation between educational attainment and the group of poor households (%)

Household classification	No formal education	Elementary school graduation	Secondary school graduation	High school graduation	Vocational school, College, University, or higher graduation	Total
Poor households	30.8	23.9	34.2	8.0	0	100
Poverty-escaping households	10.9	30.8	34.6	21.1	2.6	100

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

According to Table 6, there is a significant difference in educational attainment between the household heads of different ethnic minority groups in the poor group and the poverty-escaping group. The proportion of household heads with no formal education or only elementary school graduation is twice as high in the poor group compared to the poverty-escaping group (Chi-square test with a significance level of 0.002, indicating a 99% level of significance, demonstrating that educational attainment is correlated with the poverty escape capacity of ethnic minority households). This difficulty highlights the need for authorities

at all levels to strengthen community organizations and regularly organize basic vocational training or provide opportunities for poor households to participate in effective farming and livestock models in other areas to attract the participation of poor laborers.

Furthermore, according to Table 6, among the group of school non-attendance and elementary school graduates, there is a high proportion (70%) with limited learning capacity and poor business experience (33% for the elementary school graduate group). Limited educational attainment restricts the acquisition of the skills, experience, and knowledge necessary for improving economic conditions and escaping poverty.

4.1.3 Health Capacity

Table 7: Health Capacity for Income-Generating Work (%)

Health	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
Poor	2.6	1.7	20.5	0.3	4.6	1.2	9.1	2.1	7.1	-	-	-
Partially good	10.5	5.7	11.0	3.6	6.8	-	9.1	10.5	16.7	10.7	10.0	-
Partially poor	14.5	21.0	17.4	29.5	25.0	-	22.7	36.1	35.7	11.1	10.0	-
Good	32.0	45.0	27.4	30.6	22.7	48.2	13.6	26.9	19.1	38.6	60.0	89.0
Very good	39.5	26.6	23.3	36.0	40.9	50.6	45.5	24.4	21.4	39.6	20.0	11.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

According to Table 7, the perception of health among ethnic minority households being good or very good is relatively high, especially among the Hmong and Khmu ethnic groups, where 100% of poverty-escaping households and 80% of poor households consider themselves to have good or very good health. The Muong, Thai, Tho, and Dao ethnic groups also rate their health as good or very good to work, accounting for a fairly high percentage. This is both an advantage and an opportunity for ethnic minority households to lift themselves out of poverty.

The proportion of poor households with poor or only partially good health is significant (Muong 13.1%; Thai 31.5%; Hmong 11.3%; Dao 18.2%; Tho

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24.8%; Khmu 10%). Some poverty-escaping households also perceive themselves as having poor or partially good health (The Muong 7.3%; Thai 3.9%; Hmong 1.2%; Dao 12.6%; Tho 10.7%). This reality has an impact on the poverty escape capacity of households since they lack the physical ability to engage in work. These households must often borrow money for medical expenses and require additional labor to care for family members with poor health.

The table also reveals significant differences in health proportions between the poor and poverty-escaping households within each ethnic group and across different ethnic groups. The poverty-escaping households have a much lower proportion of poor or only partially good health compared to the poor house-holds, confirming the initial hypothesis that illness and health issues significantly affect the poverty-escape capacity of households.

Table 8: Number of members with chronic diseases that have not been treated (%)

Value	Ethnic group											
	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
Yes	10.8	70.8	9.0	59.0	6.5	46.0	6.3	34.0	13.5	54.0	12.9	40.9
No	89.2	29.2	91.0	41.0	93.5	54.0	93.7	66.0	86.5	46.0	87.1	59.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

Difficult economic conditions are among the factors that affect access to health-care for ethnic minority people. The proportion of individuals who are unable to access healthcare when they are sick or have health problems remains high (Muong: 89.2%; Thai: 91%; Hmong: 93.5%; Dao: 93.7%; Tho: 86.5%; Khmu: 87.9%), while the proportion of those who receive medical treatment is very low.

Comparing healthcare access between poor households and poverty-escaping households shows that a higher proportion of individuals in poverty-escaping households receive medical treatment for chronic illnesses, in contrast to poor households. This reality confirms that the economic factor plays a role in people's access to and utilization of healthcare services.

4.1.4 Skills and Experience in the Production Labour of Households

Skills and experience refer to the knowledge and expertise that farmers gain through their production processes, as well as learning from family members,

friends, and technical experts. These skills and experiences are related to various aspects of agricultural production, such as selecting quality seedlings, planting techniques, coping with natural disasters and disease, and livestock farming.

Table 9: Learning capacity and entrepreneurial experience of households in ethnic minority areas (%)

| Learning capacity and entrepreneurial experience | Ethnic group | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Muong | | Thai | | Hmong | | Dao | | Tho | | Khmu | |
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor household	Poverty-escaping households
Poor	3.9	2.7	31.5	6.4	29.5	3.2	22.7	6.1	4.8	-	-	-
Partially good	10.5	6.8	20.5	2.6	11.4	-	-	6.3	21.4	-	10.0	-
Partially poor	23.7	16.2	11.0	26.9	25.0	6.5	13.6	31.3	21.4	27.0	20.0	28.6
Good	35.5	55.4	23.3	38.5	15.9	54.8	9.1	37.5	33.3	43.3	70.0	71.4
Very good	26.4	18.9	13.7	25.6	18.2	35.5	54.5	18.8	19.1	29.7	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

According to Table 9, the proportion of poor households with good or very good learning capacity and entrepreneurial experience is relatively high among all six ethnic groups (Muong: 61.8%, Thai: 37.0%, Hmong: 34.1%, Dao: 63.6%, Khmu: 70%). This observation indicates that ethnic minority households have a learning mindset, which is encouraging in helping these groups leverage their capacity to escape poverty. However, a significant proportion of ethnic minority households have poor or only partially good learning capacity and experience (Muong: 24.6%, Thai: 42.5%, Hmong: 54.5%, Dao: 36.3%, Tho: 26.2%, Khmu: 20%).

All six ethnic minority groups that have escaped poverty self-assess their learning capacity for poverty alleviation as good and very good, with high proportions (90.3% of Hmong households perceive their entrepreneurial learning capacity as good and very good; 71.4% of Khmu households; 72.9% of Tho households; 74.1% of Muong households; 72.9% of Tho households; 64.1% of Thai households; 56.3% of Dao households).

According to the survey results, households that have escaped poverty in the Khmu, Hmong, Tho, and Muong ethnic groups self-assess a better ability to absorb and learn compared to the Thai and Dao ethnic groups. However, these quantitative findings contradict qualitative observations and research by the study group, which suggest that Dao, Tho, Thai, and Muong households have

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better learning capacity and experience in business than Hmong and Khmu households. Hmong and Khmu are two ethnic groups residing in the highland areas of Thanh Hoa province.

4.1.5 Capacity to Mobilize Borrowed Capital for Business

Chart 1: Capacity to mobilize borrowed capital for business among poor households (%)

	Not good	Partial good	Partial not good	Good	Very good
Khmu	20.00	20.00	30.00	30.00	–
Tho	21.40	23.80	11.90	16.70	26.20
Dao	22.70	13.60	9.10	13.60	40.90
Hmong	27.30	27.30	20.50	15.90	9.00
Thai	30.10	21.90	20.50	9.60	17.80
Muong	23.70	13.20	28.90	11.80	22.40
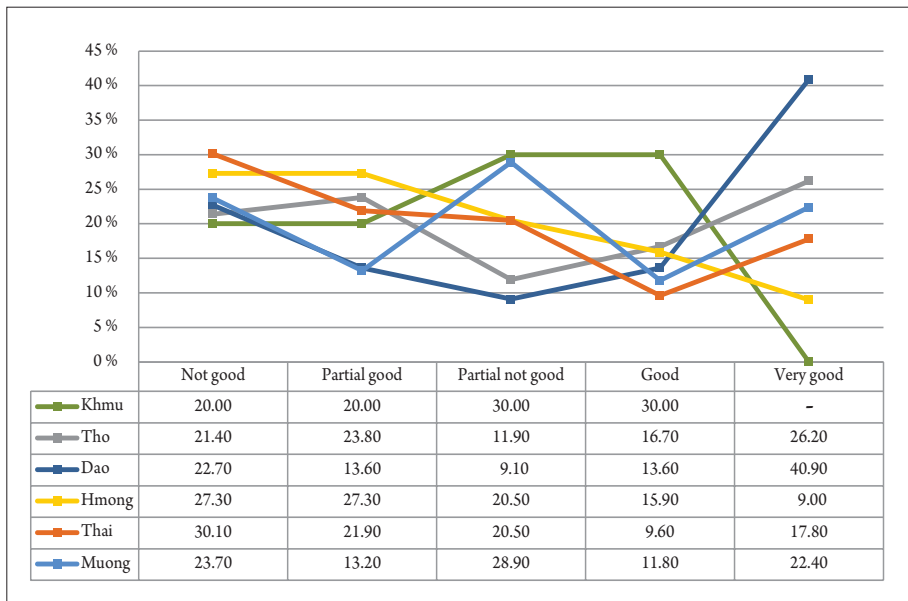
Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

According to Chart 1, the utilization of loan capital by ethnic minority households is still limited. The proportion of ethnic minority households with poor capacity to mobilize loan capital for production and business is high (40% for Khmu, 51.2% for Thai, 54.6% for Hmong, 36.9% for Muong, 36.3% for Dao, 45.2% for Tho). This indicates poor accessibility to loan capital for these households. The proportion of Households with partly poor capacity to mobilize loan capital is relatively significant for the Muong (28.9%), Thai (20.0%), Hmong (20.5%), Dao (9.0%), Tho (11.9%), and Khmu (17%).

The assessment of good or very good capacity to mobilize capital among different groups of ethnic minority households shows apparent differences and modest figures (only 13% for Khmu, 22.4% for Thai, 25.0% for Hmong, etc.). The group of poor households, particularly the Dao ethnic group, self-assesses the highest capacity to mobilize loan capital (54.1% for Dao, 42.9% for Tho, 34.2% for Muong).

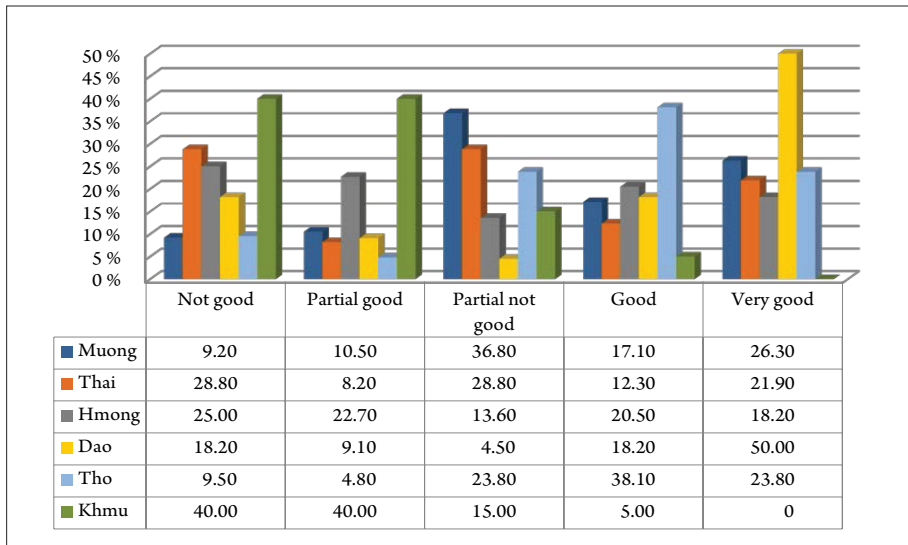*Chart 2: Business capital mobilization capacity of poverty escape households (%)*

	Not good	Partial good	Partial not good	Good	Very good
■ Muong	4.10	4.10	40.50	35.10	16.20
■ Thai	14.00	7.70	24.40	37.20	16.70
■ Tho	6.50	0	41.80	32.30	19.40
■ Hmong	18.70	12.50	25.00	31.30	12.50
■ Dao	2.70	16.20	21.60	37.80	21.60
■ Khmu	0	57.10	14.30	28.60	0
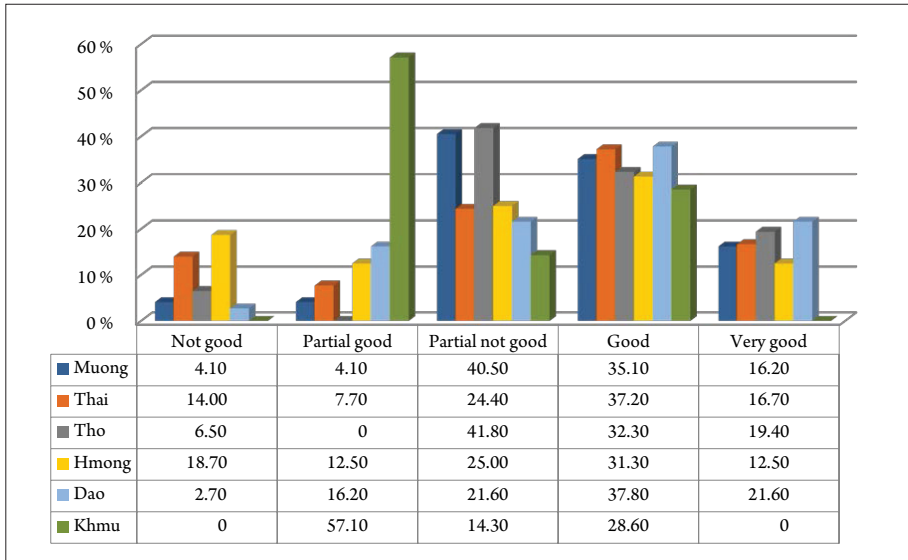
Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

The analysis of Chart 2 shows that the business mobilization capacity of poverty households from ethnic minority groups is partly good and has a high proportion. This is a favourable result and an important skill that helps ensure sustainable poverty escape. However, a significant proportion is still assessed to have poor capacity to mobilize capital, especially among the group that self-assesses their capacity as only partially good (40.5% for Muong, 24.4 % for Thai, 41.9% for Hmong, 25.0% for Dao, 21.6% for Khmu). In reality, these households that have escaped poverty are at risk of falling back into poverty.

A comparison of Chart 1 and Chart 2 reveals a significant difference in the business mobilization capacity between the poor households and the poverty escape households from ethnic minority families. There are also significant differences in mobilization capacity among different ethnic groups (16.2% for poverty escape Muong households, 16.7% for Thai, 19.4% for Hmong, 12.5% for Tho, 21.5% for Dao who have assessed their capacity to escape poverty as very good compared to 0% for the Khmu ethnic group). These differences depend on the living conditions in their areas of settlement, the educational level of the household head and labourers, the farming practices, and the perception of poverty among ethnic minority households.

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Chart 3: Capital utilization capacity of poor households from ethnic minority groups (%)

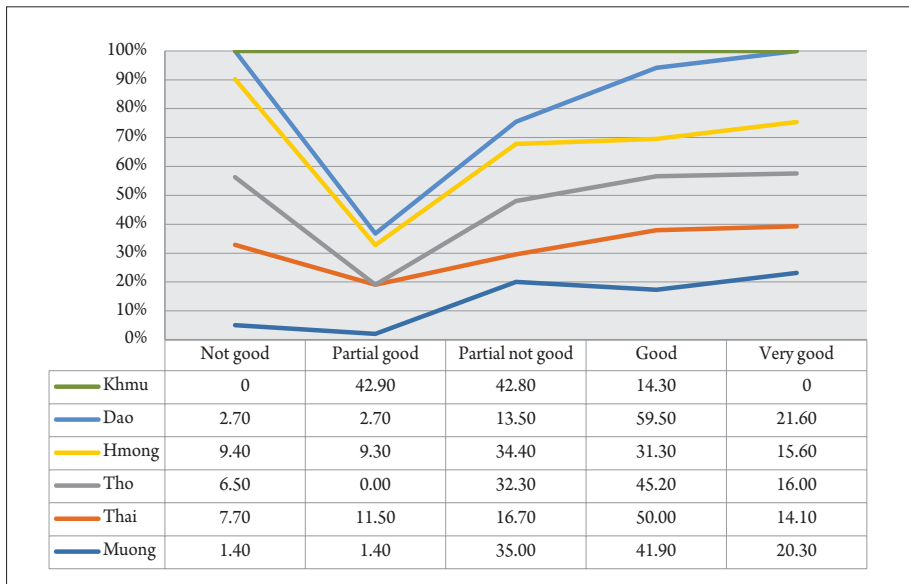|	Not good	Partial good	Partial not good	Good	Very good
Muong	9.20	10.50	36.80	17.10	26.30
Thai	28.80	8.20	28.80	12.30	21.90
Hmong	25.00	22.70	13.60	20.50	18.20
Dao	18.20	9.10	4.50	18.20	50.00
Tho	9.50	4.80	23.80	38.10	23.80
Khmu	40.00	40.00	15.00	5.00	0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

From Chart 3, it is evident that the capital utilization capacity of poor households from ethnic minority groups remains limited (40% for Khmu, 28.8% for Thai, 25.0% for Hmong, etc.), indicating that these households have poor capital utilization capacity. The proportion of households with partially good capital utilization capacity is also relatively high (40.0% for Khmu, 20.7% for Hmong, 10.5% for Dao, etc.). However, there is a relatively high proportion of households that assess their capital utilization capacity as good and very good (68.5% for Dao, 61.9% for Tho, and 38.7% for Hmong etc.), indicating that these households have a strong capital utilization capacity. This is an advantage and a strength that creates favorable conditions for poverty escape.

According to Chart 3, there are also differences in capital utilization capacity among ethnic groups. The explanation for this difference depends on the perspectives and ideologies of each ethnic community. The Dao ethnic group, despite residing in remote and isolated areas, has progressive thinking and has recognized the challenges of agricultural labor from the outset. They encourage their children to pursue education and place a strong emphasis on investing in education and labor migration to other regions. This creates favorable conditions for the Dao ethnic households to transition their occupations and develop their economic status, reducing the risks associated with the agricultural economy. Additionally, Dao households are hardworking and diligent, actively applying new scientific and technical achievements to farming and animal husbandry. These favorable conditions contribute to poverty escape and sustainable poverty reduction for these households.

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On the other hand, the Tho ethnic group resides together with the majority Kinh population in low mountainous areas (central communes, near towns) that offer certain advantages in terms of trade exchange and abundant job opportunities. These conditions make it easier for them to learn from and interact with various groups, providing favorable conditions for the Tho ethnic households to enhance their skills and experiences in farming and animal husbandry. They also have more favorable opportunities for occupational transition and sustainable poverty escape.

Chart 4: *Capital utilization capacity of poverty escape households from ethnic minority groups (%)*

	Not good	Partial good	Partial not good	Good	Very good
Khmu	0	42.90	42.80	14.30	0
Dao	2.70	2.70	13.50	59.50	21.60
Hmong	9.40	9.30	34.40	31.30	15.60
Tho	6.50	0.00	32.30	45.20	16.00
Thai	7.70	11.50	16.70	50.00	14.10
Muong	1.40	1.40	35.00	41.90	20.30

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

The survey results indicate that poverty-escape households from ethnic minority groups have a relatively good capacity to utilize borrowed capital for economic development. Specifically, a small proportion of these households assess their capital utilization capacity as not good enough, while the highest proportion considers their capital utilization capacity as good among ethnic groups such as the Tho, Thai, Muong, and Hmong. The Khmu ethnic group has a relatively high proportion of households with subpar capital utilization capacity. These favorable conditions enable ethnic minority households to effectively utilize borrowed capital for economic development and escaping poverty. However, there is still a significant proportion of ethnic minority households that partially assess their capital utilization capacity as good. In reality, the use of capital for economic development by these households carries considerable risk, and this group is at high risk of falling back into poverty.

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A comparison of Tables 3 and 4 also reveals differences in capital utilization capacity between the poor households and the poverty escape households. Additionally, there are differences in capital utilization capacity among different ethnic minority groups. The reasons for these differences lie in the educational level and skills of the household heads and labor within the households, which significantly impact their capital utilization capacity and overall poverty escape. Furthermore, the differing perspectives and ideologies of each ethnic group play a role. For example, ethnic groups like the Hmong and Khmu may view poverty as normal and even benefit from various government programs and policies (such as healthcare and education), leading them to resist escaping poverty.

4.1.6 Market Search Capacity and Product Consumption Ability

The capacity to search for markets and consume products refers to the ability to identify and meet the demands of customers who consume the goods produced. Searching for markets requires strategic vision and the ability to identify and assess the feasibility of meeting the demand for one's products before starting production.

Table 10: The capacity to search for markets and consume products among EM households (%)

The capacity to search for markets and consume products	Muong		Thai		Hmong		Dao		Tho		Khmu	
	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households	Poor households	Poverty-escaping households
Poor	31.6	14.9	45.2	23.1	52.3	3.2	86.4	34.4	21.4	27.0	60.0	-
Partially poor	34.2	44.5	21.9	30.8	15.9	41.9	9.1	31.3	26.2	11.6	20.0	57.1
Partially good	17.1	8.1	13.7	3.8	11.4	12.9	-	15.6	23.8	31.6	10.0	42.9
Good	13.2	23.0	11.0	21.8	9.0	32.3	4.5	15.6	16.7	16.2	10.0	-
Very good	3.9	9.5	8.2	20.5	11.4	9.7	-	3.1	11.9	13.6	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Results of the topic survey (2020).

According to Table 10, the capacity of ethnic minority households to access markets and consume products still has many limitations. A high percentage of households from ethnic minority groups assess their capacity to access markets as not good or only partially good. This includes 60% of poor households and

57.1% of poverty escape households from the Khmu ethnic group, 95.5% of poor households and 65.7% of Dao ethnic group households, 68.2% of poor households and 45.1% of Hmong ethnic group households, and so on. On the other hand, a modest percentage of ethnic minority households perceive their capacity to access markets as good or very good. This includes 10% of poor households and poverty escape households from the Khmu ethnic group, 4.5% of poor households from the Dao ethnic group, and lower percentages for other ethnic groups compared to the above-mentioned assessments.

Table 10 also highlights differences in two dimensions: First, it reflects variation in the capacity to access markets and consume products among different ethnic minority groups. The Khmu, Dao, and Hmong ethnic groups have very limited capacity to access markets compared to the Tho, Thai, and Muong ethnic groups. Second, it illustrates differences in the capacity to access markets and consume products between the group of poor households and the group of poverty escape households within specific ethnic minority groups. For example, the assessment of poor households from the Muong ethnic group indicates a 31.1% rate of poor capacity to access markets compared to 14.9% for poverty escape households. Similarly, there are differences of 52.3% versus 3.2% for the ethnic group and 86.4% versus 34.4% for the ethnic group, and so on.

4.2. Solutions for Enhancing the Human Capital of Ethnic Minority Households

4.2.1 Principle of Subjectivity in Poverty Reduction

One of the main reasons why poverty reduction activities in ethnic minority mountainous areas have not achieved the desired effectiveness is that they have not paid enough attention to ethnic characteristics. To escape poverty, we need to have faith in the poor and their potential to lift themselves out of poverty, rather than just focusing on the thinking of policymakers or government leaders in poor countries (Narayan et al. 2009).

For poverty reduction efforts among ethnic minority groups to be effective in the context of sustainable development goals, it is necessary to unleash the internal potential of the poor. Instead of just giving fish, the focus should be on providing the fishing rod and teaching them how to fish. It is crucial to focus on enhancing the poverty escape capacity of the poor themselves, in addition to improving the capacity of local officials involved in poverty reduction to evaluate policies/projects. These are areas that have not been adequately addressed and still face limitations in the current poverty reduction efforts for ethnic minority groups.

4.2.2 Classifying Ethnic Minority Households in Poverty to Enhance Poverty Escape Capacity

Among the ethnic minority households in poverty, there are diverse groups with distinct characteristics. To enhance their poverty escape capacity, appropriate and tailored solutions are needed for each group. For example, we can temporarily categorize the following three groups of ethnic minority households in poverty:

Group 1: This group includes households with elderly, weak individuals, sickness, lack of labour, and little to no potential for poverty escape (also known as the chronic poor group). This group represents a small proportion of the six ethnic minority groups in the mountainous areas of Thanh Hoa. They require mobilization and support through social welfare policies to ensure their daily livelihoods. In the long term, this group will likely have the least capacity to escape poverty and will require consistent social welfare support.

Group 2: This group consists of households with an available labour force and a desire to work but which face limitations in terms of knowledge and skills in agriculture, animal husbandry, and lack of production materials, resulting in a lack of employment opportunities. However, overall, they have a progressive spirit and a desire to learn to uplift themselves from poverty. This group has a high potential for poverty escape. To support this group, efforts should focus on enhancing their human capital through vocational training, providing access to credit, supporting production materials, creating employment opportunities, and facilitating labour migration.

Group 3: This group comprises households that are unwilling to work, lazy, and lack knowledge of business operations and organization of daily life. They are also vulnerable to social vices and often rely on government policies and assistance programs for the poor. For this group, it is necessary to promote awareness and encourage mindset change before implementing support policies such as loan assistance and production materials. Without such changes, the effectiveness of support programs will be limited, as people may not know how to utilize the assistance or may sell it for cash without making sustainable improvements, leaving them trapped in poverty.

4.2.3 Supporting Policies and Efforts by the Poor to Enhance Poverty Escape Capacity

Policies for directly or indirectly supporting (facilitating) capacity building for households to reduce and escape poverty:

– Continue to apply policies for poor households that promote effectiveness, such as health insurance policies, support for children of ethnic minorities to attend school, policies on loans for labour export, and support for seedlings.

– Mobilize resources to improve transportation project infrastructure systems, such as electricity, schools, medical stations, household water supply, cultural and sports facilities, and other infrastructure that serves production and livelihoods.
– Study and adjust current land policies to ensure fair land distribution and efficient utilization, which contributes to poverty reduction.
– Strengthen communication and raise awareness about poverty reduction, especially among the third group of poor households mentioned above. Encourage individuals and families to invest in production and business activities to lift themselves out of poverty.
– Support the development of production, business, vocational diversification, and income generation. Promote agricultural and forestry extension models, transfer advanced techniques to poor labourers, and facilitate the replication of successful models.
– Implement projects and vocational training programs linked to employment and technical skills for labourers in agriculture, extraction forestry, animal husbandry, farming, processing, and other sectors. Continue to effectively implement Decision No. 1956/QD-TTg (2009) by the Prime Minister on vocational training for rural labourers in Thanh Hoa province until 2020.

Developing the human capital of ethnic minorities to reduce poverty:
– For poor people and households, especially in the second group, it is necessary to focus on analysing the 5 sources of capital according to a sustainable livelihood diagram: natural capital, financial capital, social capital, institutional capital, and human capital. For ethnic minorities, human capital is the decisive capital source (as well as their weakest link) in poverty reduction.
– To enhance human capital within ethnic minority households, the following approaches are recommended: learning, experimentation, and practical experience to build skills and lessons that gradually increase income and sustainably reduce poverty. It is essential to address psychological barriers such as laziness, lack of self-confidence, fear of hard work, and risk aversion.
– Access to services and production materials (such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides) can be facilitated through borrowing or purchasing on credit with repayment after harvest.
– Poor households should be gathered together to learn and enhance production and business skills.

In terms of policy, to improve both the quantity and quality of Human Capital, there is a need for State and social intervention to improve the capacity of ethnic minorities from the mountainous regions of Thanh Hoa:
– Develop and implement a long-term program to improve people's knowledge in ethnic minority communities. This program is interdisciplinary, and

synchronous and needs direction and management at the highest provincial level;

– Continue to support and encourage ethnic minority children to go to school at a higher general education level and learn vocational skills. The State has some policies in this direction; the province needs to set specific goals, make a roadmap, and set aside appropriate funds for implementation. For example: In the next 10 years, lower secondary school must be universalized for all school-age children; vocational training with practicing certificates for at least 50% of young people aged 16–18;

– Conduct research on piloting bilingual teaching (national and ethnic languages) for kindergarten and primary school children, to quickly improve the understanding and social integration ability of ethnic minority children;

– Restore the Adult Literacy Program, so that within 5–10 years, the illiteracy status of all citizens in the province will be completely eradicated;

– Increase the duration and quality of mass communication programs (television, radio) in ethnic languages to provide diverse information to ethnic minorities in the province;

– Integrate development programs and projects in the province to increase the diversity and duration of, and funding for vocational training projects and business administration capacity training for ethnic minorities;

– Coordinate with sectors and organizations to encourage businesses, cooperatives, farm owners, and social organizations to participate in training, sponsoring, and attracting ethnic minorities into production chains to bring higher income and improve production and business skills among these people;

– Promote a solidarity movement in the community, where households unite to help each other develop, such as rich households help poor households, Kinh households help poor ethnic minority households in production and business, cultivation, animal husbandry, etc.;

– Guide and encourage ethnic minorities to diversify jobs, and seek opportunities to develop non-agricultural activities, such as handicraft production, combining agricultural production with tourism services in places with convenient conditions;

– Develop and implement a special plan on improving the capacity for economic management and social organization among grassroots cadres in ethnic minority areas, including rejuvenating and local solutions and cadres at a grassroots level.

5. Conclusion

Human capital is indeed a decisive factor (as well as the weakest link) in poverty reduction. Only when this capital is developed will it be able to use opportuni

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ties for other capital sources (financial, land, social, material, and institutional). The limited education, skills, and production experience among poor ethnic minority households in the mountainous regions of Thanh Hoa province have direct implications on their ability to absorb new knowledge and skills through training sessions for practical application in production. The results surveys indicate that, among ethnic minority households in the mountainous regions of Thanh Hoa province, individuals who receive training on knowledge and skills for poverty reduction are not necessarily directly involved in production. This is because not everyone in the local ethnic minority community has a firm grasp of the Vietnamese language. Typically, men participate in training sessions while women are the ones directly engaged in production. This is a significant barrier to the application of scientific and technical knowledge in the production practices of these poor households. Therefore, to achieve sustainable poverty eradication, it is crucial to enhance the level of awareness from multiple perspectives for the poor, and creating conditions for them to improve their education is an important step.

Based on these research findings regarding the current situation and the capacity to utilize human capital among poor ethnic minority households in the mountainous regions, it becomes clear that they must participate in training and vocational education programs organized by local authorities and/or associations. In the process of enhancing awareness, knowledge, labor skills, and attitudes among these poor ethnic minority households, besides the formal solutions that provide modern knowledge and skills by experts in agriculture, livestock farming, business, etc., informal solutions from the social work sector, such as "community education," linked to the nature and characteristics of each community, play a decisive role. In other words, starting from the strengths, knowledge, and local experience of each ethnic minority group in the mountains, the "community education" approach, based on continuous sharing and mutual support, yields high efficacy because of the similarities between communities. Regarding formal solutions to improve the education level, knowledge, understanding, and skills of poor ethnic minority households in mountainous regions for sustainable livelihood development, support from government and socio-political organizations, as well as social-professional organizations, in assessing and analyzing needs, as well as building training and education plans, will eliminate the sense of insecurity and enhance a confident, open, proactive, and committed attitude to participation in poverty reduction projects.

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Notes

[1] The sustainable livelihoods framework developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) has been applied worldwide.

[2] According to the Decision, the poverty line for the period 2016–2020 of the Vietnamese government, a poor household is a household with an average income per capita/month from the policy poverty line or below, or with an average income per capita/month higher than the standard policy poverty but lower than the minimum standard of living in terms of deprivation of 1/3 of the total deprivation point of access to basic social services or more (Decision No. 289-QD/TU …, 2020); Decision No. 291-QD/TU …, 2020).

[3] According to the Decision, poverty line for the period 2016–2020 of the Vietnamese government, households escaping poverty need to meet the following criteria: the average living standard per capita meets the national poverty line: the national poverty line is adjusted according to each year. The current period (2024) is 2.3 million VND/person/month in rural areas and 2.8 million VND/person/month in urban areas; not eligible for support policies for poor households: including support policies on housing, health care, education, training, running water, electricity, transportation, postal service, and telecommunications.

[4] According to the Decision, poverty line for the period 2016–2020 of the Vietnamese government, near-poor households are households with average income per capita/month higher than the policy poverty line but lower than the minimum living standard, and lacking less than 1/3 of the total score lacks access to basic social services.

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Guidelines for Contributors

General — The editorial board of **Treatises and Documents**, **The Journal of Ethnic Studies** welcomes the submission of scholarly articles in the field of ethnic and minority studies, especially on racial and ethnic relations, ethnic identity, nationalism, xenophobia, the protection of (ethnic, national, linguistic, religious, and other) minorities, migration, multiculturalism and related subjects. The journal is particularly but not exclusively - interested in discussions regarding ethnic and minority issues in the so- called Alpine-Adriatic-Panonnian area. However, the policy of the editorial board is also to publish excellent contributions with relevant content from different parts of the world, which we would be happy to present to our scientific audience.

Two issues of the journal are published every year, usually in June and December.

Articles that are submitted must be original, unpublished material and should not be simultaneously under consideration – either in whole or in part – for publication elsewhere.

The journal encourages the submission of articles in English, since this enables authors to present their ideas and work to a broader public. The abstracts of the articles are always published in the language of the article in English and in Slovenian.

Authors who do not have native or equivalent proficiency in English must prior to submission have the article read by someone with this proficiency. This step ensures that the academic content of your paper is fully understood by journal editors and reviewers. Articles which do not meet these requirements will most likely not be considered for publication.

Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic form and must include:

- the submitted article, with the title in the language of the article and in English;
- an abstract of the article in the language of the article and in English; this should include a brief presentation of the issues discussed, the methodology used, the main findings and the conclusions;
- 3 – 7 key words in the language of the article and in English.

The length of the title, the abstract and the key words in one language should not exceed 1,100 characters (including spaces). More detailed information about the form of submitted manuscripts is presented in the prescribed template, available at the journal's website (https://sciendo.com/journal/TDJES).

In a separate document please submit: the author(s) name, the title of the article, any acknowledge-ment of research funding and a brief biographical note on each author with full contact information (for publication in the journal). Please refer to the template (at the journal's website) for further detailed information.

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