

Round Table *Social Clientelism and 'Contradictory Social Mosaic' as a Framework for the Development of Public Policies in Croatia*

UDK 35.072.22(047)

The Institute of Public Administration organized its third scientific debate in the field of public administration intended for all its members – professors, assistants, PhD students and graduate students of public administration, political science, law, social work, economics and other social sciences, as well as for experts-practitioners who want to expand their knowledge and apply theory to gain new insights into their daily work. Head of this series of theoretical debates is Gordana Marčetić, associate professor at the Chair of Administrative Science, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. One-hour lecture on a topic of high scientific significance is normally followed by intense theoretical discussion.

Previous scientific debates discussed “Problems of Understanding and Interpretation in Empirical Social Sciences” with Professor Stjepan Ivanišević as keynote speaker (retired from the Chair of Administrative Science, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb), and “Research Strategy in the Social Sciences” with Professor Duško Sekulić as keynote speaker (Chair of Sociology, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb). The third one was held on 1st June 2016 with Professor Siniša Zrinščak as keynote speaker (Chair of Sociology, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb). He lectured on social clientelism and ‘contradictory social mosaic’ as a framework for the development of public policies in Croatia.

Professor Zrinščak presented his thesis that the reform ideas explicitly or implicitly based on the general theoretical perspective of modernization and Europeanisation failed to adequately justify and implement the

reforms. The first aspect of this thesis is theoretical and based on inadequacy of the theory of modernization and cognitive Europeanisation (the classical welfare state model in particular) to understand the development of a social policy that is, contrary to these theories, contradictory, ambiguous, inconsistent and subject to rather different ideological influences. The welfare state model, as developed by Esping-Andersen, becomes dual in post-industrial society: the core of the labour force in a country (its citizens) is protected by the institutions of social security, while other social groups (immigrants, asylum seekers, etc.) are not. Zrinščak questioned the dominant theoretical framework of the analysis – the dichotomy Europeanisation – re-traditionalization. The former has not contributed to the radical shift in public policy in transition countries as much as it has to the institutional reforms. Re-traditionalization is the wrong approach because it assumes the existence of a previous modernization phase, which often falls behind.

Another aspect is the effort to understand the Croatian welfare state as social clientelistic. Although still insufficiently theoretically and empirically based, it can reveal structural embeddedness of some important features of the development of the welfare state in Croatia. The social clientelism, according to Zrinščak, was developed from 'trapped' (captured) social policy. This is a policy that treats pensioners and war veterans as predominant interest groups in a society. Moreover, it connects political and electoral support to a certain political option (party) with social benefits (money, services, rights). The consequence is that trapped social policy leaves very little room for protection of the rights of the other, equally or more vulnerable social groups, because resources are limited.

The discussion highlighted many interesting questions. What motivates public policy – social needs or artificial issues invented by politicians? Is it possible to put forward a rational public policy or does the constant power game make it impossible, depleting social wealth to settle numerous conflicting interests? Who is more important – actors or institutions? Are factors outside administrative organizations (organizational environment) more important than what is going on inside organizations?

Some conclusions were presented regarding the need for new theoretical concepts and units of analysis that could encompass many informal relationships and arrangements already existing in reality either in addition to or in spite of formal institutional arrangements, as they could no longer be described by the concept of liberalism (e.g. self-help as a basis of local solidarity in social policies of South European countries). Informal relationships cease to be an excessive phenomenon and it is not possible to

take a unanimous stand on linear societal development, as we perceive regression trends in reality. Furthermore, we cannot fully rely on global trends as the most influential cause of social changes, because the core values differ from country to country and in some of them there is a constant tendency to 'learn anew' after a different political option wins the general and/or local elections.

*Daria Dubajić**

* Daria Dubajić, Research Assistant, Chair of Administrative Science, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb (znanstveni novak na Katedri za upravnu znanost Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, e-mail: ddubajic@pravo.hr)