

Behind the Mirror

On the National Minority Councils, 2014 Elections and More

The study was created within the implementation of the project of the Center for Development of Civil Society (CRCD) School of Minority Rights and Integration (hereinafter referred to as the School). The project was supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Open Society Foundation. In implementing the project educational, research and media activities were combined. The project was closely connected to the elections for the National Councils of National Minorities held on 26 October 2014. This study was one of the results of the project. The views and opinions expressed are solely of the participants in the electoral process, the participants of the school - researchers, and co-authors of the study. They do not necessarily reflect the official position of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, nor the Open Society Foundation.

Zrenjanin, December 2014

Andrej Kubiček

Snežana Ilić, MA

Vladimir Ilić, PhD

Research Method

The basic research procedure which is applied in our study is rarely used in ethnic relations studies. The mentioned method is the observation, moreover, its participatory form.

The observation provides the most immediate information. Between what we have investigated (elections for national councils of national minorities and the campaign that preceded it) and our observers, the way of creation of the data base was the shortest and most direct: the only mediator was observer's sense. With all other methods data is much away from the observer: in an interview informants must perform introspection, and then verbally convey it to the interviewers. The official state documents and media records, are formed on the basis of self-examination (e.g., statistical surveys during conduction of the census), or by observing others. Travel of the information from the observed phenomena to the researcher in this way is extended and the sources of errors and distortions of information are thus multiplied.

In line with the objectives of the project, but also taking into account the nature of the primary object of our study, we chose an observation with participation. We have once before researched ethnic relations by applying systematic observation; it was probably the only attempt of its kind in all post-Yugoslav countries. (Ilić et al., 2012)

Data was analysed by discourse analysis. All three co-authors independently accessed the material in its original form. After they have advised and corrected each other.

Our study covers an area of theoretical ambition, but does not focus on the verification of the theory. It was created with a practical purpose. The theory of multiculturalism and the theory of ethnic relations (the development theory and the theory of ethnic competition) were used for explanation of the results to the extent which best corresponded project's goals. In developing the research plan, the role of theory, was significantly higher.

We were interested in the specific, the average, and typical cases, but in deviant and extreme cases also. Special attention was focused on the cities such as Subotica (as the seat of

the possible future Hungarian territorial autonomy, as well as the city where the most intense tensions between ethnic Croats and ethnically declared Bunjevacs are manifested), Petrovac na Mlavi (where in 2010 elections the number of the police interventions was the highest), Novi Pazar (due to the inter-ethnic division and the boycott of the elections), places inhabited by a large number of Ruthenians (Kucura, Ruski Krstur, Đurđevo, Novi Sad). Ruthenian minority is a relatively small but well-established minority, can be both a litmus and a guidance, Bečej (due to the Party of the Hungarian Unity which boycotted the elections, and the Democratic Association of Vojvodina Hungarians), as well as Senta (because of the Civic Alliance of Hungarians, who also boycotted the elections for national councils). The reader will see that the research included a significantly higher number of places. We are not mentioning them all, on purpose: to guarantee an anonymous use of the data, not just for the observed and interlocutors, but also for our observers, for those who collected the data in smaller towns, could easily be recognized. Nevertheless, the need for such a guarantee represents a worthy research finding.

We did not enter the spelling corrections. Not in the testimonies of the observed interviewees, nor in the observers' notes. We wanted to preserve the colour, context, and the atmosphere, which followed both, the campaign for the 2014 elections for national councils of national minorities, and the elections itself.

Official Data on the Turnout and the Voting Results

Free available data originated apart from our research will be interpreted first. Those are primarily official statistical material and the results issued by the Republic Electoral Commission (RIK). Data which are particularly important for our study are: the number of voters registered in the Special Voter's Register List for each minority, and in general, the share of voters who exercised their right on October 26 2014, and finally the number of assigned lists and their individual results. Overall, out of the 456 444 persons belonging to national minorities enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, 171,799 (37.63%) of them had voted. Turnout was distinctly

lower than 4 years ago, when it was 54.5%. There were about 20,000 registered voters more this year, which is interesting, given that members of ethnic minorities together have a negative natural increase. However, this time, the number of minorities who have participated in direct elections was higher for one national minority (17 in total), as the Slovenes opted for this type of voting as well, but the impact of this factor is very small. Croats and Macedonians elected their representatives on the Electoral assemblies once more. Montenegrins joined them as well.

Several ethnic groups, such as Yugoslavs, Gorani, Aromanians (Cincars), Turks, Russians and Poles, did not elect their national councils for various reasons.

The Voting Results

Analysed data for 2014 elections were downloaded from the website of the Republic Electoral Commission¹, while those from 2010 were obtained from the database of the former Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, which organized it.

Albanians: out of 35.395 enrolled in a Special Voter's Register List, at 100 polling stations, 14,108 (39.85%) voted. In previous elections 15,071 Albanians had voted, 81% of who voted for the list of the Party for Democratic Action Riza Halimi, and 19% for the Democratic Union of Albanians Rahmi Zuljfiu.

1. Koalicioni për të drejtat e Shqiptarëve/Coalition for Albanian Rights 5.788 votes, 7 mandates
2. Coalition of United Albanians/Koalicioni i Shqiptarve të bashkuar 4.911 votes, 5 mandates
3. Democratic Party – Dr Sc Nagip Arifi/Partia demokratike – dr sc Nagip Arifi 3.017 votes, 3 mandates
4. For the Future of Albanians in Serbia – Sevdail Iseni 124 votes, 0 mandates
5. Nagib Taipi – Nagib Taipi 100 votes, 0 mandates.

¹ http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/propisi_frames.htm

Ashkali: out of 1,746 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 52 polling stations, 582 (33.33%) voted. At the last elections 439 of Ashkali voted, 51% of who voted for the list Abedin Toplica, 37% for Iljazi Ramadanović, and 12% for Zijadin Salihu.

1. Ashkali, but Together – Iljaz Ramadanović 222 votes, 6 mandates
2. Ashkali for Progress - Abedin Toplica/Ashkali selamet - Abedin Toplica 197 votes, 5 mandates
3. Ashkali: „Moving on“– Afrodita Demir 107 votes, 3 mandates
4. Ashkali for a Better Tomorrow – Zijadin Salihu 41 votes, 1 mandate

Bosniaks: out of 99 259 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 267 polling stations, 35,638 (35.90%) voted.

In previous elections 54.154 Bosniaks voted. Muamer Zukorlić's list won 48%, 37% won the list close to Sulejman Ugljanin, and the third, the list related to Rasim Ljajić won 14% of votes.

1. "For Bosniak Unity" - Dr Sulejman Ugljanin/"Za bošnjačko jedinstvo" – dr. Sulejman Ugljanin 19.304 votes, 19 mandates
2. "For Bosniaks, Sandžak and the Mufti"/"Za Bošnjake, Sandžak i muftiju" 16.044 votes, 16 mandates

Bulgarians: out of 14,908 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 143 polling stations, 9,870 (66.2%, the highest turnout) voted.

In previous elections 8,612 Bulgarians voted for 7 lists. The list of Zoran Petrov won 30% of the votes; Vladimir Zaharijev's list won 28%, while significant result had achieved the lists which did not participate on the elections this year, such as the "Coalition of the Bulgarians in Serbia" Nebojša Ivanov which won 14.6% and the list "For Bosilegrad in European Serbia" which won 13.5% of votes.

1. Vladimir Zaharijev – This is us – from the heart, for the well-being of all of us wherever we may be/Vladimir Zaharijev - Това сме не-от сърце, за по-добро на vsički nas kъдето i da sme
4.782 votes, 10 mandates
2. Coalition of Bulgarians in Serbia – Zoran Petrov/Koalicija na bълgarite v Сърбия - Zoran Petrov
2.376 votes, 5 mandates.
3. “Future We Believe In” – Dr Vladica Dimitrov/„Въдеше v koeto vярваме“– dr Vladica Dimitrov
2.157 votes, 4 mandates.
4. Forward – Sonja Stanulov
359 votes, 0 mandates

Bunjevacs: out of 8,634 enrolled in the Special Voter’s Register List, at 177 polling stations, 3,246 (37.59%) voted.

Number of voters in the previous elections was about the same: 3,388. The relative majority of votes in 2010 was won by Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić (34%), while Mirko Bajić won 15%, Nikola Babić and the "Bunjevacs for Bunjevacs" list won 14.5%, the list of Branko Pokornić won 12.5%, while the other three lists won between 7% and 8.3% of the votes, of which only the "League of Bunjevacs” participated again with the same name but with a different leader.

1. Alliance of Bačka Bunjevci - Mirko Bajić 883 votes, 6 mandates
2. Bunjevci - MA Suzana Kujundžić - Ostojić 610 votes, 4 mandates
3. Bunjevac Party -Srđan Evetović 436 votes, 3 mandates
4. Civic Association “Bunjevac Kolo” Sombor, Aleksandar Bošnjak 338 votes, 2 mandates
5. Bunjevac People’s List - Branko Pokornić 254 votes, 1 mandates
6. Bunjevac Heritage Society - Marko Marjanušić 247 votes, 1 mandate
7. „Bunjevci are citizens of Serbia, too”- Mirjana Savanov 222 votes, 1 mandate
8. Bunjevac Cultural Center “Bunjevac vote for all of us” - Prof. dr Etela Jerinkić 137 votes, 1 mandate
9. „Bunjevac League” Branko Tot 78 votes, 0 mandates

Czechs: out of 1,271 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 51 polling stations, 649 (51.06%, which is the third largest turnout) voted.

The Czechs were the only minority that had only one list in the previous election (Štefan Klepaček), which had won 524 votes.

1. Czechs Together, Štefan Klepaček 405 votes, 10 mandates
2. Czechs of Serbia – Dr Jože Sivaček/Češi Srbska - dr. Jože Siváček 236 votes, 5 mandates

Egyptians: out of 1,865 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 57 polling stations, 494 (26.48%, the lowest turnout) voted.

The number of voters was lower than in 2010, when it had been 684. The list of Agim Ajre "The Future" won 60% of the votes, a list of Seladin Osman "Egyptians but together" won 40% (in 2014 Osman's list was second).

1. „For an Even Better Future” - Agim Ajra 292 votes, 10 mandates
2. „Together for a Better Tomorrow “106 votes, 3 mandates
3. „So That We Know Each Other “Nezir Keljmendi 79 votes, 2 mandates

Greeks: out of 2,363 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 115 polling stations, 1,528 (64.66%, which was the second largest turnout) voted.

In the previous elections less than a half of that number had voted: 673 voters. The List SaGaPo from Smederevo won 65.38% of the votes, while the list of Vera Jeftimijades Jobst had 34.62% of the votes.

1. “Greeks of Serbia – Vasilios Provelegkos” 897 votes, 9 mandates
2. “Sa Ga Po – Serbian Greek Friendship”, Rodifcis-Nađ Petar 307 votes, 3 mandates

3. "Community of Greeks in Serbia Elefterios Venizelos – Beograd" Papadopulos Dimitrios 119 votes, 1 mandate
4. "Kalimera Serbia – Greeks and descendants", Dr Christos Aleksopoulos 101 votes, 1 mandate
5. "Greeks are Citizens of Serbia, Too" 94 votes, 1 mandate

Hungarians: out of 137 111 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 392 polling stations, 55 673 (40.6%) voted.

There was an enormous turn down of voters since in 2010 76,287 of Hungarians exercised their right to vote. Then the list of SVM "Hungarian Unity" convincingly won with 77% of votes, the list of "Vojvodina Hungarians for Europe Čengeri Dr. Atila" won 13.3%, while the remaining three lists ("Movement of Hungarian Hope" list Laslo Rac-Saba and "Hungarian League ") won about 3% of the votes.

1. "Magyar Összefogás/Hungarian Union "46.753 votes, 31 mandate
2. "DZVM (Democratic Community of Vojvodina Hungarians) - CSONKA ÂRON"/"VMDK – Csonka Áron" 3.567 votes, 2 mandates
3. "Hungarian League – New Hungarian Alternative – Tibor Vass"/"Magyar Liga - Új Magyar Alternatíva - Vass Tibor" 2.481 votes, 1 mandate
4. "Másként magyarságunkért - Fodor László"/"For Hungarians in a different way – Fodor Laszlo" 2.298 votes, 1 mandate

Germans: out of 2,491 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 225 polling stations, 1,191 (47.81%) voted.

Hence, slightly less than four years ago, when 1,388 of Germans voted, but on the other hand, that year there was less lists at the elections - only two. The list "Together for unity of the German national minority of Serbia" won 70.5%, and "Danube Germans of Vojvodina" won 29.5% of the votes.

1. "Gerhard" Danube Germans - Together, Anton Bek 564 votes, 8 mandates
2. Danube Germans of Vojvodina - Donauschwaben in Wojwodina 269 votes, 3 mandates
3. German List - Rudolf Weiss/Deutsche Liste – Rudolf Weiss 210 votes, 3 mandates
4. Danube German Women/Donauschwäbinnen 140 votes, 1 mandate

Roma: out of 61 755 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 520 polling stations, 17,523 (28.37%, which was the second lowest turnout) of them voted.

Within this minority a large drop in turnout could be noticed (12,500), 4 years ago there were 30,255 of voters. Quite strong relative majority had been won by a list of Vitomir Mihajlović "Roma for European Serbia" (45%), while the remaining 9 lists had a significantly poorer result. List of Nenad Tairović won 15%, "Vojvodina Roma List" Petar Nikolić 13.67%, "Association of Roma Citizens in Serbia" Dragiša Todorović 8.77%, and a list of Srđan Šajn 7% of votes.

1. "Roma for a Better Future" 4.308 votes, 9 mandates
2. "Roma Voice for Europe" 2.668 votes, 5 mandates
3. "Roma Citizens of Serbia - Srđan Šajn" 1.877 votes, 4 mandates
4. "Justice and Truth for Every Roma - Tane Kurtić" 1.849 votes, 4 mandates
5. "Alliance for change – People the Measure of Man" 1.767 votes, 3 mandates
6. "Our Roma List – Duško Jovanović" 1.415 votes, 3 mandates
7. "Anglunipe – Progress" Dragoljub Acković 1.028 votes, 2 mandates
8. "Roma for Serbia – Serbia for the Roma" 960 votes, 2 mandates
9. "Association of Roma of Serbia – Vladan Stanojević" 910 votes, 2 mandates
10. "Group of Voters – Roma for Europe" 503 votes, 1 mandate

Romanians: out of 17.858 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 181 polling station, 7,432 (41.61%) voted.

In this community there was also a decrease in number of voters, because in 2010 9,321 of Romanians voted. That year the list of Daniel Petrović had the best result (48%), while the "Community of Romanians in Serbia" won 15.5%, "Unity" of Valeriju Pintor won 14.8%, "Independent Romanians" 8.3%, "United Romanians of Serbia" 7%, and "Romanians United" Raša Todorel 6% of votes.

1. "United list – Daniel Petrović"/" Lista unită – Daniel Petrovici" 2.975 votes, 10 mandates
2. "Romanian Community – Stevan Mihajlov"/" Comunitatea Românilor – Stevan Mihailov" 1.588 votes, 5 mandates
3. "Romanians for National Reconciliation – Jon Čizmaš"/" Români pentru reconciliere națională – Ion Cizmaș" 873 votes, 3 mandates
4. "Initiative of Romanians from Serbia - Bojan Barbucić"/",, Initiativa Romanilor din Serbia - Bojan Barbucić" 653 votes, 2 mandates
5. "Independent Romanians of Serbia – Dr Dorinel Stan"/" Români independenți din Serbia – Dr. Dorinel Stan" 652 votes, 2 mandates
6. "Romanians United – Todorel Raša"/" Români uniți – Todorel Rașa" 314 votes, 1 mandate
7. "Anything for the Motherland – Ionel Omoran"/" Total Pentru Țară - Ionel Omoran" 245 votes, 0 mandates

Ruthenians: out of 8,270 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, at 155 polling stations, 3,317 (40%) voted. Four years ago the turnout was 4,724 Ruthenians who voted for 6 lists. The victory of Slavko Rac was convincing (36%), and the "Ruthenian League" of Olena Papuga had also achieved a better result (25.5%). It is interesting that even after those elections each of the lists had their representatives in the Ruhtenian National Council, since all of them won about 10% of the votes ("Ruthenian Democratic Party - For Its People," "Ruthenian Youth," "Ruthenian Heritage" and "Srem List").

1. "Together for Ruthenians - Slavko Rac"/",,Vedno za Rusnacoh - Slavko Rac" 806 votes, 5 mandates

2. “Ruthenian League” Olena Papuga/„Ruska lira” Olena Papura 634 votes, 4 mandates
3. “For Ruski Krstur - Željko Kovač”/„Za Ruski Kerestur - Željko Kovač” 526 votes, 3 mandates
4. “I Ruthenian”/”Я Rusnak” 468 votes, 3 mandates
5. “Ruthenian Initiative, Nikola Šanta”/”Ruska inicijativa, Mikola Šanta” 399 votes, 2 mandates
6. “Youth for the Future”/„Mladi za budućnost” 254 votes, 1 mandate
7. “Ruthenian Youth”/„Ruska mladež” 194 votes, 1 mandate

Slovaks: out of 31.196 enrolled in the Special Voter’s Register List, at 160 polling stations, 9,682 (31.03%, which is the third lowest turnout) voted.

Huge drop in turnout within this community was also noted, in particular one third (in 2010 the turnout was 15,092 of voters). The list of Anna Tomanova Mankanova then had a total victory (60% of the votes; that year for her voted almost as much the Slovaks as came out to the polls four years later). "Slovak Heritage" was second with 22.3% of the vote, while the "Slovak League", "New Slovak Party" and "Slovak Party" had significantly lower results, though these lists have had 1 to 2 representatives in National Council.

1. “Slovak Identity” - Ana Tomanová Makanová/Slovenska identita - Ana Tomanova Mankanova 3.294 votes, 10 mandates
2. “Slovaks Forward! – Pavel Surovy”/Slováci vpred! – Pavel Surový 2.814 votes, 9 mandates
3. “Slovak Heritage Society in Serbia - For Slovak Identity“ Katarina Melegova-Melihova/Matica slovenská v Srbsku – za slovenskost’ Katarína Melegová-Melichová 1.846 votes, 6 mandates
4. League of Slovaks of Vojvodina - Jan Brna 1.051 vote, 3 mandates
5. Slovak Party – Jan Paul/Slovenska strana – Ján Paul 519 votes, 1 mandate

Slovenes: out of 1,741 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List at 125 polling stations 713 (40.95%) voted.

In previous elections Slovenians elected their Council through the Electoral assembly.

1. Slovenes Together/Slovinci skupaj 400 votes, 9 mandates
2. All Together - Zoran Jovičić 309 votes, 6 mandates

Ukrainians: out of 2,818 enrolled the Special Voter's Register List, at 97 polling stations 1,251 (44.39%) voted.

Four years ago 1,640 of Ukrainians voted for 7 lists. Then the "Ukrainian list for the future" had a relative majority with 25% of votes, immediately followed by the list of "Spring - Vesna" with 21.5%, "Justice" with 17.7%, "Kolomejka" 16% "Kalina" with 9.5%, list of Dalibor Pjeknog with 6%, while the list "Galicani" did not enter the National Council with 4% of votes.

1. Senjuk - Mihajlo Letvenčuk 480 votes, 6 mandates
2. Ukrainians Together - Stefan Semjaniv 320 votes, 4 mandates
3. Kalina - Petar Zakamarok 231 votes, 3 mandates
4. Ukrainian List „Kobzar” - Miro Kalenjuc 136 votes, 1 mandate
5. Group of Voters - „Justice” - Dalibor Pjekni 74 votes, 1 mandate

Vlachs: out of 27,763 enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List at 104 polling stations 8,902 (32.06%) voted.

The drop in turnout was enormous, since in 2010 turnout was 12,943 of voters. It should be noted that the representatives of the list which then had the most support, "Community Vlachs of Serbia" Predrag Balašević (28%), this year boycotted the elections. On the other hand, the list which this year won convincingly, "Vlachs of Serbia", in 2010 had 26% of votes. Of the remaining 7 lists only a few had significant support, "Vlachs for a European Serbia" Siniša

Čelojević 15%, "United Vlachs" Dragan Balašević 11.7%, and "Vlachs in European Serbia" Neli Đorđević 10.7% of votes.

1. Vlachs for Serbia – Serbia for the Vlachs, Radiša Dragojević 6.365 votes, 18 mandates
2. Vlach Unification Movement – Slobodan Perić 909 votes, 2 mandates
3. Association “Gergina” Negotin – Primarius Dr Siniša Čelojević 853 votes, 2 mandates
4. C.G. “Community of Vlachs of Serbia - Dragan Demić 700 votes, 1 mandate

Montenegrins: 90 electors participated in the Electoral assembly

1. Aleksandar Vučinić 26 votes, 7 mandates
2. Ratko Šoć 63 votes, 16 mandates

Croats: 132 electors at the assembly of electors

1. Slaven Bačić 93 votes, 21 mandates
2. Tomislav Stantić 37 votes, 8 mandates

Macedonians: 84 electors at the assembly of the electors

1. Slave Gruevski 28 votes, 8 mandates
2. Borče Veličkovski 55 votes, 15 mandates

Interpretation of the Turnout and Results

The representatives of the Croatian community justified their decision on the electoral method of electing the members of the National Council by the fact that they were not able to enroll a sufficient number (40%) of members in the Special Electoral Roll (Special Voter's

registration List – SVRL), due to the geographic dispersion of these communities, but also due to the fear of their members to register in this kind of list . However, the alternative interpretation is that this decision was conditioned by political parties. The DSHV, which controlled the assembly of electors from the beginig, held monopoly over the representation of this community. Each elector had to provide a certain number of signatures, which required a party logistics and resources that the other candidates did not have.

As for the turnout, smaller communities such as Greek (64.66%), Czech (51.06%) and German (47.81%) had a great turnout. The Bulgarians (66.2%), as a relatively large and territorially concentrated community still had the highest turnout. The reasons for this should be sought in extreme poverty of municipalities where Bulgarians live (Dimitrovgrad, Bosilegrad, Surdulica, Babušnica), in limited rights enjoyed by the community of about 20,000 people, but also in the great influence of the candidates of the lists on the local level, Vladimir Zaharijev (DSS member and mayor of the Bosilegrad) and Zoran Petrov (former member of the Democratic Party, now member of the list "Together for Serbia" Dušan Petrović, and former deputy mayor of Dimitrovgrad).

Apart from the small number of members, these three smaller communities share a few more things in common. They are dispersed, but their members are mainly located in the cities, they are relatively educated; and they have a long tradition of association. They also have a small public visibility, which could have certainly been a motive for voters to participate.

On the other hand, the turnout within big communities was quite low, lower than four years ago: within Hungarians the turnout was 40.6% (20,000 less than 2010), Roma 28.37% (13,000 less), Vlachs 32.06% (4,000 less), and Slovaks 31.03 % (over 5,000 less). Apart from being numerous communities, all of them are characterized by some kind of boycott of the elections that occurred during the campaign, or with public accusations of the political parties controlling the work of the councils. It is difficult to determine to what extent the boycott have had an impact on running the elections, but the fact that boycott appeared indicates that problems existed, which directly influenced the low turnout. These factors will be discussed in the next

part of the study; but also the external political influence should be revised. Relations between SNS and the government in Budapest had caused that less money was invested in motivating the members of the Slovak (related to the DS) and Vlach (partly related to SPS) minority.

Low turnout of Roma is to be analyzed together with the low turnout of Egyptians (26.48%) and Ashkali (33.33%). Specific and difficult social position of the members of these three communities is probably the main cause of the low turnout. Lack of education of a significant number of members of these groups, and their illiteracy are the factors which could have been noticed during the campaign. It should be stressed that many voters were certainly far more focused on providing for living than on dealing with the elections for national councils. There were also some very specific factors. Therein, elections were held on Sunday, the day when a large number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians work (in markets). Also, many of them who came to vote were returned for not being registered in the list (SVRL). This might had been a result of a change of residence or marital status. The only larger community that has maintained a stable turnout was the Albanian one.

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL MINORITY COUNCILS

Media Coverage of the Elections for National Minority Councils

The elections for the national councils of the national minorities were not of interest of majority (mainstream) media; however some of the minority communities were in the eye of the public several months before the elections. Moreover, reporting on these communities was not related to the official campaign of the elections but it was in fact concerning the inter-ethnic tensions, and tensions between minority and majority communities. Is it possible that the government handed over the campaign for the elections to “its trusted people” within the

communities, interfering only in case of the “hostile minorities” such as: Croatian (and DS, Slovaks as well), Bosniak and Albanian national minority? The cases that drew the most of attention were the ones concerning “March on Hadžet”, (Cyrillic) textbooks donated to the members of Bunjevac national minority, as well as the series of violent incidents which occurred on the football match between Serbia and Albania (14 October 2014) and the incidents that immediately followed the football match.

On the other hand, media coverage of the elections for some national minorities was rather fair. According to our observers, the lists for Ruthenian National Council were all equally represented in each print and electronic media in Ruthenian language. The example of good practice in this respect was Ruthenians. The observers have recorded that” the editor of a newspaper in the Ruthenian language "Ruske slovo "sought and received support from the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) to draw attention of minority media on the Journalist Code which recommended that journalists, editors and other media workers who were represented on the electoral lists for national councils cannot write or report about the elections. “NDNV notified by e-mail all redactions. Furthermore: “the Informer on monitoring the election activities of national councils in 2014 was posted on the website of the Ruthen Press, the daily news agency in the Ruthenian language. The Informer gave detailed instructions on how to monitor the election campaign by the weekly "Ruske slovo". It was clearly said that members of the editorial board who were on the electoral lists during the election campaign would not write about the elections. Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA) gave precise instructions to the electronic media on the method of monitoring the elections for national councils. Electronic media were following the instructions. All lists were equally represented, there was no protection. Moreover, the President of the National Council complained that the editors of the Ruthenian program on RTV Vojvodina did not broadcast materials where he performed some of the activities on behalf of the National Council during the election campaign².” The justification was that the president was the leader of the list for 2014 elections.

² The justification was that the president was the leader of the list for 2014 elections. Worth mentioning is the following observation: "The media in Ruthenian language were continuously recording the opinions of Ruthenian community on the tasks of the future National Council. When it comes to the print media, citizens generally had a

The situation with other minorities was different. According to field observations, "the lack of publication of the list of electors provoked a revolt in the Croatian community; State justified this as a means of prevention of manipulation."

As for the small minorities, media had little or no role. With the exception of the publication of electoral lists, in the case of the German national minority the elections had no media support.

“March on Hadžet” in Context of the Elections for Bosniak National Council

The Islamic Community in Serbia and the Mufti Muamer Zukorlić organized a gathering on 4 September 2014 where a special attention was drawn by madrasa students in uniforms and flags with national and religious symbols. Although SDA Sandžak Ugljanin was not officially participating in the march some of its members were present. The official occasion for this event was the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the execution of collaborationists from Novi Pazar. There was also the request for the archives that reveal those events to open. This was an opportunity for the president of the Mesihat of Islamic Community Mevlud Dudić and the Mufti Muamer Zukorlić, to present themselves as authentic representatives of the interest of this community. The mayor of Novi Pazar, Meho Mahmutović, reacted. He is the member of the opponent SDP; in his speech he was referring to his political opponents as if they were on the same side: "Their policies are the same, but they have different rhetoric. Zukorlić wants to be both, a religious leader and a politician, and Ugljanin would like to be a politician and a religious leader³. Mahmutović's party leader and Deputy Prime Minister Rasim Ljajić, as well as his deputy in another party, SDPS, Meho Omerović also condemned the event. Omerović pointed

constructive approach to these questions, probably due to the help of journalist who passed the responds through linguistic and editorial filters. Citizens were mainly informed on the areas of the realization of minority rights but there were responses which emphasized that the National Council should also take care of socio-economic status of the community it represents. In the electronic media, mimicry, intonation and simplicity of citizens' responses to the question of what they think of the national councils could not have been hidden. "

³ http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/drustvo/parada-zelenih-uniformi-pretnja-ili-ne_516375.html

out that this was a campaign for the upcoming elections for the Bosniak National Council⁴. This incident spread from Novi Pazar, and turned into inter-ethnic tensions, when members of the "Chetnik Movement" announced that they will organize a similar event⁵. This has opened the door for the organizers of the "March on Hadžet" to continue to present themselves as the fighters for the interests of Bosniaks, with further rising of the tensions among ethnic groups that share a conflicted past. These extreme events certainly had influence on the national mobilization of Bosniaks, and on demands for territorial autonomy of Sandžak and the unification of the Islamic Community.

Majority media were much more interested in such announcements than in the elections itself. "Večernje novosti" reported that Sulejman Ugljanin is asking from the members of his list to "recognize and respect the results of the referendum for the autonomy of Sandžak. This referendum was organized in 1991 (door to door) by the unrecognized Bosniak National Council of Sandžak. If elected for councilors they are obliged to stand for the right to self-determination of Bosniaks ⁶".

On the other hand, Muamer Zukorlić gave a half-hour interview to Kuwaiti television before the "March on Hadžet" and during the election campaign (August 2014). This interview was transmitted by some Sandzak media who are in favor of the mufti. He stated that Sandžak has been "under the occupation of Serbia and Montenegro for hundred years⁷," and that the Serbian government under the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church tried to create a parallel Islamic Community who would obey it⁸.

4 <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/493479/Omerovic-Cudi-izostanak-reakcije-na-setnju-uniformi-u-Novom-Pazaru>

5 <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Drustvo/494055/TENZIJE-I-cetnici-ekstremisti-zele-da-marsiraju-u-Pazaru>

6 <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:511432-SDA-Pravo-Bosnjaka-na-samoopredeljenje>

7 <http://sandzakpress.net/%3Fp%3D110546>

8 The division within the Islamic community happened in 2007. Islamic Community of Serbia is independent rijaset with center in Belgrade and Reis-ul-ulema Adem ef. Zilkic is a head. It is divided into three Meshihats (Serbian, Sandzak and Presevo). The Islamic Community in Serbia is Meshihat of Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has the status of an independent rijaset, and includes Mashihat in Croatia, Slovenia and the Islamic Community of Bosniaks in Germany. IC in Serbia is subdivided into four Muftis, three of which correspond to Meshihats of IC of Serbia, and one is in Novi Sad. Center is in Novi Pazar, and it is led by Mufti Muamer Zukorlić. The representatives of IC in Serbia accuse the leaders of IC of Serbia to be the product of the Serbian authorities (former Ministry of Religious Affairs and DSS) and that want to divide and suppress the Islamic community to their

Textbooks in Bunjevac Language and the Issue of Croats in Serbia

Donation of the textbook of the President of the Republic of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić to the pupils from Bunjevac national community, proved to be a useful litmus test for multiple occurrences. It indicates a complicated ethnic situation in the North Bačka (North Vojvodina). Firstly, this gesture certainly sends a message that the government favors members of the certain communities, whilst the others are facing great problems to exercise their right to education in their mother tongue. This gesture can also mean the support for the current session of the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority, because the printed textbooks can be the strong tool for the future campaign. The fact that the Croats in Serbia belong to the group of communities which still do not have textbooks further complicates the situation. Croats consider Bunjevacs as an alienated part of their community. Furthermore, as the largest Croatian party in Serbia DSHV has for a long time been in a coalition with the DS, securing the benefits for the members of their ethnic group. SNS coming to power DSHV and a part of the Croatian community were left deprived for these rights⁹. This minority was also left without representatives in the National Assembly, and questions about the suffering of Croats in Vojvodina during the nineties are raised again. Therefore, it is not surprising that this event has caused a strong reaction of Croatian National Council (HNV), but the foreign policy tensions as well, as the President of the Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipović and the Prime Minister Zoran Milanović reacted on this occasion¹⁰. Death threats addressed to Mirko Bajić, president of the Alliance of Bačka Bunjevci and holder of one of the lists are another consequence of constant Bunjevacs-Croatian tensions¹¹.

The event, which also reflected the conflicted relationship of these two communities is the ban of the expert conference "Identity Content and the Problems of Bunjevac Croats" in

will. On the other hand, one of the main line of criticism of IC of Serbia on account of IC in Serbia is that it mixes religion and ethnicity, and that behaves as if all Muslims in Serbia were Bosniaks, neglecting others.

⁹ http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/vojvodina/subotica/hrvati-bez-poslanika-u-skupstini-srbije_471688.html

<http://www.hnv.org.rs/aktualnosti.php?op=vise&pid=1108>

¹⁰ [http://www.tanjug.rs/novosti/144240/milanovic--nikoliceva-donacija-nije-korektna.htm?](http://www.tanjug.rs/novosti/144240/milanovic--nikoliceva-donacija-nije-korektna.htm?keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=650&width=850&caption=Tanjug+novinska+agencija...)

[keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=650&width=850&caption=Tanjug+novinska+agencija...](http://www.tanjug.rs/novosti/144240/milanovic--nikoliceva-donacija-nije-korektna.htm?keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=650&width=850&caption=Tanjug+novinska+agencija...)

¹¹ http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/vojvodina/subotica/pretnje-mirku-bajicu-zbog-nikoliceva_518028.html

the Subotica City Hall¹². Although the mayor Jena Maglai (SVM) justified such a decision as preventing disturbance of relationships in a tolerant environment, HNV claimed that the local authorities sided with Bunjevacs, since in the same City Hall was formerly held the ethnological event on the Bunjevac heritage in the organization of the Bunjevac National Council. There is also the fourth side, Subotica Hungarians. The division between Croats and Bunjevacs is bringing them political advantage, because it allows them to easily gain power over the municipality of Subotica. In the end, if we take into consideration the cooperation of the Government of Serbia led by the SNS and the Hungarian authorities, the situation in this part of Vojvodina becomes much clearer.

Tensions with the Albanians

Albanians were also faced with the lack of textbooks, and the uncertainty of whether the children would have them before the beginning of the school year, in the municipalities where they exercise the right to education in mother tongue. In the end the textbook arrived, but Albanian parties were threatening with protests. Much harder tensions followed a month and a half later.

After termination of the football match between Serbia and Albania in Belgrade an inter-ethnic tensions were present throughout the areas inhabited with Albanians. The tensions affected other nationalities too, as Greek community was exposed to the violence in Albania. A month before these events, the Albanian Federal unit “Republic of Ilirida” was declared in Skopje. On the other hand, Albanians and their property were the targets of violence in those places where they represent the minority, especially in towns in Vojvodina. As Albanians are often identified as bakeries and confectioneries’ owners, these kinds of shops were the first to be attacked, although they were not all owned by Albanians¹³. Consequences of such events on the elections are easy to imagine.

12 <http://www.hnv.org.rs/aktualnosti.php?op=vise&pid=1121>

13 Source: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/135/Hronika/1724090/Napadi+na+pekare+Albanaca+.html>

First, significant number of Albanians who live outside the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveđa was discouraged to come out and vote. Analyzed data of the results of the elections by municipalities shows that the turnout outside of the mentioned municipalities was only 13 Albanians. On the other hand, those who live in predominately Albanian communities in South Serbia were disposed to the nationalist mobilization of the parties that oppose cooperation with the authorities in Belgrade. Riza Haljimi's Party for Democratic Action (PDD) which is the parliamentary Albanian party and has also had the majority in Albanian National Council could, in context of these incidents, have easily been interpreted as useless or even harmful for it advocates cooperation with Serbian state institutions.

Boycott of the Elections within Minority Communities

In addition to the aforementioned events news that mostly caused the attention of the general public was the boycotts of the elections of certain social actors and political options within the communities. Proponents of the boycott have usually been the representatives of minority parties which were supported by a smaller part of the community. Although such a move could be interpreted as an attempt of the weaker parties to avoid the competition with predictable and for them the unfavorable result, the offered arguments give a lot of important information.

Bela Čorba, the leader of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians (DSVM) the second largest Hungarian party in Serbia, and the main opponent of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians was the first to call for boycott¹⁴. His explanation was that his party does not want to participate in the elections and doing so give the legitimacy to the elections. Such explanation has not much to do with the competences of the national councils as for him the main argument was the difficulty of the economic situation in the whole country, which caused the Hungarians to leave abroad to "happier European countries". These areas are now being populated by the

14 <http://www.vajma.info/cikk/szerbkiadas/3529/DSVM-nece-da-ucestvuje-na-izborima-za-Nacionalni-savet-Madjara.html>

residents of different culture and different language. The consequence of this process is partly related to the minority education, for Hungarian classes are being shut down, and the teachers are losing their jobs. Still, this was more the attack on SVM for their cooperation with Serbian authorities which affected the interests of Hungarians. There is also an accusation of SVM that entering the government together with SNS it has neglected the issue of rejection of collective guilt of Hungarians who were killed, or sent to concentration camps, and their property was taken in 1944, and 1945. Finally, "SVM took the advantage of financial support from Hungary and benefits of network of contact offices for users of funds, and secured the advantage of his party. For that reason the political competition between Hungarian parties in Vojvodina does not exist anymore", that is why DSVM decided not to participate in the elections.

Civic Alliance of Hungarians (GSM) has also boycotted the elections, but they had a different justification. The argument of Laslo Rac Sabo, the president of GSM, was that his party has already participated in the work of National Council, but its goal to extend the competences of that institution were not realized. On contraire, the competences are even narrower. He also claims that the Law on National Councils of National Minorities has become the biggest threat in achieving cultural and territorial autonomy of Hungarians. Laslo Rac, same as DSVM, finds SVM as the main responsible for this situation. He accused SVM for deliberately preventing the realization of the "real" autonomy that voters really want ¹⁵. The Party of Hungarian Unity from Bečej, which joined boycott on 27 September 2014, used the same argument.

Sandžak People's Party (SNP) had a completely different argument for boycott, in comparison to Hungarian opposition parties. Mirsad Đerlek. The leader of this party said that too large ambitions of the two big Bosniak parties are the main reason not to join the electoral campaign. He warned the potential voters that these parties are of extreme nationalist, military and secessionist ambitions and that this could be harmful for Bosniak people, and for all the citizens living in Sandžak.

¹⁵ It refers to the territorial autonomy of the municipalities where the Hungarians represent majority, on the other hand, there is a cultural autonomy which refers to all Hungarians in Serbia. On the theoretical aspects of the right of minorities to territorial autonomy cf (Ilić, 2010). The request for matching ethnical and territorial borders represents operational definition of the nationalism, by E. Gellner. (Gellner, 1997)

It is interesting that Sulejman Ugljanin, the leader of SDA Sandžak, was also announcing the boycott if his condition was not satisfied. The condition was to enable the representatives of national minorities to participate in the municipal Working bodies, to be present at the polling stations, but also to have access to the Special Voters' Register List (SVRL), in order to avoid the irregularities¹⁶. These conditions were not satisfied; however SDA did not boycott the elections.

Boycott was noted within Vlach community, as well. In the beginning, the representatives of Vlach People's Party (VNP) were not sure if they were going to boycott the elections. The decision was to be made after they were assured that majority parties would not interfere in the electoral process. They were referring to SPS and the part of the SNS which is more in favor to President Tomislav Nikolić, as they already got the promise from the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić that SNS is not going to interfere in elections for Vlach National Council.

VNP announced the boycott on their website, on 22 September 2014. The main justification was that "the people from the authorities" (Members of Parliament, Mayors, board members, directors of the public enterprises) have shown up on the other lists. Those parties had logistic and financial support of the ruling coalition (SPS and SNS). They also said that high positioned official of SNS from Belgrade decides on members of list which was formerly formed by SPS. The representatives of the VNP have also indicated that in East Serbia the members and those in favor of majority parties are enrolling the Special Voters' Register List of Vlach National Minority. VNP find the elections to be the fraud which served as the false proof of respecting the minority rights in Serbia for European Union. They also reminded that in 2010 the members of Vlach national community faced inconveniences, pressure and torture.¹⁷

As for Roma community, Coordinator for Roma issues of Čačak, Miroslav Mitrović, has not directly called for the boycott, but he stated that he personally would not come out for voting. He criticized the Roma National Council on several grounds. Firstly, he criticized it for the impact of majority parties on the electoral campaign, but also for neglecting of Roma community

¹⁶ <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/1701397/Ugljani%3A+Ili+bolji+uslovi+ili+bojkot+izbora.html>

¹⁷ http://www.vdss.org.rs/vucicu_verujemo_ostalima.html

which should be its priority. He also stressed the marginalization of persons belonging to Roma national minority in Southwest Serbia, and emphasized that they had never had any real benefits from national council¹⁸. Jovan Damjanović, former Minister, and member of Democratic left of Roma party, stated that he did not want to run for the elections with representatives of other lists who had more than a problematic past, referring to financial frauds¹⁹.

A reminder, Roma community had the lowest turnout after the Egyptians (28, 37%). This is not only due to the organized boycott, but also due to the social status of the Roma, the fact of them being inadequately informed, and the poor access to polling stations.

Accusations of the Representatives of the Lists for Cooperation with the Majority Political Parties

Slovak community was the exception within bigger communities regarding the boycott. However, some of the problems used for obstruction of legitimacy of the electoral process within other minorities, Slovaks used as arguments in their campaign. Jan Paul, who is said to be close to SNS²⁰, accused the League of Vojvodina Slovaks of using the logo of LSV, and doing so broke the law, due to the fact that citizen parties have no rights to participate in the elections for national minority councils. The main accusation that Paul brought up was addressed to current session of the Slovak Nacional Council saying that it worked as the branch of DS. Apart from that, he accused the president of the Slovak National Council Ana Tomanova Mikanova for misuse of Council's funds, for representing the interests of DS instead of interests of Slovaks, and for the use of financial means of this majority political party in campaign²¹.

18 <http://www.rts.rs/page/radio/sr/story/23/Radio+Beograd+1/1736011/Romano+Them.html>

19 <http://www.dlr.rs/index.php?lang=en>

20 His party also called for Slovaks to support SNS at the Elections in March 2014. Source: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/2208/Izbori+2014/1543387/Slova%C4%8Dka+stranka+podr%C5%BEala+listu+SNS-a.html>

21 http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/vojvodina/paul-savet-slovaka-produzena-ruka-ds-a_518729.html

The elections were conducted in a relatively positive social context. There had been concerns on possible incidents in campaign and on the Election Day for the Bosniak National Council, taking into consideration the inter-ethnic tensions within this national community. Nevertheless, according to the observation of our observers the campaign had been run in quite calm atmosphere. Such calm atmosphere was not expected in Novi Pazar and Sandžak for there were some announcements of coalitions, uniting and reconciliations. However, Sulejman Ugljanin participated in the elections independently when realized that any kind of coalition with Muamer Zukorlić or with the party of Bosniak Democratic Community could have led to dispersion of members of SDA, and the loss of support for the elections.²²

Those who denied existence of the fair elections found an alternative way of announcing: “they organized a theatre play “Đevrasim Cvijan for president”. Dragan Marinković- Maca played the main role, with the message “Vote for Me, for My Better Future”. The idea was to delegitimize the elections, and to discourage the voters of coming out to vote in general, apart from incidents in Tutin, the elections were conducted in a calm atmosphere.²³

According to field observations, Catholic Church from Subotica changed its option in comparison to last elections: “Even though the Church supported one list at the last elections (there was only one list running for the elections), that was not the problem because it was the

22 Observer from Sandžak on the Mufti’s List: „They are also using the calm rhetoric. This is unusual for Muamer who typically says whatever is on his mind; he is also saying the things that no one else would dare to say. The rumour has it that he has a support of the state. If anyone else made such kind of statements he would have been arrested immediately. But in this case he is quite easy on the opponents. He is just mildly attacking.” The other observation: „The campaign was quiet, no incident occurred. Even the poster champagne was fair. The half of the wall was covered by Ugljanin’s posters, and the other half by Zukorlić’s posters. Opponent’s posters were not being destroyed. “

23 The observer from Ruthenian national minority remarked: "The premises of some Cultural Centers have also been opened to all lists and their forums, for example. in "RKC - Ruthenian Cultural Centre" in Novi Sad, almost all the lists maintained their forums and introduced their visitors with their ideas. It was different in other places, especially in Đurđevo. In Đurđevo we have not even tried to keep the presentation because we knew that the Cultural Center was "busy". Besides, in this place military discipline was present also the pressure that nobody goes to another list, which is actually a management policy of Cultural Center "Taras Shevchenko" located at the top of the list "Together for Ruthenians" Slavko Rac (DS). The media survey was characterized by a significant number of texts from Đurđeva, but not related to the elections, in other words - silence, under pressure from the Democratic Party. "

right choice within community. This year, on the other hand, a representative of Church supported the list “Dr Tomislav Stantić.”²⁴

The Influence of Political Parties on the Work of National Minority Councils (PARTIZATION)

The often mentioned issue was also the influence of the political parties on the work of national councils (partization) which has affected overall process of the 2014 elections. Minority parties are the exception from the provision of law which prevents political parties to nominate their own lists in the elections. This constellation of rules has its consequences. Firstly, differences between the minority communities caused by difference in number of members are deepening. The most powerful minority parties, such as Hungarian (SVM), Bosniak (SDA Sanžaka) and Albanian (PDD) have a greater impact than various other parties by virtue of being the parliamentary party. Their power is immense over the power of smaller national (majority) parties which political organization could be of impact only on a local level. The same goes for the weaker parties of the three aforementioned national communities which in the campaign are facing an opponent who has much more resources to persuade voters. The power of one political party is significantly determined by its cooperation with the Serbian government, or even by participation in it²⁵, and by the support of a kin state. This kind of support is determined by foreign policy factors. Therefore, it is not surprise that Hungarian list under the patronage of SVM has had well organized, expensive campaign, while the German or Czech lists had to meet their internal funds. These funds were not sufficient even for the informing of the voters, let alone for motivating them to enroll the Special Voters' Register List or to come out and vote. The co-operation between influential parties and National Minority Councils does not end on the Election Day; it is further developed during the whole mandate of the councils. It is the interest

²⁴ The observer from Subotica

²⁵ The observer from Novi Sad quotes older Hungarian: "The National Council, since it cooperates with the government, is working better. That is really good, this government is better than the last one, and it stands for people, and then the National Council cooperates better with people".

of political parties to have their representatives in the Councils the longest possible, for that is the way they satisfy the appetites of some of its members for a paid jobs. There is also the fact that over the control of the National Council political parties may indirectly provide support for an even wider range of party associates, or to deny the support to their opponents. By associates it is meant the potential school principals, language teachers and subject teachers in the minority language, minority media journalists, employees of cultural institutions, artists and writers of the textbooks. If the minority party has the ability to help members of the community to get a job at a public institution, at least at the local level, that person would feel a responsibility to support the party, but also would fear that otherwise it would lose party's affection of which his or her salary depends.

Moreover, the triumph in the elections for national council of the list that certain political party supported represents a clear demonstration of the power and the support which that party enjoys in the community. It could also mean a strong political defeat of the rival parties. The better voting result won by the opponents of the common list of parliamentary Movement for Democratic Action (PDD) and the Democratic Union of Albanians "Coalition for the Rights of Albanians" casts doubt on the legitimacy of the PDD. One observer, a member of the Albanian community, wondered how it was possible that the party which had won the parliamentary elections with 24,000 votes now in a coalition with another party won only 5,788 votes. The elections for national councils are, therefore, used not only to maintain the current political constellation, but for its violation, as well. Moreover, the supporters of the Albanian parties that have achieved a better result²⁶ - and which are also nationalist parties- celebrated the victory that evening.

26 Jonuz Musliu, newly elected President of the Albanian National Council during the campaign advocated for the use of the flag of the Republic of Albania as a symbol of Albanians in Serbia, the use of textbooks from Albania and Kosovo, and stated that he will stand for a referendum on the union of municipalities with a majority of Albanian population and Kosovo. Riza Halimi and Saip Kamberi from PDD had less radical demands, particularly with regard to the last question. Source: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/jonaz-musliu-nas-put-je-prema-tirani-i-pristini/26671614.html>

One more issue is that the obvious impact of majority parties over minority ones is completely over control, but at the same time tolerated in practice.²⁷ In proposed names of the lists it is noticeable that certain lists' names contain parts of the names of supporting political parties, or in case of the League of Vojvodina Slovaks even the coat of SVM. It was obvious that the Ruthenian list of "Youth for the Future" had some kind of financial support for a numerous flyers and posters, as its members were students with no income. The identity of the sponsor has ceased to be a secret when this list had its final conference held at the Cultural Center of Novi Sad, chaired by Andrej Fajgelj, who is a member of the political party The Third Serbia. Leading Vlach list had the full support of SPS, as that list consisted of high positioned officials of SPS, such as the president of the municipality of Petrovac na Mlavi who is also a director of several public companies. This list also had the support of a part of SNS loyal to the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolic and his son Radomir. In the case of the Vlach minority it could be seen that support of certain party may not be sufficient for success. "Vlach Unification Movement" led by Slobodan Perić, who is SNS Member of Parliament, won 909 votes and 2 mandates.

Minority communities which count a couple of thousands of members are not immune to the political parties' influence, or the influence of their local boards, to be precise. The same applies to even more numerous national minorities in certain municipalities. The benefits for both sides in this political symbiosis may be multiple, as in case of both, provincial and republic authorities.

Either the supporting party was majority party or the powerful influential minority party; the consequences are easy to be noticed. Coming from the political party, the financing can vastly affect the success of the list, since the lists do not have the funding for the campaign provided. Powerful minority parties, such as SVM or DSHV, can provide for their lists appearance on the media they control or the billboards and paid advertisements on the Internet. It

²⁷ Associate from Ruthenian community gave this description of the situation: "My impression is that the lists 1, 2, 3, are directly associated with political parties (1 - LSV, DS 2 and 3), list 4 is close to SNS and the organization " Ruska Matka ", list 5 is DS' youth list, list 6 in cooperation with a list 4, only lists 7 has nothing to do with any party or organization in particular! What a de-partization of national councils! "

should be borne in mind that SVM has state secretaries in the Government of Serbia, and that DSHV is actually a part of DS, which controls the Government of Vojvodina and its resources. The same can be applied to "non-minority parties": SPS in the case of the winning Vlach list or SDP Rasim Ljajic when it comes to Roma. In addition to legal procedures in the campaign (advertising and media appearances) the party funds also enable a vote-buying, a position in the state apparatus, and a blackmailing of the voters. This could be also seen from the charges that Predrag Balašević, Vlach People's Party, addressed at the mayor of Petrovac na Mlavi²⁸, whose position at the local level allowed him to control the electoral process. This is not an isolated case of conflict of interests and possible misuse of power, as Aleksandar Zaharijev, leader of the Bulgarian list that won the most of the votes, is also president of the municipality (mayor of Bosilegrad).

On the other hand, the lists that had symbolic budgets had to limit their work to volunteered work in the field: in real or cyber space. However, financial support is not the only aspect of the party- influence on the electoral process. Party logistics (membership, committees), as well as the infrastructure which parties own were often used. Our observer from Croatia community noticed: DSHV could be an example of this phenomenon. Under the infrastructure here we can also consider the media, working offices, pressrooms, as well as various events where it was possible to promote the list. It can also be the state property as in the case of the Hungarian list that was supported by SVM which used the school facilities²⁹ for its promotion. SVM represent the most drastic example of misuse of state resources. SVM sent the invitations for the elections signed by Istvan Pastor to postal addresses of voters, which indicated the access to the Special Voters' Register List and its misuse. On the other hand, this could have been an attempt to assure voters that SVM had such information. The first case is more likely if we take into account observations from the field and the fact that Hungarians knew that SVM through its activists had organized a registration in the Special Voters' Register List in 2010, and since then they have owned personal data of voters. This information came from the observers from

28 Izvor: http://www.vdss.org.rs/intervju_sa_predragom_balasevicem_7_novembar_2014.html

29 But, as the observer from Kikinda quoted, they engaged the minor students from those schools for distribution of the flyers in Tornjös where they also wore T-shirts with slogans of the "Hungarian Unity" list.

Kikinda and from a place in Bačka. DSHV committed similar misuse, since members of the Croatian community in Subotica were invited by phone to come at a certain time in the party premises and give their support to an elector, but they were not told to whom exactly. The observer from Subotica, who himself received a call, supposed that this was the way of collecting statements of support for those electors who were missing certain number of signatures.³⁰

Within the Ruthenian community in Đurđevo an anachronistic way of political behavior has been noticed: an influential family at the local level is very close to one majority political party, and its members always end up to be representatives in the National Council. A Poling Board in the village was consisted of people considered to be "assistants" of a mentioned family, while the second part of the board was transporting voters. One particular kind of political skill, which observers from the field described as "disgraceful behavior", "well established teamwork" and "great capability" has played an important role. Someone who is not otherwise involved in the political life does not have such skills. When received a call to vote from some political party rarely did the citizens refused to go, according to observers from Bačka. We should not forget - these are small communities where the majority of the members know each other well. Everyone knows where the other live, or where the other works or how can favor could be returned to someone, or even how to revenge for mistrust. Observers from the Hungarian community stated that there were cases of refusal to participate in the elections under opponent's list, as well as the withdrawal of a candidacy, for being under pressure. The situation when more lists were sponsored by various parties was not desirable, and was carrying a lot of risks. We

30 "Significant fact was that, in the very beginning, the Croatian list "Dr Slaven Bačić" and electors who had signed this list had a far better position comparing to the other list. In fact, they had the insight into the list of names and addresses of those who had signed for their electors four years ago. In fact, even though I did not support any of the electors, unlike in 2010, neither did my family members, we have received a phone call from the elector of this list. They wanted me and the members of my family to come at certain time to offices of DSHV in order to support the electors. When I asked for the name of the elector, because I wanted to know who I will give my support to, they told me nothing, which implied that I would give the signature to those who lack a signature. My wife (not a member of any political party, but she supported the list of "Dr Slaven Bačić") who previously got the job in the government office due to the support and intervention of the officials of DSHV, stated that on this year elections in some way she did not have the choice (not based on the real threats but on the personal fear), but to sign the list of "Dr Slaven Bačić". Otherwise she would face the possibility of losing their support in the future." (The note of the observer of electoral elections of Croatian national minority)

already mentioned the case of the Slovak party Jan Paul, which had the support of SNS³¹, thus had the ability and obligation to criticize the current session of the National Council for the support enjoyed by the DS. Actually, the Slovak National Council constituted after previous elections was a branch of the DS. Representatives from the list of "Slovaks Forward" Pavel Surovy were also conducting an extremely negative campaign against the current session and have spent significant resources for that. The campaign was conducted publicly, with billboards, but also secretly. Observers say that the reporter of one print media in Slovak language published a pamphlet for this party and charged about 1,000 dinars for it. Representatives of two lists loyal to SNS also accused the list of "Slovak Heritage society in Serbia," claiming that the institution behind it is also "manipulated by a certain party". Neither of these accusations was unfounded, as the representatives of this list were mainly from the SPS, and partly from the DS. Finally, even the last remaining Slovak list was not without a party behind it. As mentioned before, the "League of Slovaks of Vojvodina" besides the part of the name of LSV used their coat of arms as well. The consequences of the general partization and negative campaign of some of the lists had its consequence that Slovaks' turnout ended up to be very low (31%), which is definitely disappointing for a national minority, which has a very developed cultural capacities: events, institutions, prominent artists and so on. The observer of the Slovak community offers an explanation which can stand here as a conclusion: the large number of "ordinary voters" felt betrayed, as they believed that candidates of the lists were "politicians eager of the functions."

The incident that occurred within Croatian community indicated that the administration of public companies could influence the election process, as well. In fact, on the way to Belgrade to Electoral assembly, public transportation bus "Suboticatrans" with 50 electors from the list of "Dr Slaven Bačić" broke. With the additional effort on the very spot, and the additional cost of 100 Euros, the electors have arrived in Belgrade in time. The representatives of the rival list of Tomislav Stantić rejected accusations that it was a deliberate diversion. Apparently the owner of the company Subotica-Public Companies ("although Serb") from sympathy for the lady from the

31 Izvor:<http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/2208/Izbori+2014/1543387/Slova%C4%8Dka+stranka+podr%C5%BEala+listu+SNS-a.html>.

rival lists tried to prevent their arrival in Belgrade, and thus significantly change the results of the elections³². It is hard to determine what has really happened, but this story testifies the atmosphere in which the elections were conducted, as well as the means of political fight, which were used.³³

The influence of the political parties on the electoral process and on the work of the national councils (partization) is harmful for achieving the minority self-government. Citizens are losing trust in the institutions. One Ruthenian observer expressed his experience: "what good came from the fact that I had the patience and was explaining to everyone, distributing flyers all over the village? I wanted my people to benefit from my experience "... 'I am so naive "...but we will see the results, perhaps I was just afraid of what the results will be when the polls are closed. He continued: "I went to vote, I did not know whether to do it because it is already known who will win, but my conscience won, so I came for voting ... but it seems I was wrong, I can see what is happening, and who is standing next to the ballot box."

32 A similar interpretation of the event was presented in the RTV News in Croatian language on 27 October 2014, which is consistent with the previously observed tendency that the redactions of minority media are inclined to the current sessions of the National Councils.

33 Note and cursive of the CDCS observer:

"The rhetoric that was used during and after the campaign has certainly influenced that many permanently opt against one or against the other side (winners and losers in this election, whatever that means) and that the HNV's actions and decisions will again be reflected within the same scale and within the same circle of people. The statement of the President of DSHV, Petar Kuntić, after the election is more than symptomatic when it comes to retrograde rhetoric: "The stakes were much too big for Croatia and for Dr Slaven Bačić' list. Getting the majority of councilors was our imperative. We worked a lot in DSHV and associations throughout Vojvodina. We listened to the pulse of the people and in the end the people decided. The people were for Croatian list of Dr Slaven Bačić the means and the ends. We did not use shortcuts in decision making and we didn't make hasty and unfounded decisions. By all the means we tried not to fall into the surface flatness and apologetic weakness. At any time, we considered the coherent historical perspective of our nation. /.../ the victory was clear as a bell, without stains and doubt. It is a victory of the people, the Croatian people, who concluded that the 'Croatian list of Dr Slaven Bačić' will be its best advocate. /.../ the sun grew hot, and for all of us participants this was the hottest day of the year. We are proud of our victory. For that we have the right. Especially, since we had a very strong opponent. Among them there were our opponents who were the largest and fiercest opponents of our coalition with DS in the past. They turned out to be unskilled in agitation, which ended up in the mud of politicking. But is not the time for them. It's never good to cheat people. Let's leave it to their voters. "The observer gave the following comment:" The statement (press release), I have to admit, seems too funny and unprofessionally written for a president of a party, and it only confirms the fact that this year's elections were understood as a struggle and victory over others, and not as a field of democracy (...). I sincerely hope that in four years, the Croats will choose their representatives for their umbrella body in a dignified way, through direct elections.

Or: "The election results are not so surprising considering how much pressure was put to people by the list "Hungarian Union" whose main message was that only they can represent the interests of Hungarians in Vojvodina. What about the other Hungarians who do not share the opinion of SVM? Many of our potential candidates refused to accept the invitation to be on our list (there were later withdrawals from the list) because of the possible pressure on them or even a possible job loss in the institutions in which they work. Frankly, we were expecting at least three seats in the National Council. Our list "For Hungarians in a different way – Fodor Laszlo" took second place after "Hungarian Union" in the municipality of Novi Bečej in all six polling stations. That was my priority before the elections; I'm not satisfied with the number of votes we took.³⁴"

The elections for national councils were conducted in a calm atmosphere, and that is a significant success. Further erosion of minority self-government and its institutions through being under party's influence is associated with dominance of the political parties over the entire public life and the state authorities of Serbia. In terms of exercising the minority rights, this has particularly negative consequences.

The system of protection of minorities includes the existence of external and internal protection. Will Kymlicka has developed this double concept, to protect the special minority community of the state and to protect the individuals from the tyranny of ethno-cultural communities. (Kimlika, 2002) Minority rights represent the correction of the liberal conceptions of citizenship and of injustice that is inherent to this concept.³⁵ (Podunavac, 2000)

³⁴ The field notes of the election observer. The following statement is from the political forum of the municipality of Novi Bečej: "According to the former President of the Hungarian National Council, the winner of the elections is already familiar, whether people voted or not, for that is politics." The associate of the Centre for Development of Civil Society commented on this: "The four lists should make the arrangement and propose their best staff members, so the Hungarian National Council could function in an effective way. Otherwise we will have the National Council of SVM. National councils for national minorities will not be de-partized in this country for a long time. And my conclusion is that if the members of the Hungarian national minority cannot achieve the consensus on the political party scene, they should try to achieve it within the national council, but unfortunately a major influence of personal relations and politics still exists."

³⁵ More on this Ilić (2009a; 2009b), Lošoc (2003; 2007)

The ways of achieving these rights in Serbia affect the external and internal protection of national minorities. Some of the national councils (e.g. Slovak, Croatian, and Romanian) after the previous elections actually represented the offices of certain majority political parties. In numerous minorities, such as Hungarian, the method of the elections for the National Council represents the abolition of internal protection of minorities: its members are divided into those that comply with the requirements of the dominant elite within ethno-cultural communities and the Others. The theory has actually predicted this.

Misuse of the National Council Leadership

The (mis)use of the National Councils by the current leadership is a significant problem. A rudimentary form of the misuse is the allocation of the budget funds of the Council for the campaign, which is usually justified as they were used in other purposes as provided by law. Official Internet and Facebook pages of the certain National Councils (Hungarian and Roma) were often used as propaganda tools in the campaign; where the contents related to the program of the current session of the National Council were available. Other resources were used for the same purposes: phones, photocopiers, scanners and other technical equipment. An observer from the Croatian community claims that the telephone and other bills of the Croatian National Council were multiplied during the campaign. Furthermore, the Elections for National Minority Councils were conducted immediately before the Belgrade Book Fair, which opened maneuver space for the current leadership of the Councils to promote new print editions. The second event related to the date of the elections was the beginning of the school year. Therefore, the distribution of the textbooks was a good opportunity for promotion.

Such misuses are well tested on local, provincial and national elections, and do not represent an exception or innovation.

Personalization of the Lists

Partization (the influence of the political parties on the work of national councils) of the national councils is necessarily followed by another well-known feature of the political culture in Serbia, personalization, i.e. the reduction of certain political options on one or several of its most prominent members. Such a reduction is both factual - organizations are centralized and hierarchical, decisions are made by one person or a few of them - but such personalization exists also in the minds of voters who (correctly) do not distinguish between the party and its leaders³⁶. Here the issue of internal protection of minority rights arises again, which had previously been indicated (by Kimlika, Ilic, Lošonc). As the leader represents his party by the overall image of his public figures, the arguments in the political struggle are commonly personal by nature, and sometimes completely saturated with insults and attempts on disqualifying the opposing leaders. It is no wonder that this feature is even more pronounced in the politics of minorities, since many of their members personally know the prominent political actors, and are often engaged with them in a more intimate relationship (neighbors, classmates, colleagues, relatives ...). An observer from Novi Pazar has represented the situation and quote that perfectly reflect the attachment of voters to their party leaders. An elderly woman who went to the polling station accompanied by her son's wife asked her to help her "Daughter in law, come see where Suljo is here, I do not know how to read."³⁷ Many of the Slovak minority give the impression that "in their minds there is only one figure - a longtime President of the Council and they know that it is 'something important', but most do not know what (national council) actually does," as quoted by knowledgeable observer on the ground. An observer of the Ruthenian community has gained the impression that people do not want to understand that the National Council is not one man, but a lot of people acting within its mandate. The situation is not much different in smaller communities, the German for example, with the difference that personalization of the list may seem repulsive to voters. The observer from Novi Sad conveyed the attitude of an elderly

³⁶ Or, in the context of this study, national minority association

³⁷ Novi Pazar participant's comment: Onlu Allah is one. I will vote for the one who stopped this youth going to war. Half of Pazar wouldn't have been here today if it weren't for Suljo who saved them in the toughest of times. (an elderly man spoke, went behind the screen, came to the ballot box and put his voting paper in).

German woman who said she does not want to vote since one of the representatives of the German Association lists is using the association for personal purposes and that he has even privatized the association's chambers. "I'm not interested in elections with such people."

On the other hand, if a national minority has no undisputed leader (or, in the case of minorities such as Bosniaks and Albanians, leaders) in circumstances in which the institutions are not functioning or functioning poorly, there is a risk of reduced national mobilization. For example, Bunjevacs, in the absence of a strong and recognizable leader, had the opportunity to vote for one of the nine lists, which is quite a number for a relatively small community. The observer from Subotica interpreted this as domination of personal interests and aspirations, which diluted the body of voters. There was no "minority charismatic leader" that would overcome these problems.

Incompetence of the Members of the Councils

The decisive word of "professional politicians" has a very negative consequence when it comes to national councils. In fact, it often happens that the decisions regarding culture and language are made by people who have a completely different type of competence (doctors and engineers), or, in turn, by people who are not educated enough to be able to seriously address the areas of work of the National Council. The Ruthenian community criticized that car mechanics, merchants, craftsmen and doctors were not competent to take care of the cultural life of the community, as they are not professional enough, and often are not knowledgeable in the field of education, culture, language or media, as observers from the community reported. There were especially vocal criticisms coming from the Croatian community, many of whose members claimed that the only goal of Croatian National Council (HNV) was that its staff received their salaries, as quoted by the observer from Subotica³⁸. You could hear that HNV misused funds

³⁸ A Croat from Subotica, who passed by the polling station, noticed: "The Vojvodina Croat Culture Institute prints up to thousand books a year, if they wanted to print school textbooks, they could have...They only had 600 missing textbooks." According to the spectator, this research topic "generally does not agree with the „strong current in the National Council, they are too hard“

given to it, because it distributes them only to their close associates, or people close to the party DSHV, while the young and promising people are not given the opportunity to contribute to the community³⁹.

A source from the Slovak community adds that many intellectuals do not want to run in the elections, because they believe that the act of doing politics could harm their reputation⁴⁰. When it comes to preparing this year's election, the voters of the Slovak minority disapproved that the lists do not represented young people up to thirty years, "probably because young Slovaks from Serbia in large numbers are leaving the country, or are not interested or do not see their future here, and have no reason to fight for it." The absence of ethnic intellectual elite among the electoral lists was also criticized "Although the list consists of highest number of candidates with higher education, among which there are masters and PhDs, one gets the impression that most of the" intellectual elite "is not included in the electoral operations for National Council nor in the work of the National Council in the previous term. Some of them have publicly distanced themselves from the work of National Council after its early politicization. "It is worth repeating that the conversion of the Slovak National Council in a branch of the Democratic Party and the removal of the external system of protection of minority rights, led to the same result.

This was also visible in the case of objections to the work of the previous session of HNV. To the question "What do they mind and what do they criticize with the previous session of the National Council, what lists, individual candidates, legal solutions?", this answer was obtained : "The legal solution that centralizes activities of the HNV favors political parties and excludes activism and also the influence of people in the local communities. The transfer of powers in the field of minority policies on local level would significantly increase the process of

39 As one spectator in Subotica noticed: "The biggest criticism from the people to the previous HNV session is in regard to education. It is most likely that they were criticized because there was most work done in that area, but there was still place for criticism. A part of textbooks which were allegedly provided, were not deliver to students on time, not even to this day, say the parents. From a Croatian class in one school from Subotica, five students dropped out. Reasons for this are still unknown."

40 As noted by one voter from Novi Sad „They (in Slovak National Council) took their functions and they're mostly working for themselves. They're not wotking for the community“

democratization of minority communities, as opposed to existing centralized isolation. Previous HNV assembly was in the scope of its powers trying to do something in the field of culture, education, information and official use of language, but progress in these areas was minimal. The biggest stumbling block was certainly the non-implementation of the Interstate Agreement between Croatia and Serbia, after which Serbia was obliged to ensure direct participation of Croats in the National Assembly (special polling units for minorities)⁴¹. "

It should be borne in mind that, when it comes to external protection of minority rights, the previous session of HNV actually represented a part of the client network of the DS. And when it comes to their internal security, it was damaged by the DSHV's political party performance which, as previously stated, acted as a "State Party" of Croats in Serbia.

National declared Bunjevacs had similar comments. On the question of observers' What do you mind in the previous session of the National Council? ", The answer was," We mind that members of the Council were overcome by personal interests instead of the general or the interests of the national body. "Another interviewee said:" Domination of personal interests in order to sustain personal material, moral and the dominant interests. "Remarks made at the polling station could be summarized in this comment:" Of course they were the only ones who had the program and specific proposals, since they didn't allow anyone else to work, in order to maintain such a position. "This comment was followed by a second participant's observation: "If they didn't let you work, did they forbid you to think?" Voters contacted for Bunjevac National Council disapproved of his previous legislature authoritative approach to decision making and "populism" and praised the building of systems and structures of the body of the Bunjevac National Council as the achievements of the previous session.

41 Some other answers to this question are equally verbal „You think that the previous HNV session, as well as the entire leadership of the Croatian community in Serbia, and we have said that the same people lead all out institutions, wasn't really comfortable with its role, so that now the position of Croatian community in Serbia is even worse.“ Or: „Enemies to our community were found everywhere, we have not succeeded in making friends with any community, with any institution, with any level of the government, even the state of Croatia and the church have been accused to have brutally interfered in order to harm the community“

Predrag Balašević, president of Vlach People's Party, which boycotted the elections for the National Council of the community, noted that "the state is forcing the politicized part of the community with the help of gynecologists, teachers of physics and music to standardize the Vlach language while not wanting to hear the voice of professionals and scientists"⁴². "The same political party accuses the current convocation that the training of teachers for the school subject Vlach language with elements of national culture was inadequate as far as the speakers and as far as the space in which it is held (one pizzeria in Negotin)."⁴³

The Lack of Plans of National Councils or Their Inefficiency

The incompetence or inadequate competence of the national council members certainly contributes to the poor managing and planning the activities of the councils. It can even lead to complete absence of plans and results. The "programs" of most of the lists include the general guidelines, usually copied from the competences given by the Law on National Councils of National Minorities. Proposed program of specific lists often has nothing to do with the legal framework of the work of national councils, but is usually related to economy or politics. According to the statement of one informed observer from Novi Pazar, many Bosniaks in this town perceived the Bosniak National Council as Construction Company that will pave the roads and build water supplies. He added that Sulejman Ugļjanin promised even the construction of factories, airports, heliports and distribution of agriculture machines and new vacancies, beside this basic construction work. Others, as already mentioned, were confident that the Bosniak National Council has the competence to decide upon the autonomy of Sandžak or unification of all Muslims in Serbia (although not all the Muslims in Serbia are ethnic Bosniaks). Neither of citizens came to these misinterpretations regarding the national council's competences by themselves, but they were convinced so by the representatives of the two lists that have participated in the campaign. However, this was not difficult to do, since it is easy to manipulate

42 http://www.zajednicavlahasrbije.com/intervju_sa_predragom_balasevicem_7_novembar_2014.html

43 http://www.vdss.org.rs/protest_vns_povodom_zloupotrebe_naziva_zajednica_vlaha_srbije.html

the voters whose existential needs are unsatisfied. They introduced the elections for the Bosniak National Council as the local elections, where voters could elect institutions that could solve all of these problems. Likewise, many of the Hungarians were convinced that these elections were "ordinary elections". One observer from the Ruthenian community noted that the presentations of the lists were usually limited to the monologues of their representatives, while the problems they highlighted had nothing to do with the main difficulty voters were facing – the reduced number of students registered for the Ruthenian classes.

Going outside the framework of the competences of the national councils of national minorities represents a potential risk. Some participants of the campaign had even promised a different allocation of economic resources among different ethnic groups in Serbia. According to the theory of ethnic competition, in order to turn the competition of different ethnic groups into an ethnic conflict, it is first necessary, that a difference between these groups in the economic and social plan exists, and secondly, that this difference is perceived as rather unfair. (Hechter, 1978, Belanger, Pinard, 1991) It was clear that some of the campaigners' promises implicitly, but clearly, suggested that such injustice truly existed. By giving unrealistic promises in their campaigns they neglected their responsibility towards civil peace.

False promises are usually accompanied by the lack of work control. The particular problem was the lack of transparency in the work, especially within the financial activities of the national councils, which was reported by the source from the Slovak community. He added that it is not surprising that Slovaks do not know much about the importance of the national council, because even if someone from this community wanted to put an effort and get additional information about its specific activities, he/she could not find any data about them.

Uninformed and Uninterested Voters

Bearing in mind all the aforesaid, it is not surprising that a great number of persons belonging to national minorities are uninformed about the work, or even the existence of the

national councils⁴⁴. Observer from Hungarian community noted: "People around me were poorly informed about the work and purpose of the national council. I get the impression that many of them do not know now what the elections were for; not even now, after the elections". Informed members of the community are often prone to give little significance to the national councils⁴⁵. An observer from Kula estimated that 90% of the Ruthenians identifies National Council with politics. In Đurđevo the passengers on the street were more interested in who paid for flyers, than for what is written on them. We could often hear the statement "we do not have any benefit of the elections "and "It will be as the Government says anyways". When asking why they do not participate more, now that they have the opportunity to choose those who will make the decisions, a participant would often get the answer along with laugh, "You are so naive!" The paradox that one candidate of the Ruthenian list, and our observer, has spotted was that he and his associates did not have in mind the lack of information of their countrymen when they were preparing the program. They made the program according to the legal framework of the work of the national councils. They realized the mistake only in the field, when it became clear that potential voters do not even know what these institutions should do. The observers from Croatian community have gained the impression that the very perception of "politicization" of the Croatian National Council reduces the motivation of the members to vote⁴⁶. In these

44 Observer of the Bosniak national minority recorded: "Elderly lady, about 60 years old, came to the polling station and asked: "I came here in order to vote. So, whom should I vote for? I have been voting for 40 years. I never miss the elections. What are these elections for? (after informed that the elections are for National Minority Councils) Ooh, that! Then I will vote for both of them!"

45 "Going to the polling station is worth a dirty shoe", a Ruthenian stated.

46 This was most obvious within the Croatian community, since it is quite clear that the current session of the Council is influenced by DSHV and the opponent Dr Tomislav Stantić a former member of G 17+. Therefore, even voters who gave the signature for one of the two lists have commented that they do not see the purpose of the elections, as in any way the parties would continue to make decisions, and that among the members of the CNC only "the councillors who are loyal to a certain party, will be welcomed, and not the citizen provenance" a middle-aged Croatian woman stressed.

Pessimism was noticed at the campaign for the elections for the Ruthenian National Council, as well: "With most of the attention they listened to me, not always, but mostly. I always pay attention to whether I was clear and as simple as possible when explaining all the answers or have a micro exposure. But the hardest thing is when they ask, "What can you do there all alone? You will be the nineteenth; you will have to cooperate with the majority." I always answered that it is difficult. The thing is that people usually give up at the beginning giving the opportunity to other lists, which representatives are already known as the eternal members of the council. When I say to them there is no giving up they are amazed, as if they did not think about that. They did not think that there is a need to fight until the end and this fight means to go out and vote. After the elections they ask me to justify why someone else won, and that is usually someone who they already characterized as a bad "sheriff". In simple words it would sound like this: "Ok, you are great, people should vote for you, but in any case the worse is going to win."

circumstances the lists that had more resources achieved a much better result. This is proved by the words of an older Hungarian from Bečej: "I do not know what these elections are about; but I have seen on television the elaboration of the SVM program and their program I like the best." A similar impression related to the media and the elections for national minority councils has been noted in other communities.

The information on the electoral process has been reduced mainly to promotion of the certain lists - whether as an obligation of RTV or in paid terms –while the information on the competences and the work of the council were not mentioned at all⁴⁷. The exception was the campaign of the Conference of Roma associations “Amen sija but Roma” (“There are a lot of us Roma”) which called Roma to vote and informed them about the importance of a national council.⁴⁸

It was the same on the Election Day. The observer for Đurđevo noted that only those who were contacted personally- by phone, or if someone came to their home⁴⁹ to take them to the polling station, actually came to vote. Voters who were interested in the elections could have had other motivation than the one related to the capacities of the national councils. The motivation

47 Field recording of the election observer from Ruthenian national minority: "I was sharing the promotional material in the center of the main street; the people were friendly and were taking flyers. However, when I would mention," On the 26th October the elections for a new session of the National Council of Ruthenian National Minority “they would only ask “What number should circle? “ I was disappointed. When trying to explain what my list have in plan, for what we want to advocate, I would usually get a friendly smile, but a remark also. "Ok, very well, we know that you want the best for us," and "It does not matter, I will circle what you say, "" I do not have time "... Impression - pensioners were most grateful, and they listened to what I had to say and they had questions, but they as others were reserved. You could feel that people have other problems and that they are rarely occupied with these things, it is in such a situation irrelevant to them. Only when certain person familiar to them is mentioned they would pay attention, I guess out of respect toward that person"

48 <http://www.ligaroma.org.rs/sr/novosti/kalendar-dogadaja/detaljidogadjaja/13/-/izadi-i-glasaj-amen-sijam-but-roma-konferencija-za-novinare.html>

49 “The elections will take place in four days, but it is still unpopular topic among the people. It is time of harvest, people work in the field. They are a bit nervous because of the bad weather and cold. All the work that they are doing is outside in the cold. My friend and I, both from the same list, went to the market to share the flyers together with the plan where all our candidates are represented. However, there was no market, it was very cold, we encountered a few people and we gave them the flyers. That day, for the first time, we came across someone who said he knew about the elections. These were two people who even knew who was on the list. We were amazed!!! After this we stayed to share the flyers on the cold, but with a smile on our faces. We were handing out flyers, primarily reminding them that they should turn out to vote, presenting them also with a list of our plans. "

could have arrive from the loyalty to a certain party, or from the hate for some other party, but sometimes also from the need to express its national identity by going out for voting. The observer from Novi Pazar recorded some interesting quotations of the voters which reflect on the elections as the manner of showing loyalty to leader, in an open way, at the polling station: “These are not elections, this is nonsense, I swear to Allah! But still, man has to vote. I would never come to vote on these elections if there was not for Babo (he means Muamer Zukorlić). When he shows his teeth everybody gets scared, they run and hide. And for this reason, I will vote!” The others, on the other hand, saw the elections as a chance to resolve every problem of the community, same as one voter who said:” Selam alejkum gentlemen! Praise the today’s victory! Let Allah helps us all. I know for whom will I vote- don’t you dare look at me- it was enough, enough of them riding us like horses and laughing at our faces. It is time! Enough, enough! Stop torturing this poor people.”

A voter from Novi Pazar, about 50 years old, claimed that turn out for voting is of extreme importance, because that is the way to improve visibility of the community and to show its size. Here is the quotation from our observer: “Everyone has to vote. They should turn out to the elections, vote and show to the world who they are. Let me tell you gentleman: the one who comes today and vote, that man is a true Bosniak. It does not matter who he voted for, mufti or Sulja, he had shown to this country that he is the Bosniak. The state is not stupid. The state will know who voted. They have the names; they will know who left his home today in order to vote. Those are the Bosniaks, the real Bosniaks. The others – those are the betrayers.”

The turnout of the young people within certain communities was rather low. The observer from Ruthenian community noticed following: “The young people that I have interviewed had the following excuses for not participating in the elections: I forgot; I have got no time; I was not informed; I did not get the invitation and so on. Indifference! The conclusion – all of this makes me conclude that I should have been more aggressive with the campaign; I should have been louder, instead of being polite, well-mannered and patient while explaining the role of the councils... still, I am not sure that it would helped, I do not have the integrity nor the connections

in the public institutions; they are not afraid of me. Am I wrong? I think not... For my principles it is wrong, but not for this what is made out of the elections for the national councils.”

However, not only the youth was uninterested. The observer of the elections for the Hungarian National Council: The elections for the national minority councils were conducted in Sunday. I was the representative of one list which gathered thirteen young people. The biggest impression was the indifference of the people, not only young but all the people. They all want the change. They are all unsatisfied, but the moment the elections are mentioned vast number of negative comments is present. I am well aware that the situation in the whole country is the same, but I could not imagine that there is this huge number of people who cannot distinguish between the state institutions and other such as National Minority Councils. As regards to all of this, we have expected the low turnout, but not this low. If I am not wrong about 2/3 of the registered voters came out to vote.”

The electoral elections affected the turnout within Croatian minority. A Croatian woman stated: “Someone should have explained the electoral method of the elections. I did not know a thing about that. There was no information about it. I am not sure who is going to vote for Croatian National Council?!” The observer’s description of the elections for the Croatian National Council: “The arrival to the elections was badly organized; we stood in a queue like we stood in line back in the nineties waiting for the bread. There was no organization regarding to the voting as well... there was no order. State Secretary Ivan Bosnjak described this situation as well organized. I ask myself how it looks like when badly organized.”

The observers were aware of the fact that decreased interest of the voters is a consequence of converting the national councils in the client organizations of the political parties. The turnout in the case of the Ruthenian voters decreased from 54% in 2010 to 40% in 2014. The observer of CDCS explains: "In the places where the parties established the supremacy over the civil society, the turnout compared to the total population was smaller than in situations where the organizations of civil society were at the same time part of a cultural process of creating a national identity ...”

Misuse and Irregularities

Members of the community – the potential voters - were not the only ones who showed disinterest in the elections. This was confirmed by inaccurately and improperly written invitations for the elections in Kula, since the text was written in Ruthenian, but in mixed Ruthenian and Serbian Cyrillic alphabet (although the Ruthenian language is in the official use in the municipality of Kula). A number of voters enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List haven't even got the invitation by mail, so they did not have the opportunity to interpret the text written in non-existent alphabet. On the other hand, there were numerous irregularities regarding the Special Voters' Register List in almost every community.⁵⁰ Many of the voters who voted in 2010 stated that they were not enrolled in the updated register, whereas some were candidates for the National Council or a close relative and spouse of the candidate of the list. Several Ruthenians in municipality of Kula got the invitation for the elections, but could not vote because they were not in the register list.⁵¹ The observers estimated that in some places (e. g. in Kikinda) up to 40% of the voters did not have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote because they were not registered the Special Voter's Register List.

Additional problem occurred with the misuse of applications for enrollment in the Special Voters' Register List sent by post mail. The leader of the Bunjevac's list complained to the observer that 700 applications were sent at once from the Kelebija post office for enrollment in the register of his community. Similar events happened in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as in Bosniak community, as one observer from Belgrade noted.⁵² One of

50 More on these irregularities stressed in the report from Kula

51 Same applies for other communities. An observer from Novi Sad noted: "Many of the voters called me and said they did not get the invitation, so they did not know where to vote; and many of them who had changed the address since previous elections did not receive the invitation at the new address. So, for data not being updated they did not go to vote. Many of them live and work in Novi Sad and the invitation was for a polling station in Kucura or Krstur, so they could not go."

52 Testimony from the polling station in Novi Pazar: "Why am I not enrolled in the voters' list? I have been voting here, in this office, for over fifty years. Since Tito, then in Milosevic's era, until today. Now I am not enrolled in the list? Who made the list? Who did this? What is this municipality, this country thinking about? I am a citizen of this country, this cannot be; I voted in March, when I was supposed to vote for Vucic and now when I need to vote for Bosniaks, I am out of the list. What you are doing is a disgrace; you are making fools out of these people. I am going to go to the municipality office and appeal to them. I am not in the list, my son nether, but my wife is, and we have been voting together for fifty years; and now I am deleted, and she is not..."

the field observations from Sandzak was quite significant: "The voting began with the short and optimistic statements by the representatives and continued with unfortunate scenes at several polling stations. It is hard to explain the fact that the number of the voters who were deleted from the Special Voters' Register List could be measured with a three-digit sum. This was mostly the case in the municipalities of Tutin and Sjenica. Unfortunately, this started the wrath reaction among the individuals, and following their instincts they wanted to enforce "personal justice". Such a behavior could not be excused. Unlikely will we get the accountability for invading the electoral rolls. I call upon all of those who supervise and control the organization of the elections to address this problem before the elections. Maybe even more than 50% of the voters has been deleted from the register lists in Novi Pazar, so we need to come to the end of it."

This has created the problem in conducting the elections. According to the statement of the observers at the polling station in Novi Sad, "Hungarian woman, a political party member, wanted to allow the voting for her compatriots who were not invited, not even enrolled in the register list and had their ID cards expired. Fortunately, the other two members of the board did not allow this. Since there is a lot of Hungarians in Telep, they were the ones who were causing minor problems such as showing the intent to vote at all cost, even though they did not get the invitation for the elections." The same observation was made in Becej: "Also there was one man who complained that he was enrolled in the Special Voter's Register List, but did not get the invitation for the elections. He said that this was the reason why many of the voters did not vote, which was evident as the turnout was about half of the registered voters."

Problems related to the Special Voters' Register Lists were noticed in the case of the elections for the National Council of the Albanian National Minority: "The problem was not within the voters themselves, but in the fact that they did not receive the invitations. Moreover, when people went to the polling stations, they were not allowed to vote because they were not in the Register list, and they lived in Bujanovac or in the neighboring villages. This means that the situation in South Serbia is quite difficult, since many of the citizens could not vote... During the pre-election period, it was rather intense, since all the parties in South Serbia and in the Presevo

Valley were quite active in that period... It was a bit different this time, since all the Albanian parties united. Except for the party of Riza Halimi PDV, since no one wanted to form the coalition with those who were running the National Council...

The following report from Novi Sad summarized some of the problems related to the right to participate in the elections: "Problems with the Special Voters' Register List: a) It was not updated, even though people had reported the change of address; b) The invitations were not sent (although the person was registered), and due to the reduced number of polling stations, this forced people to wander around from one polling station to another; c) Elderly population remained convinced that by declaring themselves in the census as members of national minority, they would automatically be able to vote in the elections national minority councils; d) Some people were deleted from the register list even though they voted on the previous elections for the national minority councils (this mainly within Hungarian community).

Field observations have shown that the formal part of the elections, at least when it comes to the right to official use of language and alphabet and the composition of the electoral board, was respected: "Bilingualism: a) Electoral material of the Ashkali was bilingual! (I was surprised, so I needed to note it); b) One of the members of the Hungarian national community sharply asked: "Is there anyone who speaks Hungarian?" and then, discovering that there were, she lowered the tone; c) Only members of the Ruthenian and Hungarian communities used their mother tongue in several occasions – when entering the polling station (they welcomed everyone in Ruthenian or Hungarian language, and then continued to communicate in Serbian). "When it comes to the composition of the Electoral Board, it was noted that: "only representatives of the Hungarian minority lists – Mađarska sloga (represented by the SVM, Istvan Pastor), had the member of the board. Other members of the board were hired by the administration of the City of Novi Sad which (it seems) paid attention on not employing national minority members in the board. I suppose that this quite neutral composition of the electoral board (in terms of absence of direct interest in success of any of the lists), had contributed to the fact that the Election Day passed without any tension, pressure on the voters, or similar."

The report from Kikinda pointed out that there were no problems at polling stations, but the political pressure was present: "The political pressure was present, but it was indirect and has only created the mess and the confusion (sometimes even quarrels). This lowered the turnout and within the Roma community... They have the choice and should be thought of democracy and the right to vote. Many of the people enrolled in the register list did not get the invitation, thus about 40% of them did not have the opportunity to vote. I was informed that similar problems occurred within the Hungarian national community. Elections for the Roma national council turn out to be a political pressure, rather than the exercise of freedom of election will. Intrigues, lies and pressures characterized these elections, although there were a few competent and educated people who put an effort to regularly participate in the race."

When it comes to the elections for the Croat National Council, as they were conducted according to the electoral method, broader observations should be presented: "The Croat national community was deprived of communication with the voters who should have personally gone out to the polls. But during the signature collection it was quite vivid. The process of electing the representatives was interesting, as well. The process of collecting certified signatures for electors was calm, but there was certain degree of confusion when verifying the enrollment in the special voter's register list by state authorities. In several cases the voters of one community did not know that they were somehow registered in another community's register. Furthermore, there were cases where one voter's signature was accepted, then denied, and then again accepted..."

Another observer noted the following (extensive quote required): "First of all, the campaign has been adjusted to the "field situation", which means that as the community we did not enroll enough people in the Special Voters' Register List to meet the criteria for direct elections. But this is not matter of the coincidence, incapacity, or lack of infrastructure; this is the political will of our community leaders. The electoral method of the elections can easily be controlled by the party that has good infrastructure and money to create more electors and thus provide an advantage. If you have heard the statement of the chief of the election committee of one of the lists (Dr Slaven Bacic), that the electoral elections were more democratic, you could

recognize the attitude of the leaders in our community (...) I know for sure that one of the councilors donated 100,000 dinars back in 2010 in order to conclude enrollment in a Special Voters' Register List. The money has been taken, but the registration of voters was boycotted. Please note that the management of our communities remains the same, DSHV, HNV, Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Croats, Hrvatska riječ.

These institutions get annual donations of around 650,000 Euros from the state budget. (...) The campaign was conducted in two ways by the two lists. Common list of Croatian Associations did not have solid organization, it presented a set of enthusiastic individuals who wanted to improve the conditions within the community and there was even a suggestion of creating a common list with the list "Slaven Bacic". Everyone was collecting signatures for themselves, from their associates, friends, along with their regular business and family activities. There was no professionally organized campaign. Representatives of this list have sought to demonstrate that they are nobody's opponents, especially not of the people from the community and they tried not to offend anyone. Those who were a bit assertive, they just mentioned - the way that money was spent until now..."

The electoral elections were conducted in following way: "At the moment when elections took place at the former Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, every elector had the objection regarding the organization. One of the participants stated that right after the security check and the arrival into the room, board members coming from the Republic Electoral Commission, determined the two hour break, in order to get the administrative requirements done. The electors rebelled upon the length of the break, so the fifteen minute break was assigned. Before the voting, the re-authentication of all electors' identity was requested at the entrance to the hall. It took a lot time and the experts on such procedures said that it was even unnecessary. By the way, regarding the list of Slaven Bacic, only one person from the organization brought the list of electors knowing that it would be needed at some point. No one else even knew they needed it. During the roll call of the electors, the name had been read, then the elector came to the table for identification, received the ballot, voted, and then they would call for the next elector. That was

the procedure done for about ten electors. Imagine if they did the same for 132 electors. It would take a century, as the one elector stated. The procedure was accelerated in calling several electors, so while one is taking the vote, the others could prepare. This was much more efficient."

The Electoral assemblies were preceded by the elections of the electors. In order to show how they were conducted the report made of field notes is presented: "We were talking normally (almost all of us); a positive atmosphere was spreading. The very process of the elections showed the key difference in the character of the two lists. Activists of the list "Dr. Tomislav Stantić" voted in the way they wanted, according to their conscience, there were no pressures ... a real small school of democracy. Activists of the list "Dr. Slaven Bacic" were against the secret voting and requested that each elector take his ballot, vote for who he wanted and then return the ballot in the ballot box. Those who are familiar with the voting in 2010 know that the "boss" of this list has figured out the way how to control each and every individual and its voting. This shows the status of the electors within that list. Nobody trusts anyone; the "boss" is controlling everything. Anyhow, we agreed with the board that the voting should be secret, and the curtain was set. However the voters of the list "Slaven Bacic" were under great pressure and had to demonstrate how they voted. After the voting they had to raise high the open ballot so that a man in the front row could see for whom they have voted. For me this was a defeat of democracy and an embarrassment to our community, for the second time in our history. The leaders of our community, there are two or three of them, do not even trust their associates. As for the speeches - the leaders had ten minutes for presentation, speeches were correct; each presented their views on the community and the program. When I officially became an elector, there were offers from the other lists to join them, promising a high position on the list of proposed councilors and various other "promises". I stayed at his position and supported the list till the end (Common list of associations), as I had planned. I met the other side of all elections - planning, solicitation by another list. I got disappointed for the human disgrace."

The collected field records in a qualitative form are sometimes more accurate than what it could be its interpretation and the interpretation which would present the co-authors of the study.

An observation from Sandzak confirms it best: “Sulja’s (Ugljanin) voters could be identified by the clothes; it is Sulja’s legacy to be refined at the elections. Those of the Mufti could be identified by manners, i.e. by not having any. When they enter the room they are extremely noisy. "Give me that paper to vote for Mufti; we know who the best is! I am grateful to Allah for sending him to us." I had to react. I could not allow for this show to continue. I said it! “Gentlemen, we cannot do this anymore. The turnout is extremely high!” Further, “We are breaking the electoral will; it is the same as we are stilling the votes. We are not, but still, it looks like that. I am afraid of Allah for doing this.” I acted in order to calm the board members and in the way our leaders would do it: by Islamic-Bosniak rhetoric. I succeeded in calming down the situation. But I had to react several times until 8 pm and closure of the polling station. I had to repeat: “Gentlemen I cannot allow this. Madam this is not tolerable!” The elections finished. The Democracy has been defeated!

The disappointment of the voters and young people in the electoral process can also be seen from one more observation from Sandzak: “The electoral day is passing without incidents, so far. The atmosphere is calm, but the turnout is not so high. The polling stations are nearly empty. There were some objections but from those who could not hide their mutual dislike, for election campaign being so calm. In the end of the Election Day just before the arrival of the preliminary results, both lists declared their victory. The list number one, of Jahja Fehratovic, is claiming its victory in all the cities of Sandzak apart from Tutin, where the elections should be repeated. The List number two, of Sulejman Ugljanin, claims the absolute victory in the whole Sandzak. The problem is that the both list were right. The list number one won without results from Tutin, but the list number two won according to the results including Tutin. The results from the whole Sandzak and those without Tutin differ in about 4000 votes. Total results are in Ugljanin’s favor. Difference in the results if Tunin not included are in favor of the list number one for 3000 votes. Therefore, until the Tutin elections are finished we cannot know for sure who won. The day after the elections mutual accusations that there was stealing of votes started. Some of them claimed that irregularities were enormous and that promised unification and reconciliation is not going to happen. People remained dissatisfied. People were commenting that

it was not good to argue or divide each other for no reason. The consciousness of people has changed a bit; apparently they understood the message from Đebrasim Cvijan, to vote for him, for his better future...

The overall impression is that there were no significant procedural misusages, except for the confusion with the Special Voters' Lists. There was no evidence whether it was due to the bureaucratic negligence or due to deliberate intervention. Formally the elections were conducted in accordance with the law.

The fact that the elections were related to non-transparent allocation of resources at the disposal of the national councils is somewhat worrying. On the one hand, this "generosity" of the competent supervisory authorities may represent a kind of non-violent (corrupt) method of violation of external guarantee of minority autonomy. (Kimlika, 2002; Ilic, 2009a; Ilić, 2009b; Lošonc, 2003; Lošonc, 2007) On the other hand, an excessive influence of political parties in the elections for national councils of national minorities represents a systemic misuse. It should be noted that the method of conducting the electoral instead of direct elections in the case of relatively numerous Croatian national minority undoubtedly represents not only the misuse of legal options, but also a way of contesting the internal guarantee of minority rights. (Ibid)

Neglected Members of the National Minorities

Significant parts of certain national minority communities are thoroughly neglected when it comes to the work of national minority councils. Roma in the Southwest Serbia, Croats and all the rest “Vojvodina” communities who live outside of Vojvodina, Albanians living outside of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, Hungarians living outside the municipalities of the North Backa. The divisions of the lists by region, town or the village they come from are noticeable even in the names of lists. This is particularly expressed within Ruthenian community. There is a great rivalry between Kucur and Krstur list.⁵³ The consequences of such a process could be very harmful to the work of national councils, since many of experts and members who could contribute to the field of education, culture, informing and the language are living in those “marginalized” areas. The lists were often counting on the votes of these members of community which indicate that this problem of marginalization is so transparent that it could be used as a political strategy.

Members of national minorities who are living far from the center where this minority is inhabited cannot achieve their interest in such a partokratyc system (the system where the parties have influence on the work of National Minority Councils). The divisions within Ruthenian community on those who consider themselves as an independent nation, those who consider Ruthenians as Ukrainians, and those consider themselves as a part of pan-Russian nation are actually related to locations where they live. The CDCS observers also noted the tensions between the previous forms of Ruthenian self-organization. For example those between Ruthenian People’s Educational Society, upon which tradition Association of Ukrainian Ruthenians of Serbia is built, and Ruhtenian Zaria, which tradition still has the impact on the Ruthenian Heritage Society⁵⁴. The same applies for Slovak Heritage Society and the organizational forms of Slovak national minority from Backi Petrovac; on the other hand, the

53 According to our source, "it is interesting that Sremska Mitrovica, where there were 691 Ruthenians according to the census from 2002, was almost completely omitted, as if it did not exist... I interpret it as a similar as in Đurđevo - it represented a center of Ruthenian Democratic Party, but nobody wanted to go there, and it turned out that RDS was not active. "

54 Observation: "This is important since this division in the Ruthenian community continues today with same passion!"

Society of Vojvodina Slovakists which was the main actor of mobilization of Vojvodina Slovaks did not participate in the elections this year. Tensions between those who represent the branch of DS and those loyal to SNS had far more influence. In conclusion, the walls of the external guarantees of minority rights are demolished, except for the Hungarian, Bosniak and Albanian national minority.

Some persons belonging to Hungarian national minority, from Ivanovo, Skorenovac, or Dobricevo which are close to Grocka are neglected by the National Minority Council's strategy towards North Vojvodina Hungarians. The same applies to the north areas where larger number of ethnic Hungarians lives. The associate of CDCS presented the example of his campaign which he wrote on the political forum of the municipality of Novi Becej: "I would urge all members of this forum of Hungarian ethnicity to vote for the list under number 3 " For Hungarians in a different way – Fodor Laszlo " on the upcoming elections for the Hungarian National Council to be held on Sunday 26 October. Our main message is that we want the Hungarian National Council which will take care of all the members of the Hungarian national minority, and not only the members of one political party: we are committed to departization (elimination of the political parties' influence) of the National Council ... One member of the Forum of Hungarian ethnicity responded: "well, but who has the right to a separate Hungarians (one from another); the idea is crazy; whether a war is brewing? When does it start? Who will fight? And one more question: are you sick? "

Manipulating the Endangered

In this kind of circumstances it is not rare that less informed or less interested voters are being manipulated with. Representatives of certain lists who are more experienced and more skilled in politics know very well which population categories are especially vulnerable to this kind of misuse, and they routinely use this as they would in any other kind of elections. The example of such misuse could be the poor who are a large part of certain communities (Roma,

Ashkali and Egyptians), or elderly people that are numerous in German, Croatian, Ruthenian, Bunjevac and other communities. “The poor are grateful if you remember them once a year and give them aid”. These are the words that one observer from a small place in Vojvodina used to describe the situation. One source from the field (Djurdjevo) reported that a representative of Ruthenian community used his own car to transport voters from their homes to the pooling station, thus securing their votes. In Petrovaradin the police had to intervene because members of the LSV tried to manipulate elder citizens of the Croatian community. The LSV members offered help to the seniors that wanted to verify signatures by themselves and made them sign papers with Vlade Kranjcevic’s name. This information was delivered by the observer from Novi Sad. The external wall of protection of the minority rights was severely violated by this act.

The observer from Novi Pazar noted that children voted instead of “babo” (father) or “majka”(mother). Some even took ballots to vote instead of the members of their extended family (“to save them the trouble” of traveling to the pooling station⁵⁵) or even cousins from abroad. The members of electoral board knew of course to whom the votes of the elderly and workers from abroad were going to, but they did not complain if some votes went to the opposite lists. The observer stated that there was a silent agreement in place. There were similar occurrences in Bujanovac where people voted instead of voters who live in Kosovo and Metohija.

Marginalized members of the minorities (for example social marginalization, people who live far away from the minority population center etc.) were rarely mentioned during the campaign. The rare exception is Tomislav Stanic. In his speech he used the opportunity “not only to deal with the representatives of the DSHV and the previous session of the Croatian National Council, which was considered inappropriate in that moment (and also counterproductive before the vote), but also stated the idea that a greater number of Croats that were marginalized at that time, should be involved in the work of the Croatian community.

55 "We do it every year, Mr President. We agree to allow someone to vote instead of the disabled from their families do not worry."

Ethno-nationalism in the Campaign

Insisting on "concentration" within a community and the orientation to the traditional values that it cherishes is somewhat understandable when you take into account the decrease in number of members, from biological reasons, due to migrations or assimilation. A particular problem is the declining number of students who attend classes in the language of their community or attend classes of their mother tongue as a subject, which is most common within the Ruthenian community.

There is no need for further analysis of the concept of ethnic-nationalism. In general, Gelner's definition of nationalism as an effort to coincide ethnic and national boundaries is acceptable, but, as in the case of each theoretical concept, its use depends of certain specific circumstances. The campaign was not calling upon separatism; and advocacy of territorial autonomy is a legitimate, even though it represents only a moderated form of ideas expressed through Gelner's definition. (Gellner, 1997) Nowadays, nationalism in Serbia is at the very least allowed, and analysis that would not be trying to understand it risks being not only impartial, but biased.

According to all sources, it was noticed that a tendency of using the ethnic tensions with rival ethnic groups for the campaign existed. This supports more the theory of ethnic competition, than the theory of modernization, all under highly questionable assumption that the Serbian society is in the modernization process. (Belanger, Pinard, 1991) In practice, it sometimes appeared as a perceived fear of assimilation of Vlachs towards Romanians, or the imposition of Vlach identity that Romanians south of the Danube consider artificial and find it as hidden form of the "Serbianisation"⁵⁶. Similar was the relation of Bunjevacs towards Croats (and vice versa). The same applies to the relationship of the Ruthenians towards the Ukrainians, or Ashkali and Egyptians towards Roma. Visible resentment towards "denationalized" groups and toward ethnic melting was also noted. The rival groups were often used as an argument in

⁵⁶ There is no need for presenting the polemics between Gelner and Smith on the ethnic identity. (Gelner, 1997; Smith, 2010; for more see Bakic, 2006).

political fight. The rival lists were accused of being some sort of "hidden traitors" who tried to enter a National Council in order to work on the assimilation of the community⁵⁷. Ruthenian list "Ruthenian Initiative" was accused of attempting to convert Ruthenians into Ukrainians, according to the source from this community. The rhetoric of division between "real Ruthenians" and "Ukraineofiles/Ukrainisators" was common within the lists "I Ruthenian" (which was, according to some sources, close to SNS) and "Youth for the Future" (close to the "Third Serbia"), noted the source (observer from Novi Sad). The observer believes that this division caused the low turnout, because people had enough of this topic⁵⁸. Even in communities which were not threatened by tearing apart or assimilation, there were similar attempts of marking the opponents as traitors. Representatives of the one of the Hungarian lists were accused of working on "division of the Hungarian nation in Vojvodina." This again showed that the voters did not understand the competences of the National Councils, and that they came to the conclusion that the purpose of the elections was to express affection for a particular party, justified by demonstration of the unity of the community.

The representatives of the opponent lists then ceased to be only of a different belief, and became "traitors", as well. Of course, anyone who supported any of those lists could easily undertake the epithet of traitor. The observation of one part of the Croatian community that

57 Observations from the field reports, "I was told, in conversation with a colleague from the Montenegrin community, that there existed a pro-Serbian and Montenegrin-Montenegrin division- déjà vu as people say..."

58 Some interesting field observations: "One of the biggest criticisms regarding the campaign this year was related to the acting of members of the list four "I Ruthenian" and list the number six "Youth for the Future" ...These lists could be considered "nationalist" and are the major proponents when it comes to this division. Professor of Ruthenian studies at the University of Novi Sad Mihajlo Fejsa was on the list four "I Ruthenian." He was the loudest advocate of the idea that someone within Ruthenian community and beyond it wanted to Ukrainise the Ruthenians and that therefore the Ruthenians had to awaken and arise both, nationally and morally. This gentleman is within this community known for his loud verbal assaults, insults and outbursts against his opponents; he was even forbidden to enter the institution "Ruske slovo" because of the conflict with the editor, and insults addressed to him. It was he who gathered young people and formed the list number six "Youth for the Future" in order to take the votes of all other lists and divide the Ruthenian youth, because some young people in his conviction were under the influence of "Ukrainisators". He was also in personal dispute and conflict with previous President of the Ruthenian National Council Slavko Raca, so he wanted to weaken all the lists that may have been inclined to Raca."

Or: "One member from the list six who was a member of a political party "The Third Serbia" insulted the lists number five "Ruthenian Youth" and number seven "Ruthenian Initiative" from a fake Facebook profile, and he wrote really disgusting things about them at the same time calling them "Ukrainisators". In Kucura, where we were posting our flyers on the bulletin board in front of the local community, we met the leader of the list six. Mikola Medeši who mockingly remarked: "Good luck in Ukraine".

Bunjevacs had a privileged position in Serbia had served to the previous session of Croatian National Council to explain why the number of Croats in Serbia decreased and why the necessity of going to the electoral elections was inevitable⁵⁹. The observers reported that the topics of the Bačka Bunjavcs benefits and the problem of the lack of textbooks for Croatian students were dominant throughout the campaign.

Monopoly over the right to articulate the national interest of the community was justified by different types of nationalist discourse. In Croatian community, Dr. Tomislav Stantić was marked to be a "new-Croat". By this it was meant that he was not concerned about the matters affecting his community, but also, "that he was not publicly declaring himself as a Croat"; also that he was not using the Croatian standard language, as evidenced by the source from this community⁶⁰.

The struggles within the lists were hidden from "the majority of the public", but, for researchers it was obvious that they were visible within communities that selected their representatives on the electoral electors, such as Croats. This trend was not surprising, since the potential electors who collected signatures for themselves perceived the other members of their own list as the rivals. Such rivalry existed also among the lists that came out on direct elections, but remained latent because the leaders and the people at the top of the list of were deciding on their position, which was consistent with the earlier observations set out on centralized party decision-making model. The rivalry between potential electors within the same party was noticeable in the fact that sometimes they did not comply with the agreed plan, but were

59 The group of representatives of the Croatian community, including Slaven Bacic and Peter Kunitić expressed their disapproval in an open letter and asked: why the Bunjevacs non-Croats were provided with full "technical and logistical support for the institutional founding of the independent Bunevac ethnic group, the creation of minority identity infrastructure, media promotion, and why the misuse of the creation of the voters' lists was tolerated, same as the misuse of the standardization of Bunjevac language."

Source:<http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Bunjevci-Hrvati-traze-zastitu-drzave-od-Bunjevaca-nehrvata.lt.html>

60 The field observation: "At the Electoral assembly, held on 26 October 2014, in Belgrade, speech of Dr Slaven Bačić was related to the program of his list (a major part of the speech was positive and highlighted the continuation of the established program, and the Development Strategy). In one part of the speech he pointed out the following: "Croatian National Council will remain a place of exchange and even confrontation of opinions and views, but it may concern only the subject of debate, not one's personality" (although during the election campaign there were open attempts to discredit Dr. Tomislav Stantić as a man who has done nothing for the Croats and will work in the interests of the state, and against the Croats, which is contrary to the aforementioned part of the program)."

collecting signatures on the territory of the other electors, noted observers from Novi Sad. There were cases where individuals continued to take signatures of support even when they fulfilled the necessary quota, thus making it difficult for other candidates to collect enough signatures for themselves, testified the same source. Hence, inter-ethnic tensions were present in the cases of both, direct and electoral elections for national councils, but their visibility was not equally available to the perception of a wider or smaller audience.

Same applies for the Vlachs, as the list of "Community Vlachs of Serbia" was labeled as "Romanian" (although, it is true that this list was the only one who advocated the introduction of the Romanian language as the language of Vlachs). Previously mentioned case of registration of Bunjevacs in the Special Voters' Registration List may testify about the attempted takeover of the National Council by the political parties of the ethnic majority or perhaps pro-Croat part, just as was the case with pro-Roma lists in Ashkali National Council. The leaders of some of these lists were previously declared Roma, whose relatives were some of the leaders of Roma lists; they were also fluent in Romany (the language Ashkali do not use). The accusations for the registration of members of majority population in certain Special voters' lists should also be mentioned. Vlach list close to SPS and SNS, which achieved the best results, was accused for such actions by the Community of Vlachs in Serbia Dragan Demić, in an open letter posted on their Facebook profile⁶¹. The same could be concluded for certain lists of the Greek National Council, as the Special Voters' List of this community counted more voters than there were Greeks in Serbia, according to the last census from 2011.

⁶¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Zajednica.Vlaha.Srbije?fref=nf>, post from 30 October

Instead of the Conclusion

Among other things, our research showed that the Elections for the National Councils of the National Minorities were all in all conducted in accordance to the rules of relevant procedures. On the other hand, the state authorities revealed some problems. The Special Voters' Register Lists were often outdated. During the elections for the National Council of the Vlach National Minority (probably not only in this case) it was noted that the members of the ethnical majority were registered in the Register lists of the ethnical minority, and also that they voted in the elections for the national minority councils. The state did not provide the money for the election campaign: no wonder then that the national councils of the national minorities spent money in that purpose, and that affected the voting results.

In the case of these elections not all elections for national councils were covered systematically by media⁶². One theatrical question with practical relevance remains: It is the question of acceptance of affirmative action, or state support to the minority cultures. Milan Podunavac asks: if multiculturalism is one of liberal strategies, like tolerance and the right to non-discrimination, how is it to be reconciled with liberal rule of equality and individualism, when it corrects universalistic idea of citizenship and formative principals of national state. (Podunavac, 2000) . On the other hand, advocates of multiculturalism think that without state's

62 The field observation of elections for HNV: "A good part of the campaign of lists " Dr. Slaven Bacic "and Common list of Croatian Associations " Dr. Tomislav Stantić ", was led by the social network Facebook, which only partially gave insight into the course of the campaign (for those who were active on it). In addition, the leader of the list of "Dr. Slaven Bacic, "did not post anything personally under full name on the social network (the views of this list were represented and defended by the officials of previous session of HNV and other members of DSHV), while the leader of the second list sporadically involved in the discussions under his own name. However, discussions were often not constructive but were aimed at discrediting one or the other list (it in must be pointed out that the rhetoric of Tomislav Stantića was calmer). All this provoked negative comments of those who have followed the campaign and commentator on several occasions reacted with following statements: "For how long will this last "What's all this", "Do we have a future at all," etc.. Of course, there were those "neutral" (who were not nominated as electors), and who, as supporters defended the views of the individual lists, using the moderate and constructive criticism on account of both lists ... On several occasions, especially at the very beginning of the campaign (again via Facebook where the virtual dialogue took place), Common list of Croatian Association led by dr. Tomislav Stantić, called for the formation of a joint Croatian list on the Electoral assembly, but, by the end of the campaign the other party did not give any answer. This eventually resulted in a triumph of Croats over Croats, as one of the speakers noted. "

support to minority cultures, multiculturalism is “multiculturalism of majority” and that it necessarily favors “state nation”.(Kimlika,Losonc,Ilic).

A lot of word on the influence of the political parties over the electoral process was mentioned. It is more important now to mention how some voters saw the election results. One Bosniak woman mentioned that “people were not that troubled with these elections as usual. There was plenty reasons for that, the main being that people were tired of voting and did not see any change. The results were expected and at the same time unexpected. People paid attention on this few more days and then it became history.” Or how one person put it: “Don’t even mention it to me; I just came to drink my coffee in peace. I don’t want to talk about politicians anymore”.

It should be emphasized that there was considerably less incidents during this campaign as opposed to previous elections. Ruthenians we spoke to noted that “calculations regarding the votes started right after the elections”, but they also think that “the state in some way should fund every list, because otherwise, like in this case, lists which members were politically active had advantage”. It was also recorded that “the most did not respect the electoral silence while we as young people addressed the public for the last time just before the midnight before the electoral silence began”.

The observers trained in the seminars organized by the Center for the Development of Civil Society had their recommendations: “New members of national council should be educated on competences, or, how our speaker from Nis V.Djuric put it, on delegated competences of national councils”. However as far as I can see a half of the members of the new session (2014) of the Ruthenian National Council were part of the old session. To put it in modern-expert technocratic language, memory intelligence is to be envied upon. But all the members of the national councils should be trained for public communication, and to be encouraged to address more often the public in their communities, but the wider public as well.

Furthermore:" To teach them to transparency in the work, to present them with standards of transparency; and someone finally have to investigate how much money in Serbia is allocated

for national minorities. Each member of the National Council would have to know that. Not only should he have to know that information for his National Council but for all the Councils and all the minorities. The money which is predicted for the operation of the National Councils represents only a part of the budget that is set aside for minorities. "

It is almost needless to say that the political life of the national minorities is in major part realized through the work of their National Councils, but under the influence of the essential features of the political system and the broader political life of Serbia. In any case, the authors of this study consider aforementioned recommendations as their own. Without their adoption and proper implementation there will be no further improvement of the position of the national minorities in Serbia.

Litrature

- Bakić, J., 2006: „Teorijsko – istraživački pristupi etničkoj vezanosti (*ethnicity*), nacionalizmu i naciji”, *Sociologija*, XLVIII /No. 3.
- Belanger, S., Pinard, M., 1991, Ethnic movements and the competition model: some missing links, *American Sociological Review*, Vol 56, no.4, pp. 446-457
- Gelner, E., 1997, *Nacije i nacionalizam*, Matica Srpska, Novi Sad
- Hechter, M., 1978, Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84, No. 2, pp. 293-318
- Ilić, S., 2009a, Srbija između multietničnosti i multikulturalnosti, *Migracijske i etničke teme*, 25, no. 4: 363-386
- Ilić, S., 2009b, Leva kritika multikulturalizma, *Habitus*, 10, No. 16:7-16
- Ilić, S., 2010, Multikulturalne politike u Srbiji – od debata do praktičnih politika, u: D. Babić, D. Župarić-Ilić, (ur.) *Nacionalne manjine kao faktor stabilnosti u međunarodnim odnosima Hrvatske i Srbije*, Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog u Zagrebu 16. listopada 2009, Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti
- Ilić, S., Keveždi, M., Vukojičić, S., Zvijer, N., Manić, Ž., Jadžić, M., Ilić, V., 2012, Posmatranje etničkih elita u Vojvodini, *Politikon*, I, No. 1:135-152
- Lošonc, A., 2003, Multikulturalnost i etnokulturalni diverzitet s osvrtom na Srbiju, u: *Demokratija i multikulturalnost u jugoistočnoj Evropi*, Beograd: Centar za istraživanje etniciteta
- Lošonc, A., 2007, Aspekti teritorijalnih i kulturnih autonomija: za i protiv, *Habitus*, 14: 21-36
- Kimlika, V., 2002, *Multikulturalno građanstvo (Liberalna teorija manjinskih prava)*, Novi Sad: Centar za multikulturalizam
- Merton, R.K., 1979, *O teorijskoj sociologiji*, Zagreb: CDD
- Podunavac, M., 2000, "Liberalizam i multikulturalizam" - *Filozofija i društvo*, XVII:77-92
- Poole, S. M. and J. P. Folger, 2009, Modes of Observation and the Validation of Interaction Analysis Scheme, in: Klaus Krippendorff and Mand ary Angela Bock (Eds), *The Content Analysis Reader*, Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 367-375

- Smit, E., 2010, *Nacionalni identitet*, Čigoja štampa, Beograd
- Stacey, M., 1969, *Methods of Social Research*, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Paris, Braunschweig: Pergamon Press
- Vučinić-Nešković, V., 2013, *Metodologija terenskog istraživanja u antropologiji*, Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta
- Yin, R. K., 2003, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sag