

New social realities from the view of social responsibility: social responsibility in postsocialistic context

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Abstract

My presentation offers an anthropological analysis of social responsibility in post-socialist societies. Anthropologists of post-socialism described dramatic social change in post-socialist societies after the collapse of socialism that open the question of social responsibility in a new way. I compare post-socialism with social change in post-colonial situations, to prove that the knowledge amassed by social and cultural anthropologists about the process of westernization and modernization in colonial and post-colonial situations is vitally important for understanding social responsibility in post-socialist societies. I present two basic logics practiced in societies that are undergoing westernization (the first is continuity with the past of the given society; the second is discontinuity with that same past) to show that many problems needing connection with social responsibility in the post-socialist period are similar in many respects to those in post-colonial situations. The same is true for the answers on those problems.

Key words: anthropological analysis, post-socialist societies, social responsibility, westernization

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Introduction

When social responsibility and especially cross-generational social responsibility is in question, several very serious and complicated problems should be solved by contemporary, especially Western societies. One group of those problems are problems connected with climate on global level (cf. Klein 2014); other group of problems are problems connected with structural genocide, which is one of basic characteristics of contemporary global capitalism (cf. Leech 2012). Both groups of problems open among other also questions about contemporary capitalism and contemporary global capitalistic order.

Those questions are of basic importance also for post-socialist societies and countries. However, there exist several specific and unique problems and questions, which should be solved in post-socialist societies in very near future. Those questions and problems are connected with social processes, especially with processes of social change in post-socialist societies after the collapse of socialism. In the last 25 years post-socialist societies have developed some basic characteristics which distinguish them from Western societies and establish them as a new type of social reality, which in many aspects cannot be equalized, even compared with Western societies. This is the reason why also the questions of social responsibility, especially cross-generational social responsibility, should be understood and solved in a new way in post-socialist societies.

Basic characteristics of post-socialism

Basic group of specific characteristics and problems of post-socialist societies, which are closely connected with a question of social responsibility in post-socialist societies, are linked with the fact that post-socialist societies did not experience a planned transition. Transition as elaborated in transitology¹ namely included the idea of a rapid, unproblematic transformation of ex-socialist societies into modern Western capitalist societies. What was expected was “a swift and painless shift from socialist totalitarianism to liberal democracy, and from the planned economy to the market” (Giordano & Kostova 2007: 74)². To achieve such results, several simplified formulas about social, political and economic change have been introduced, such as the idea criticised by Lampland that for successful post-socialist transition only “a simple change in the structure of institutions would be necessary” (2007: 32). The idea of transition also ‘implicitly assumes that the current conditions are temporary and about to be consolidated into some new system’ (Kiedeckel 2007: 115).

More than two decades later, it has become clear that such transformation of ex-socialist societies into modern Western societies has not happened³. “Post-socialist citizens were not offered a Marshall Plan after 1989/92. Instead, phase one of their ‘transition’ brought them globalism, ‘technical assistance’ by the Harvard Institute of International Development and the Big Six accountancy firms, and an impoverished model of civil society” (Kalb 2007: 329). What started in a “spirit of confidence” (Giordano & Kostova 2007: 74), ended in “disillusionment, scepticism, apathy and in some cases even anger” (2007: 74).

Instead of the expected “brand new world” ex-socialist societies ended in economic, political and social crisis, accompanied by corruption, unemployment, misuse of the political system and of political power, increased social inequality and poverty. Post-socialist societies are today not a successful repetition of ‘the West’ (what was planned and expected), but in a position of increasing subordination to ‘the West’, i.e. to the global capitalism, for which several characteristics are of basic importance: “The current wave of globalization has three overwhelming properties. First, it erodes the cohesion and coherence of national states, except a few core ones; second, it is characterized by sharply increasing levels of inequality and disparities of power between the cores and the peripheries, between national states but also within each of them; and third, it generally comes to receiving territories in a highly uneven bundle of components (capital, goods, information and people). Whatever this means precisely for any particular location, national hierarchies are replaced by imaginary global ones, and illusions travel faster and further than the supportive hardware that alone can transform them into empowering realities. With public goods in systematic undersupply, individual ambitions become the illusions of which collective delusions are made” (Kalb 2007: 317-318).

Kiedeckel describes post-socialist type of capitalism as neo-capitalism, “a social system that reworks basic capitalist principles in new, even more in-egalitarian ways than the Western model from which it derives ... Under neo-capitalism we again see how narrow elites have been able to appropriate public resources and prevent their transparent, equitable distribution. There have been some exceptions ... The dominant trends, however, have been to scarify individualized ownership at the expense of social equality, to pursue inappropriate loan policies, and to facilitate a corrupt bargain between owning and political classes at the expense of labour ... East-central Europe is thus caught up in a

system whose basic characteristics are capitalist, but clearly not of the Euro-American variety” (Kiedeckel 2007: 115).

One basic characteristic of the post-socialist neo-capitalism is also a fact that “neo-capitalism involves the re-working of a Western prototype so as to establish a dependant hinterland in Central and Eastern Europe” (ibid.). From this perspective Verdery’s statement about division of the contemporary world into the West and the Rest is of basic importance. Verdery wrote that “it actually *makes sense* to divide the world into the ‘West’ and the ‘Rest’ and to subdivide the Rest further into different *kinds* of colonial/neo-colonial experience” (Verdery 2007: 20). Through their post-socialism the post-socialist societies have become part not of ‘the West’, but of ‘the Rest. This means that after 25 years of post-socialism the post-socialist countries ended in a specific type of neo-colonial experience I described as neo-neo-colonialism (Godina 2014).

Post-socialist societies fulfil most of - some of them (as Slovenia) even all - classic criteria for colonial situation: “Characteristic features of the colonial situation include political and legal domination over an alien society, relations of economic and political dependence, a reorientation of the colonial political economy toward imperial economic interests and needs, and institutionalized racial and cultural inequalities” (Watts 1999: 69). Political domination of ‘the West’, legal domination of ‘the West’, economic dependence from ‘the West’, political dependence from ‘the West’, a reorientation of the post-socialist political economy toward economic interests and needs of ‘the West’, institutionalized racial inequalities and institutionalized cultural inequalities have become part of everyday life in all post-socialist societies.

This unexpected transformation has been documented and analysed for Poland (Dunn 2004; Pine 1996, 1998, 2000, 2007; Wedel 1992), Hungary (Agócs & Agócs1994; Lampland 2007), Romania (Kiedeckel 2007; Stan 2012; Stewart 2007; Verdery1994,1998), Bulgaria (Creed 1998; Giordano &Kostova 2007; Kaneff 1996, 2002), Russia (Hivon 1995; Humphrey 1998, 2002, 2007a; Kandiyoti 2007; Vitebsky 2007), China (Feuchtwang 2007; Latham 2007), ex-Yugoslavia (Hayden 2007;Jansen 2005; Sampson 2007) and many other post-socialist countries (Abrahams 1996; Berdahl 1997, 1999; Bridger & Pine 1998; Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Verdery 1996).

This unsuccessful transition has been accompanied by several unexpected practices, such as the social production of mistrust (Giordano & Kostova 2007: 75), the re-introduction of social and economic solutions that were characteristic of socialism (Lampland 2007), nostalgia for socialism (Berdahl 1997, 1999; Hann 2007: 11; Hann & Hart 2011: 140) and debate about non-Western models for the future (Humphrey 2007: 14; 2007a; Hobsbawm 2012: 574). Reality has not realized the transitological dream.

About anthropological understanding of post-socialism

Social and cultural anthropologists have criticized transitological models and the idea of transition from the very beginning of post-socialism (Bridger & Pine 1998; Burawoy & Verdery 1999; Hann1996; Kaneff 1996; Verdery 1996). They found several problems with those models. The most important problem concerns the ignorance about the importance of cultural factors in transition (Hann 2007: 8). In opposition to transitological logic, anthropological research and analysis of post-socialism are “concerned with how specific cultural understandings shape people’s behaviour” (2007: 8) and find this relation to be of prime importance (2007: 8; Kalb 2007; Lampland 2007).

In her criticism, Lampland is more specific. As the first deficiency in the transitological analysis of post-socialism, she points out the general neglect of the fact that “institutions are peopled by local actors” (2007: 32). A reified understanding and analysis of social and political institutions, so common in other social sciences’ approaches to the transition, ignores the fact that people live within complex social relations, such as ties of affection, respect, obligation and reciprocity: “Advocates for radical and rapid social change tend to disregard the complex social and cultural worlds in which people live” (2007: 32).

Another basic failure of those understandings of post-socialism is their ignorance of history: these advocates disregard what people *have been doing* in the recent past. For ‘big bang’ theorists, what preceded the transition is irrelevant. More accurately, the past is anathema and must be eradicated. The tendency to dismiss the consequences of local socialist history is problematic... Socialism was not simply a package of bad economic policies, but a complex social and cultural world in which people lived and worked (2007: 32).

The third crucial mistake in the transitological understanding of post-socialism is, in Lampland’s opinion, “the ignorance of the fact that changes are slow and need time” (2007: 32). “In contrast to the views of liberal economists (and, ironically, their Marxist-Leninist predecessors), I do not believe that attitudes and practices change quickly or easily, even when much effort is expended in altering the institutional context” (2007: 32). Lampland stresses two basic reasons for this conclusion. The first pursues from the fact that, for actors in post-socialist societies, “the patterns of thought and action characteristic of the previous regime are normal and routine” (2007: 32); this complicates social situations and social activities. For successful transition, people need to change their habits, attitudes and standards of acceptable social activity. However, “it takes years of altered circumstances and new experiences to change the way people think and act” (2007: 32).

The second reason why the changes connected with transformation of former socialist societies to capitalist societies are slow and difficult involves the fact that such transformation requires not only changes in the thinking and acting of individuals, but also “restructuring of a larger social world of which one is a part” (2007: 32). And changes to one’s social world are even more complicated and difficult than changes in individual characteristics (2007: 32).

This is why Lampland concludes that, for a more fruitful understanding of post-socialism, we need “a clear theoretical understanding of the way actions and ideas combine into a complex social process of being and becoming” (2007: 32). Moreover, social and cultural anthropologists are the ones trained to collect and analyse data about these complex social realities. As Hann points out, unlike other analysis, close anthropological scrutiny of practices allows anthropologists to assess change where it matters most: in everyday life (Hann 2007: 10). This is why ‘anthropology provides the necessary corrective to the deficits of ‘transitology’ (2007: 1).

In their analysis of post-socialism, social and cultural anthropologists develop what Kalb calls “a retrospective cultural area argument” (Kalb 2007: 322), in which local culture and local history represent the crucial elements of post-socialist reality (2007: 323, 324).

According to this argument, “transformation outcomes cannot be directly explained by transition programmes but have unintended outcomes shaped by prior (socialist) conditions, expectations and division of assets” (2007: 322). Anthropologists of post-socialism stress that “societies are as much defined by what they were as by what current elites dream they can turn them into” (2007: 322).

Social and cultural anthropologists engaged in the study of post-socialism respect local history. In Kalb’s opinion, this is “a salutary move in response to those neo-liberal economists who imagine that pasts can simply be sent into oblivion by determined and well-dosed shock-therapy” (2007: 322). Anthropologists stress that prior conditions, expectations and earlier divisions of assets shape the tools for improvisation in contemporary daily practice.

Nevertheless, the social and cultural anthropologists who study post-socialism have gone one crucial step further by “showing that praxis is necessarily over-determined by the ‘unfolding uncertainties of macro-institutions’ (Burawoy & Verdery 1999: 7) and their multiple consequences for everyday life” (2007: 323). The macro level is as crucial for understanding post-socialism and specific post-socialist societies as local culture and local history. In their analysis of post-socialism, anthropologists and other social scientists should bear in mind that post-socialist societies are part of global world capitalism with all its tactics and interests: What the West is prescribing as medicine and destiny for other parts of the world is a wholesale transfer of Western institutions. In other words, the Cold War has shifted gear, has left obsession with borders and demarcation lines behind and is now engaged in a more sophisticated work of institutional re-engineering. Indeed, this is what the grand narrative of globalisation, as well as its subsection of transition, is supposed to facilitate. It is not only about capital flows...Nor is it only about the diffusion of Western cultural imaginary. It is, as Susan Strange (1996) and Saskia Sassen (2000) have argued, also very much about the diffusion of institutions and administrative standards to crisis-ridden places that are predisposed to buy into the elusive prospects offered by the West (2007: 324).

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All these crucially define the economic, social and political realities in all post-socialist countries.

Studying and analysing post-socialist societies in this complexity enables anthropologists of post-socialism to practice maintaining a critical distance on what has happened in post-socialist societies: For some of us, who knew these places when they were more isolated but safe, cheap and somehow unspoiled, the new inequalities make painful viewing. The influx of multinational businesses, property developers and advertising agencies is painful to behold. The consumer consolidations are inadequate and not available to all, while the sordid aspects of the new market economy (e.g. prostitution) go uncontrolled...my point is that the market and pluralist democracy have not, at the level of everyday practices, ushered in new moral forces comparable to those that have been displaced. Post-socialist corruption, criminality and social disintegration are constant topics of moral commentary...it would be arrogant and myopic to imagine that global capitalism offers a universal panacea or moral yardstick (Hann 2007: 11).

It is precisely this critical distance that lies at the nexus of understanding of anthropology of post-socialism as a critical and emancipating form of research and praxis: Anthropology has to take this momentous and manifold process seriously. With its grounded knowledge of places and actors, this discipline is equipped to start the

systematic study of how territories and local actors, depending on their specific modes of linkage with the global arena, perceive, link up with, and respond to these pressures. This requires 'encompassing' comparison (Tilly 1984: 125-144) within one broad programme of multiple cases, not just within post-socialism but world-wide: reflecting, subverting and, perhaps, reshaping the globalist programme (Kalb 2007: 324).

This is how, in my opinion, study of post-socialist world should look. Only this type of study can open the basic and the most important question of post-socialist social reality, what is of basic importance also for understanding the most important questions of social responsibility in post-socialist societies.

The case of Slovenia

The post-socialist Slovenia began its transformation from a socialist to a modern capitalist society in accordance with transitological logic. This transformation started with enthusiasm, high hopes and ambitious aims. The future seemed optimistic. Twenty-five years ago there were several reasons for such optimism: first, Slovenia was a reasonably industrialized and relatively rich country⁴; second, Slovenia was perhaps the most westernized ex-socialist country⁵; third, the population in Slovenia was well educated, because Slovenia had an efficient educational system⁶; fourth, Slovenia had relatively strong civic movements⁷; fifth, the Communist Party in Slovenia was not very dogmatic and accepted the Western political system as the new political system⁸; and, sixth, when the Communist Party lost the elections, the anti-communists took political power with no difficulty. Twenty-five years ago Slovenia seemed a success story, and also many years later it was still a model of successful post-socialism (Kalb 2007: 328).

However, today Slovenia is in deep political and social crisis, in a difficult economic situation, and most important, it is, as one informant pointed out, in deep moral crisis: We have a crisis in Slovenia first of all because people are becoming more and more amoral. The basic thing is a moral crisis. This moral crisis has then produced a financial crisis and a material crisis...As long as the moral crisis is present, the economic crisis will not disappear...As long as people are as amoral as they are now, we will have a crisis (Field material 8 Dec. 2009)

Slovenia has not become a story of success. It has become a story of unsuccessful transition.

There are several reasons behind this result. The most important has been the logic of transition, which has been the basic, dominant logic of Slovene post-socialist transformation. This logic has several characteristics, which together have crucially determined the Slovene transition and its results.

The first of those characteristics involves the fact that the general idea of Slovene transition was in accordance with the classic logic of modernization, as a process of economic, social, and cultural development that is expected to lead to a level of organization and production, along with belief systems, similar to those already achieved by industrial societies, primarily based on examples from the West. Consistent with a general Western idea of progress, according to which human knowledge and rationality increasingly triumph over ignorance and adversity and improve the conditions of human

life, it was generally assumed that modernization was inevitable and global (Kearney 1999: 326).

In Slovene transitological logic, all the basic characteristics of this classic understanding of modernization have been present; it was believed that transition was a process of economic, social, and cultural development, expected to lead to a level of organization and production, along with belief systems, similar to those already achieved by industrial Western societies; it has been assumed that the Slovene transition was a process in which (Western) knowledge and rationality would triumph over ignorance and adversity and improve the conditions of human life; these changes have been understood as both inevitable and global.

However, in Slovenia, this classic logic of modernization was slightly transformed: if in the classical variant, non-European countries and societies were identified with ignorance, adversity and poor human conditions, in the Slovene variant, there was former socialism that was equalized with ignorance, adversity and poor human conditions. Of course, the newly planned transitological capitalist societies were identified with knowledge, rationality and superior human conditions. This means that ex-socialist countries and societies were identified with a lack of modernization, and Western countries and societies with modernization, as such⁹. This perception also formed a major ideological argument in favour of transition and social change in post-socialist Slovene society, especially because most Slovenes were familiar with several capitalist societies, especially with Austria and Italy, and wished to emulate not so much their political system, but their model of consumerism. Most of them hoped that transition would bring them Western consumerism, which would be added to the already existing social state. One of my informants affirms, “Yes, I was for the end of socialism and for transition. I wanted to have all those things and all those shops also in Slovenia, too, not only abroad” (Field material 4 April 2011).¹⁰

In the Slovene transitological logic there is no critical distance and/or knowledge that, for this traditional understanding of modernization and modernity, “the potential risk of ethnocentricity has long been acknowledged” (Hann 2010: 8). Also ignored was the fact that it is “not always clear what the units and the common criteria for modernity might be” (2010: 8). Naturally, Slovene transitological logic did not concur with the anthropological statement that “the concept of modernity remains suspect” (2010: 9). For the Slovene model of transition, the concept of modernity was unproblematic and identified with Western capitalist societies.

Slovene transitological logic has also never included any critical distance on other concepts and/or processes connected with modernity and modernization, for example on the concept of development. All the reservations that form part of the anthropological understanding of the concept and processes of development (Ferguson 2008; Friedman 1994; Hann & Hart 2011; Sardan 2005) are ignored in the Slovene transitological logic. In the Slovene variant of transition, it was believed that modernity went hand in hand with development. This is why both classic aspects of the concept of development -- i.e., “the expansion of production and consumption and/or rising standards of living” (Ferguson 2008: 154) and “projects of planned social change” (2008: 154) -- were accepted without reservation. What was ignored were the classic anthropological statements about development being a pluralistic process, realizing itself in multiple variants (Geertz 1963: 157), the historical fact that “development was after all a revival of

that Victorian evolutionism that ethnographers had flatly rejected at the turn of the twentieth century” (Hann & Hart 2011: 108), as well as more critical statements, such as

- That development was very much an outcome of the expansion of the West from the end of the fourteenth century....This is a formation of hegemonic centre/periphery structures that characterize the social and economic world of the modern era (Friedman 1994: 242, 243), and
- That it is not surprising that many now see *development* as a hypocritical claim to moral superiority on the part of the rich that obscures the economic relations in the world (Hann & Hart 2011: 116-117).

The connection of development with colonialism (Friedman 1994; Leech 2012; Watts 1999) was also ignored in Slovenia, where we still live out an obsessive struggle to equalize Slovene development to that of ‘the most developed countries’. Because in Slovenia development is equated with GDP per capita, this obsession in practice means a struggle to increase GDP per capita at all costs. Any actual costs – social, political, personal or human – remain irrelevant.

The equation of modernity with development and with ‘the most developed Western societies’ also means that in Slovene transitological logic modernity has been ‘the one’, ‘the Western’ version. Moreover, from a Slovene transitological perspective, the West has a monopoly on modernity. In the Slovene transitological model, modernity does not vary. This is also why Slovene transitological logic includes an ignorance of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2002; Hann 2010; Thomassen 2012)¹¹. Statements such as, for example, “that the West has no monopoly on the modern” (Hann 2010: 8), or that “a less individualistic Japanese variant may be no less authentically modern” (2010: 8) have never become part of the Slovene transitological picture. The same is true for Sahlins’s famous statement that industrial organization of production does not determine the social ways in which this production will be realized (Sahlins 1976: 208).

From this perspective, it was clear what should have been done in Slovenia and what the aim of Slovene transition has been: to transform Slovene society into ‘a modern Western capitalist society’. However, there has never been any agreement about which Western capitalist society Slovenia should be transformed into: American society, German society, Swedish society, etc. This is also why the idea of the transformation of Slovene society into a modern Western capitalist society involves an unclear and unelaborated idea of a ‘modern Western capitalist society’. A single such society does not exist, and as Humphrey pointed out, capitalist societies differ among each other much more than post-socialist societies (Humphrey 2007: 12). In this sense, ‘the modern Western capitalist society’ of Slovene transitology becomes a generalisation without the possibility of concretisation or realisation. One could conclude that the fact that Slovene society did not succeed in transforming itself into ‘a modern Western capitalist society’ is not a failure, but a normal result of the fact that such a society does not exist.

What has also been ignored in Slovene transitological logic is the fact, familiar to social and cultural anthropologists, that there exists no evidence that all societies transform themselves into the form of society that is identified as ‘modern Western capitalist society’. From an anthropological perspective, few would now defend the ideas of “modernity” that were dominant half a century ago, according to which the “traditional societies”...would sooner or later progress in a direction revealed by the path which the North Atlantic states have pioneered (Hann 2010: 8).

This scepticism is unknown to the Slovene transitological model. In Slovenia transitologists never doubted that Slovene society would sooner or later transform into a 'modern Western capitalist society' (whatever this is or means).

It is clear that this logic of the Slovene transitological model is an example of classic social evolutionism (Barnard 2000; Godina 1998; Harris 1972; Voget 1975). The fact that history develops in accordance with social evolutionism in the direction of Western progress, seems in Slovenia logical and 'natural' to all: to ordinary Slovenes, to Slovene politicians, to Slovene natural scientists and to Slovene social scientists. It is more or less unknown and undiscussed that ethnographical evidence and anthropological analysis proved this logic to be wrong, even as early as at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century (Kuper 1993; Godina 1998). In Slovenia, Boas's *The Limitations of the Comparative Method* (Boas 1987/1896) remains generally unknown, even though in the history of social and cultural anthropology, this text represents one of the keystones in anthropological theory and Boas's intervention is also recognized in contemporary anthropological epistemological debate (Moore & Sanders 2006).

However, this general acceptance of social evolutionism in historical perspective should not be a surprise. The Morganian variant of the evolutionistic understanding of history was the same in Slovenia as in all others socialist states: an official historical paradigm, because it had been an integral part of Marxism since 1884, when Engels's *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels 1975) was published.¹²

In the Slovene transitological perception, it was also clear how the transition of Slovene society could be realized: with the introduction of Western solutions into Slovene society. This idea was also in accordance with the general idea of modernization. Central to the idea of modernization is the assumption that underdeveloped nations are lagging behind the developed ones and that they will eventually catch up, but that such development entails industrialization and replacement of 'traditional' social organization, worldview, culture and personality, and so on by their modern counterparts (Kearney 1999: 326).

Because in Slovenia industrialization was not a problem, the basic impact was given to the replacement of 'traditional' - i.e. socialist - social organization, worldview, belief systems, culture and personality by the Western counterparts. It was precisely this transformation that should, together with the introduction of a free market economy, have taken place in the Slovene process of transition.

In implementing this solution, all aspects of the Western social and political organization were introduced: a Western political system was introduced to replace the socialist self-management; a Western-type economy was introduced to replace the socialist economy; a Western-type state was introduced to replace the socialist state; a Western worldview was introduced to replace the socialist worldview; Western values were introduced to replace traditional values; the 'Bologna system' was introduced to replace the socialist Slovene university system, etc.¹³. Glorification of 'the West' has not been the predominant orientation in consumption alone, but has become a formal Slovene policy, not only one possible choice, but an obligation to be realized. In the last twenty-five years, all 'traditional' aspects of the state, society, political system and education have been replaced by their Western counterparts. Slovenia has become a huge experiment in

institutional re-engineering. Although in most cases this replacement has not proven successful¹⁴, this logic of transformation of Slovene society is still the formal policy in all spheres of the Slovene society. Once again, the fact that ‘most anthropologists have been critical of policies based on the transfer of Western models, which overlook institutional contexts and the strong threads of continuity that mark even the most dramatic of social ruptures’ (Hann 2007: 5) has been ignored and/or unknown.

This ‘copy-paste’ logic of Slovene transition also includes other ideas. One of these is the idea that what Slovenia should do is to repeat the development already realized in ‘modern Western capitalist countries’. This repetition has been understood as historical recapitulation: Slovenia was supposed to repeat the phases of development through which ‘modern Western capitalist societies’ passed in the eighteenth and/or nineteenth centuries. Several Slovene social scientists, especially economists, strongly stress the importance of such repetition. An idea like, “Slovenia should realize a phase of primary accumulation of capital in a way proved to be successful in Britain in the eighteenth century” has become normal in Slovene transitological logic. Most politicians constantly emphasise the necessity of recapitulation of past phases of Western capitalism. There exists an open agreement that the way into the ‘modern capitalist Western future’ should in the Slovenian case be simultaneously a way back into the past, through already proven models and paths of development, modernization, social change and social engineering. Since 1991 Slovenia has been governed by a logic described by Lampland as involving the “political agendas of those who argue that we can simply return to the ‘proper’ trajectory of capitalist development” (Lampland 2007: 32-33), i.e. with “the kind of thinking that suggests that we can turn back the clock, or at least return Eastern European societies to a ‘normal’ economic foundation” (2007: 33)¹⁵.

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This logic, however, implies at least two extremely important problems. The first is the answer to the question: which historical model of ‘the modern Western capitalist society’ Slovenia should repeat. Once again it was unclear which ‘modern Western capitalist society’ should be the Slovene model. The second issue is the fact that what needs solution, as Lampland stressed, are the problems of today’s society, and not yesterday’s (2007: 33). In this respect, several anthropological results from the analysis of post-socialism, such as Verdery’s (Verdery 1996), have also been ignored. In her analysis of the future of the former socialist societies, Verdery (1996) proved that this future would not be a repetition of the past of the Western capitalism.

Another characteristic that has fundamentally determined Slovene transition and its results is that the one dominant perspective in Slovene transitological logic has always been the economic perspective. An economic way of understanding the Slovene situation and economic logic in planning Slovenian ‘development, progress and future’ have become dominant discourse in Slovenia. Slovene economists, who in most cases understand the economy almost as a sphere of natural law, usually explain the Slovenian transitional failure with the fact that Slovenia failed to solve problems in the economy. However, there is no agreement about how Slovenia should have solved these problems. Gradualists – the most important of whom is Prof. Mencinger – think that Slovenia should continue the gradualist economic policy that proved successful in the past. Younger economists, ‘newcomers’, such as the ex-minister of economy Šuštaršič, praise neo-liberal logic. In their opinion, the Slovene economic situation is the result of Slovenia’s failure to practice rigorous shock therapy. Poland is given as a productive example of what Slovenia should do (without even mentioning the human and social

costs of this solution). Besides the ‘necessary reforms’¹⁶ to the social state, in their opinion the problem is that Slovenia did not introduce the free market economy with sufficient rigor. Most of them understand a ‘true introduction of the free market’ in a neo-liberal way. They have been explaining neo-liberal doctrine as the only solution for Slovenia and its transformation into a ‘modern Western capitalist society’. According to the logic of mechanical economic determinism, they believe that a successful free market economy would automatically solve all the problems in Slovenia.

In the last two decades in Slovenia, no one has taken any real account of the fact that transition may not be an automatic result of the westernization of the economy, and that other factors exist that influence changes in society, for example, the ethnic culture. No one ever opens the basic issue of “how much culture determines?” (Wilk & Cliggett 2007: 148-9). All basic anthropological knowledge about cultural determination of the economy is unknown and/or ignored in Slovenia, despite Weber’s analysis (Weber 1978, 1988) being part of general knowledge, at least among sociologists. Still unknown, for example, is that in an analysis of economic life “it is very difficult not to take into account cultural and social processes as part of economic processes. Or, put another way: we have to think of the economic process as embedded in social and cultural processes” (Narotzky 1997: 222). Or, as Carrier says: “Economic life cannot be understood unless it is seen in terms of people’s society and culture” (Carrier 2005: 3).

For social and cultural anthropologists, the fact that economic processes and economic life are always allied to the social and cultural processes, that are characteristic of a particular society, also distinguishes an anthropological understanding and study of the economy from that of economists (Carrier 2005; Galdwin 1989; Helgason & Palsson 1997; Narotzky 1997; Plattner 1989). Economics (in Slovenia, as well) treats the economic sphere as more or less self-sufficient and independent from other social and cultural processes. In principle, the economic life as viewed by economics does not appear in terms of people’s society and culture; it is not studied as being enmeshed with various spheres of social and cultural life, such as religion, art or kinship (Helgason & Palsson 1997: 451). Anthropologists, on the other hand, strongly reject this logic: “The rejection of the idea of a separate economic level or bounded region of economic social relations of activities seems to me a first and necessary step” (Narotzky 1997: 7).

Thus, anthropologists are aware of the general cultural context of economic activities (Plattner 1989: 2-3). This connection between culture and economic life has at least two crucial dimensions for social and cultural anthropologists: first, “material relations cannot be theoretically separated from their cultural expressions” (Narotzky 1997: 7); and second, cultural expressions “in turn, are materially produced and embodied” (1997: 7). There exists a kind of double deterministic logic, which can be understood as, firstly, a ‘culture in economy’ logic, and secondly, as an ‘economy in culture’ logic.

Additionally, no one in Slovenia knows or understands Sahlins’s classic statement “that global modernity is often reproduced as local diversity” (Sahlins 1994: 377); his explanatory example that “it was not European muskets that made Fijian chiefs powerful so much as the chiefs that made the muskets historically powerful” (1994: 391); his conclusion that what needed to be studied was the “indigenization of modernity” (1994: 390), and his general statement that: Who or what is a historical actor, what is a historical act and what will be its historical consequences: these are determinations of a cultural

order, and differently determined in different orders. No history, then, without culture. And vice versa (Sahlins 2004: 292).

All these reasons explain why Western solutions, recipes and institutions in Slovenia have never been indigenized. The present crisis in Slovenia is also the result of non-indigenized modernization, i.e. non-indigenized westernization (Godina 2010, 2014). What the indigenization of modernity means is absolutely unknown in Slovenia. The same is true for the processes of indigenization and for the role that ethnic culture plays in social change, modernization, westernization and other similar processes. In Slovenia no one understands the fact familiar to social and cultural anthropologists: that social change can be successful only if it is based on ethnic culture and its values, norms and orientations (Geertz 1963; Hann 1996, 2007; Kalb 2007; Lampland 2007; Sahlins 1976, 1994, 2004).

Slovenia also remains unfamiliar with ethnographic facts and analysis, such as those about capitalism in Africa or capitalism in Japan. Neglected is that Meillassoux demonstrated that the arrival of colonialism in West Africa did not cause the complete transformation of all previous social and economic systems; rather, the development of colonial capitalism in each area was dependent on the exploitation of pre-capitalist economies; capitalism therefore tries to encapsulate and preserve pre-capitalist modes of production (Meillassoux 1972). The examples of West Africa, which from an anthropological perspective ‘offers one of the most striking examples of indigenous capitalism’ (Hann & Hart 2011: 109), has never been studied or analysed in Slovenian transitology. Also overlooked are the classic social anthropological analyses of the importance of traditional Japanese culture and social structure for the development of capitalism in Japan and for the westernization of Japan, done by Nakane (Nakane 1973, 2004)¹⁷. Moreover, Slovenes are unaware of anthropological knowledge about the role of traditional social institutions, norms and values in the process of introducing the Western solutions and institutions into society, such as Geertz’s analysis of the role that *hamet* and *pasar* played in economic modernization in Indonesia (Geertz 1963), Nakane’s analysis of the fact that modernization in Japan was based on traditional social organization, norms and values (Nakane 1973, 2004), or Rey’s evidence that everywhere the introduction of capitalism was successful, this success was the result of a compromise between elements of the traditional social organization and newly introduced social organization, especially between the old and new ruling classes (Rey 1971, 1973).

To conclude, anthropological knowledge about the successful transformation of a non-capitalist society into a capitalist society – in the form of theory and ethnography – could perhaps be the most important correction of the false political and social practices that in the last two decades have produced an economic, social, political and moral crisis in Slovenia and all the human suffering, connected with this¹⁸. As Hann and Hart wrote: The financial crisis and its social consequences may have taken most of the world by surprise, including the economists, but it should not have been a surprise to economic historians and anthropologists, who have long been familiar with notions like ‘creative destruction’ and ‘unequal development’ (Hann & Hart 2011: ix).

These are notions and realities that form part of everyday life for the majority of citizens in post-socialist societies.

Conclusions

The open and socially responsible solving of the most important problems of the post-socialist societies is determined by understanding of post-socialist societies and especially by understanding of the processes of social change, called 'transition', which were the basic formative process in all post-socialist societies in the last twenty five years. These processes basically determine all post-socialist societies and are connected with all basic social and political problems in contemporary post-socialist societies (such as unemployment, poverty, decline of public and individual health, economic crisis, political crisis, moral crisis etc.).

It is an illusion to think that those problems of post-socialist societies could be solved as isolated problems, in accordance with 'one by one' logic. Such solving of problems of the post-socialist societies has been producing and will produce unsuccessful results, which are regularly accompanied by high economic, social and political costs, and with criticism, even anger among people.

Social responsible solving of the most important problems of the post-socialist societies must be based on understanding of the post-socialist societies and processes of social change, which are connected with the post-socialist 'transition'. That means that economic, social, political and moral problems of the post-socialist societies can be solved in socially responsible way only when some basic knowledge of anthropology of post-socialism is taken into account, such as:

- The local history and local culture are crucial factors in all processes in post-socialist societies, what means that socially responsible solving of problems of post-socialist societies must be based on local history and local culture;
- The post-socialist societies cannot repeat the past social change of Western societies, what means that socially responsible solving of problems of post-socialist societies must avoid 'copy-paste' practice and introduction of Western solutions;
- one crucial aspect of social responsibility in post-socialist societies is connected with a practice of indigenization of Western institutions, practices and solution; if Western institutions, practices and solutions are introduced in post-socialist societies, they must always be indigenized; non-indigenized Western practices, institutions and solutions namely regularly produce new serious problems in post-socialist societies, what cannot be understood as social responsible activity and practice;
- And we should always bear in mind that post-socialist societies are part of global world capitalism with all its tactics and interests.

As a scholar who daily meets people without jobs, people who cannot buy coloured pencils for their hungry children, who beg, or more often, do not beg but suffer in private invisibility because they are ashamed of being poor and without jobs, as if this were their responsibility or guilt, to see less poverty, fewer degraded people, hungry children and desperate parents would be an acceptable solution. This is why I insist in socially responsible solving of the most important problems of post-socialist societies. And this is why I think we scholars must intervene. But intervene in a socially responsible way, i.e. in the way which will not increase poverty, suffering, unemployment, decline of individual and public health and other aspect of individual and public suffering which has become one of the basic characteristics of contemporary post-socialist societies.

NOTES

¹ Among anthropologists of post-socialism, the concept of transition has negative connotations (Giordano & Kostova 2007: 74; Kalb 2007: 324; Kideckel 2007: 115); it “is increasingly recognized as teleological, ethnocentrically triumphalist and disrespectful of cross-national variations” (Kideckel 2007: 115). This is also why ‘transitology’ is understood among anthropologists of post-socialism as an ideological stand and research (Giordano & Kostova 2007; Hann 2007; Kideckel 2007). Instead of transition, anthropologists of post-socialism prefer to use other terms, such as transformation (Hann & Hart 2011: 136; Giordano & Kostova 2007: 74).

² It is important to note that the idea of transition for ex-socialist societies included greater or smaller change in the social, political and economic system, but not industrialization. Industrialization was not seen as a part of transition, because most ex-socialist countries had achieved it during the socialist period (Hann 2010: 8-9). This was an important factor in the transition of ex-socialist states into the post-socialist states and significantly influences the results of transition, in accordance with Geertz’s classic dictum, that when discussing ‘take-off societies’ it is crucial whether or not the society in question has already realized industrialization (Geertz 1963: 1).

³ Post-socialist countries differ in terms of recognition about the permanence of contemporary post-socialist social, economic and political conditions. In many post-socialist countries, people recognized that the present post-socialist conditions were a new and permanent social system (cf. Pine 2007). On the other hand, Latham reports that in China people still believe that the present conditions are only a phase on the way to a better life and a more successful economy, political system and social state: ‘China’s transition is transition *to*...it is laden with a wide range of hopes for the future’ (Latham 2007: 230). In Slovenia, too, the belief that we are only passing through an inconvenient phase on the way to a better future is still dominant.

⁴ In ex-Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the most developed and the most industrialized part of socialist Yugoslavia. This resulted in the standard of life in Slovenia being relatively high. Slovenes were regular shoppers in Austria and Italy, where they bought fashion clothes, furniture, cosmetics, perfumes and food. Several Italian and Austrian towns – such as Gorizia in Italy and Leibnitz in Austria- lived on Slovene consumption.

⁵ For this there were several reasons. One of the most important is the geographic location of Slovenia in an area of transit; historically, this territory was a connection between the Adriatic coast and Central and Eastern Europe. The result was that for centuries Slovenian territory was strongly linked with the territories that are today known as Austria, Italy, Croatia and Hungary. These connections remained stable during the socialist period, especially because, for the majority of Slovenes and Yugoslavs in socialist Yugoslavia, it was possible to travel abroad.

⁶ Like many socialist countries, Yugoslavia - and Slovenia as part of it – had a good educational system. Of course, there existed school subjects which were strongly ideological, such as ‘Self-management on the foundations of Marxism’ (which acquainted pupils with the basic characteristics of the socialist Yugoslavian political system as well as with its political ideology) and the subject of ‘Defence and Protection’ (which, as a paramilitary subject, familiarised students with basic fighting skills, as well as with ideological items about the defence of socialist Yugoslavia). However, education in mathematics, natural sciences, literature etc. was excellent, and this emerged in several ways. Most pupils who in primary and secondary school moved from Yugoslavia and Slovenia to the West continued their education successfully, with higher grades than they had received in Slovenia or Yugoslavia.

⁷ This tradition became extremely important in the seventies and eighties. Names such as Slavoj Žižek and Tomaž Mastnak were the central figures of that movement in the eighties.

⁸ This was a result of several coincidences. Perhaps the most important of these was that Milan Kučan became leader of the Slovene League of Communists. This represented the end of the dominance of the older dogmatic type of communists, such as Popit, or Maček, in Slovenia. Milan Kučan was also the one who, along with the Slovene delegation, left the 14th Congress of the League of Yugoslav Communists, which was the first step in the formal disintegration of the socialist Yugoslavia.

⁹ It must be stressed that this model is not in accordance with social and historical facts. As already mentioned, the socialist societies have generally implemented a successful transformation from agrarian to industrial countries (Hann 2010: 8-9). This complicates the question of the modernity or non-modernity of socialist societies. Hann’s comment on this dilemma is as follows: “The Soviet Union and most other socialist states succeeded in a remarkably short period of time in transforming their underdeveloped, agrarian economies into industrial, scientifically advanced planned economies in which the population was concentrated in towns and cities. Lifestyles were transformed both in rural and in urban sectors. Citizens brought up under socialism...often understood themselves as supremely modern. This equation of socialism with modernity was paradoxically strengthened in the post-socialist years” (2010: 8-9).

¹⁰ It seems that in Slovenia the wish to have Western-style consumption was the crucial motivation for transition among Slovene citizens. Slovenia was not an exception in this respect, because the failure to meet

consumer aspirations in socialist states was a central element in the weakening of socialism (Hann & Hart 2011: 128; Verdery 1996: 26).

¹¹ I am aware that understanding modernity in the form of 'multiple modernities' leads to several dilemmas (Thomassen 2012). However, the move from one monolithic modernity to multiple modernities seems to be a crucial move in the Slovene situation.

¹² We cannot discuss in detail here the relationship between Marx's, Engels's and Morgan's models of social evolution (cf. Engels 1975; Marx 1968; Morgan 1981). However, it must be stressed that the generally accepted idea that Marx developed his model of social evolution under the influence of Morgan is wrong; Marx elaborated his model of social evolution by 1844 (Marx 1968), more than three decades before Morgan's *Ancient Society* was published in 1877. It is however true that Marx read Morgan's work and made excerpts from it (cf. Krader 1976).

¹³ Slovenia is not the only example of this type of transitological logic. In other post-socialist societies a massive importation of Western solutions and institutions has been underway (Hann 2007: 5-7; Giordano & Kostova 2007: 74; Kalb 2007; Pine 2007 etc.).

¹⁴ Among Slovenes, the most commonly discussed examples of unsuccessful introduction are the juridical system, the parliamentary system, Western-style democracy and the Western type of management.

¹⁵ In her analysis, Lampland proves that this post-socialist logic is in fact a continuation of Stalinist logic (2007: 32-33).

¹⁶ These "necessary reforms" include reform of the pension system (i.e., to abolish the relatively social pension system – relatively social, because even in this system many old people do not have pensions sufficient to cover their basic living costs); reforms to the health system (i.e., to introduce payment for health care and health services via the private health system and by limiting state payments, despite the fact that today in Slovenia we have people who lack money to pay for medical or a hospital care, and that we have for the first time physicians who treat patients at their own cost); reforms to the system of social transfers (i.e., to decrease existing social transfers, although even in the contemporary system there are individuals, such as some disabled persons, who get no financial support from the state, not even the basic health care); and reform of the educational system (i.e., to introduce private schools offering education for a fee, i.e., to decrease the extent of the state-supported educational system, which will soon result in a situation where children from poor families will not be able to attend university, thus eliminating their chance for vertical social mobility). All these reforms are highly recommended by international institutions, such as the World Bank, EBRD etc.

¹⁷ Despite a well-known criticism of her work (cf. Hata & Smith 1983), I treat Nakane's analysis of Japanese society (Nakane 1973, 2004) as classic. Results of several analysers of Japanese society are in accordance with Nakane's conclusions (cf. Goodman & Refsing 1992; Macpherson 1995).

¹⁸ Over the last few years in Slovenia, we have witnessed an unbelievable increase in poverty and human suffering, unknown in the Slovene socialist past. We have very high (from the Slovene perspective) unemployment, and as a result, more and more people who are poor, who lack food and see their children hungry. Because in past we were 'the Switzerland of Yugoslavia', this fact is extremely problematic and is understood as a degradation of the Slovene people and Slovene society. Humanitarian organizations, such as the *Red Cross* and *Caritas*, speak openly in public about not having enough food for hungry people, not enough clothes for the poor, not enough money to pay bills for those without jobs, etc. We are witnessing once unknown practices of redistribution: humanitarian organisations collect not only old clothes, but also old bed linen, school books, notebooks and other school necessities and redistribute them to people without jobs and money. One of the most shocking activities occurred in August 2012: humanitarian organisations and schools collected second-hand coloured pencils for school children whose parents were not able to buy these for their children. The shock was the result of the fact that coloured pencils are very cheap in Slovenia; that someone might be unable to buy them had been, till that August, unthinkable.

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