

HERITAGE OF SOVIETISM IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIA: PERVERTED CONCEPTIONS OF PROPERTY RELATIONS

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*"We first begin to understand how social structures really work only after they have fallen apart. This may be the perfect moment to begin anthropology of socialism"*¹

S. Sampson

Abstract. After a collapse of the Soviet Union most of Central and East European countries, including Lithuania, are often entitled as "the second echelon", agrarian region, periphery of Western civilization or the "Third World"². The cultural and economical lag is often said to be caused by a mental gap, which was constructed by model of soviet collectivism and planned economy³. Herewith, slowly changing categories in cognition impact the reflections on market economy model and its mode of functioning.

The ideological and physical installation of collectivism and disruption of private sector during Sovietism in Lithuania contradicted the centenary traditions of private (individual) business' understanding. The shadow status of the private sector influenced a perverted evolution of property relations, which distinguished by private sector development processes, which dubbed state functions. After the recovery of independence, speedy land economy, property and social reforms in the village and city clashed with the expressions of collectivism practice and traditions of shadow business, which had been implanted during epoch of Sovietism. This evoked the feeling of uncertainty and social strain in post soviet society.

Why "New Europe"?

Socio-humanitaric sciences link the collapse of the Soviet Union with the new period in world

history, which gave birth to various political, cultural economical or social alternations⁴. These alternations are often being explained as the signs of forthcoming power redistribution or cultural

¹ Niedermüller P. Arbeit, Identität, Klasse // Arbeit im Sozialismus – Arbeit im Postsozialismus. Erkundungen zum Arbeitsleben im östlichen Europa (ed. Christian Giordano). Münster, 2004, p. 23.

² Frank A. G. The Thirdworldisation of Russia and Eastern Europe // The Aftermath of "Real Existing Socialism" in Eastern Europe (ed. Jacques Hersh, Johannes Dragsbeak Schmidt). Vol. 1. London, 1996, p. 43–44.

³ The term of collectivisation in the aforementioned article comprises the comprehensive connotation of this phenomenon, emphasising complex (ideological, legal, economical) aspect of the socio-culturally alien influence of historically established community structures

⁴ Humphrey C. The unmaking of Soviet life: Everyday economies after Socialism. London, 2002, p. xx–xxi.

conflicts (Let us remember F. E. Samuel Huntington, who ascribes the collapse of the Soviet Union to his famous theory of clash of civilisations)⁵. Today's Europe, unfortunately, reduces the socio-cultural differences between "newly reborn" states and the "old" Europe to the temporal obstacles of a transitional character. It is believed that sooner or later these "transitional obstacles" shall be shaded away in multicultural field of Western civilisation, which is embodied by the European Union.

Regardless the declarations of European cultural unity, a big number of states from the former Soviet bloc (East Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Baltic States, Belorussia, Ukraine, Balkan region etc.) are often identified or identify themselves as a periphery of Western civilisation⁶. Today it is fashionable to name these countries by using epithet of "New Europe"⁷. However, the existence of such treatment *a priori* shows that Europe embeds a tendency of regional segregation in geopolitical, economical and social sense.

A part of scientists and researchers, represented by writer Milan Kundera, distinguishes "New Europe" by its unique cultural spirit⁸. Others, like historian of economics André Frank, explain the affinity of the region in its performed long-lasting function to supply Europe with raw materials⁹. Yet, its communist past is generally

identified as the mostly important feature of the "New Europe".

The cultural and economical lag of "New Europe" is often said to be caused by a mental gap, which was constructed by a model of collectivism and planned economy. Here we talk not only about the dependence to a single political bloc, but rather about a failed model of communistic utopia. The principles that were formed during the implementation phase of the aforementioned utopia became a cause of social and economical drag of the "new pupils" on their way to democracy and market economy.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear, what that abstract soviet inheritance, which should supposedly be relinquished, is. Certainly, lots of grounds of the soviet mentality could be identified, however, the spirit of collectivism, which can be determined by collective property relations and their predominant conception, is the mostly important of them. While analysing the Lithuanian society in 40's-90's specifically, the property relations can be tracked as a unifying factor of collectivism. Property relations are the most affected by collectivism and unnaturally perverted sphere of social life in Lithuania¹⁰.

Following theories of free market economy, the engine of market economy is namely the existence of private (individual) business, which realises it surplus product produced according to the mechanism of demand and supply¹¹. In the long run, private sector, its control and legal regulation of its resources or property constructs a social and cultural phenomenon, so called property relations. Respectfully, the conceptions of

⁵ Huntington S. P. *Der Kampf der Kulturen: die Neugestaltung der Weltpolitik im 21. Jahrhundert*. München, 1997, p. 25.

⁶ Staniszkis J. *The ontology of Socialism*. Oxford, 1992, p. 60-61.

⁷ Emergence of the "New Europe" conception could be related with the expansion of the European Union in the year 2004 and the USA president G. W. Bush made distinction between the "old" and "new" Europe, which results from different positions of the East and West Europe countries *vis-à-vis* war in Iraq.

⁸ Kundera M. *Atplėšti Vakarai, arba Vidurio Europos tragedija // Literatūra ir menas*, 1989 kovo 4.

⁹ Frank A. G. *Ibid*, p. 40-41

¹⁰ Kačiūška Ž. Nuosavybės santykių modelis sovietiniame Lietuvos kaime. *Stungių kaimo atvejis // Lietuvos istorijos studijos*. 2004, t. 14, p. 100-114.

¹¹ Egerer R. *The Influence of Privatization Strategies and Corporate Governance Options on the Development of Capital Markets in Central and Eastern Europe*. Bamberg, 1996, p. 41-42.

these relations create general mental categories and continuous social structure in a society (or community). Should property be treated as socio-cultural phenomenon, the formation of which requires a long period of time, the unity of “New Europe” (as well as Eastern and Central Europe) evokes a lot of problematic aspects, namely:

1. Do all the societies, which today belong to “New Europe”, had formed within the same tradition of private (individual) business?
2. Are there any links between the market economy, the principles of planned economy and priorities given to collective property, which were being implemented during sovietism? If yes, what are they?
3. Can a forced transition from individual understanding of business to collectivism change the prevailing traditional private property conception in the society?
4. Did all “ex-soviet bloc” countries experience the same degree of collectivisation and planned economy?

This article reflects some of the attention points that are based on the fieldwork information, which was accumulated for the analysis of dynamics in property conception in Lithuanian society, in the years 2002–2003¹². These attention points can be divided into two main blocks: specifically Lithuania oriented and more generally – “New Europe” – oriented.

Definitions of the conceptions

The property relations and Soviet, post-Soviet epoch related definitions are rather complex and contradictory, therefore they should be discussed separately.

The article covers the conceptions of sovietism, postsovietism and transformation periods. As the theorists are still in disputes concerning the appropriate definitions of period of existence of the Soviet Union and periods after its collapse; and aiming to avoid the speculations, which might be related to ideological way of describing the periods (e. g. communist/postcommunist, social/postsocial), the article deals with chronological definition of the sovietism, which includes the annexation of Lithuania to the Soviet Union in the years 1940–1941 and 1944–1990.

Postsovietism is Lithuanian state epoch, which started with the recovery of the state independence in 1990. The misapprehensions *eo ipso* rise while defining the period of so called transition, transformation, etc. of the restored state reforms. The main discussions brake concerning the problematic identification of the “end point”. Defining the aforementioned period, the aspect of “newly” created/emerged is raised. In this instance, the transformation period is understood as an epoch, when conflict between two concepts of time (past and future) is sharply affecting the understanding of the social reality in a society¹³.

The concept of property in the article is based on the one formulated in the works of K. A. Wittfogel, because it was *de facto* adopted by subsequent property related theorists. Property, according him, is the accepted right of the individual to possess a particular object. This embodies not only the relation between the object and individual, but also the relation between the owner of the object and other individuals, who accept the rights of the owner towards that object¹⁴. Property is treated not only as legal and

¹³ Matonytė I. Posovietinio elito labirintai. Vilnius, 2001, p. 23.

¹⁴ Wittfogel K. Die orientalische Despotie: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung totaler Macht. Köln, 1962, p. 292.

¹² The field research was made in 2004, in a Lithuanian village, namely Stungiai.

political institution, but also as socio-cultural phenomenon¹⁵.

Theoretical field

The guidance by sole, though perfectly organised, theoretical "grid", while analysing the property relations as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, may result in large deviation in research references and conclusions¹⁶. Pursuing to reduce the above-mentioned risk to maximum, it is indispensable to review the multiplex spectrum of the interdisciplinary researches, related to this phenomenon, as widely as possible¹⁷.

The model of State government and centrally planned economy in the Soviet Union abundantly differed from model of the market economy and democracy principles. Both Western countries and the Soviet Union justified the differences by a borderline, identifying the reasons why do "we" differ from "them".

In both sides of the "iron curtain", the theories on soviet block and the organisation of constitutive societies, after a number of social investigations, pinpoint to the aspect of property relations. The conceptions of K. Marx "Asian Mode of Production" and K. A. Wittfogel "Hydraulic State", which became the most important and influential in the mid XX century in Western countries, explains the organisation of soviet society referring to a number of aspects of property relations and work planning¹⁸. In the other side of the "iron curtain" this question was ana-

lysed publicly as long as it fit in the narrow frames of Marxist/Leninist conception¹⁹.

In the end of the existence of Soviet block, a movement of anthropology transition period has formed, which elaborated the conception of the micro-level influence to the macro-level²⁰. This makes a part of transitology, the research object of which is the socio-cultural reforms related to the change in power leverage and its reflections to micro-level, which take place in ex-soviet societies.

The research, described in the article, may correspond with the researches performed by the anthropologists Caroline Humphrey, Katherine Verdery, Chris Hann, Nancy Ries, which emphasise the importance of the role of formal and informal relations in societies. The anthropology of the transition highlights the survival of aspects of contacts formed during sovietism and the access to the resources, which still influence the evolution of postsoviet society and relevant reactions of the population to the changing environment. Other important aspect – the comparative researches of soviet and post-soviet economy management practices, which rather orient around the level of social consciousness more than the level of economy. The possibilities of change in already settled mental categories are revealed through the conflict of different practices of government. The researches of relationships formed during Sovietism and economy management practices incorporate the phenomenon of property relations²¹.

¹⁵ Humphrey C., Verdery K. Introduction: Raising Questions about Property // Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy (ed. Caroline Humphrey, Katherine Verdery). Oxford, 2004, p. 2.

¹⁶ The major part of theoretic material concerning the topic was collected during the internship in the University of Fribourg in Switzerland.

¹⁷ Bourdieu P., Wacquant L. Įvadas į refleksišiąją sociologiją. Vilnius, 2003, p. 50–51.

¹⁸ Wittfogel K. Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁹ The above mentioned theorists are reflected only as the architects of the interdisciplinary predominated theoretical attitudes, guidelines and insights, strongly questioning their futurist and/or unifying models of society evolution.

²⁰ Burawoy M., Verdery K. Introduction // Uncertain Transition (ed. Katherine Verdery, Michael Burawoy). Oxford, 1999, p. 1–2.

²¹ Verdery K. Ethnic relations, economies of shortage, and the transition in Eastern Europe // Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia (ed. Chris Hann). New York, 2002, p. 174–175.

The majority of other soviet and post-soviet anthropology researches confine to studies of countries that were not included into the Soviet Union. Regarding the property relations, their conclusions could be acceptable only partly as the most of Soviet-block countries distinguished by limited commercial activities in the private sector, which actualised in a form of co-operative property (e. g. agricultural enterprises in Soviet Poland)²². By contrast, the realisation of any surplus product from the private sector was treated as illegal in the Soviet Union till “perestroika”.

From the positions of history of civilisations, the problematics in research is mostly related with the model of Lithuania as a periphery of Western civilisation, developed by Lithuanian historian E. Gudavičius, who underlines the importance of individual farming as an indicator of cultural/civilisational dependence²³.

Sovietism: first stage of transformation in property relations

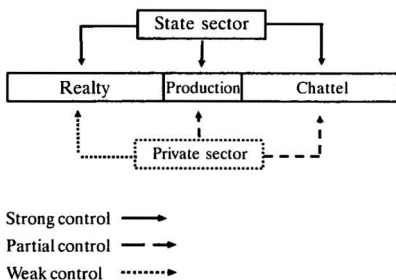
Referring to the data of the year 1939, 77,1 per cent of Lithuanian inhabitants lived in village²⁴. The majority of them worked in agriculture and maintained private farmlands, which were owned by themselves or agrarians.

Occupation, which commenced interruptedly, launched not only totalitarianism, which was alien to the political traditions, but also a new model of community relations, built on collective property and communal farming, as well as artificially forcing the industrialisation and urbanisation of the country²⁵. Despite the intense

migration from village to town, the population living in town did not exceed 50 per cent till 1970²⁶. Therefore, during the most time in occupation, the village-type society prevailed in Lithuania. Its production made not less than 28 per cent of total GDP of the country²⁷.

During Sovietism in Lithuania, private sector was treated as a rudiment of commercial activities and therefore contradicted the society model that was constructed by the official Communist ideology. Following this, it was pursued to eliminate it from the market. Nevertheless, legally, a person could possess private property only for uncommercial purposes. All personal and real estates as well as their output were controlled by the state. However the Soviet power structures were unsuccessful in totally eliminating private sector. In reality, private sector, which produced surplus production for commercial purposes, remained a half-legal, informal and shadow structure in village or city.

Property relations in Soviet Lithuania



Private sector for the rural and urban societies was one of the main sources of incomes, resources for which were rendered from the state sector. Private business tradition in Sovietism

²² Wedel J. *The private Poland*. New York, 1986, p. 53–54.

²³ Gudavičius E. *Lietuvos europėjimo kelias: istorinės studijos*. Vilnius, 2002, p. 19–20.

²⁴ Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 2001, p. 31.

²⁵ Šimėnas A. *Ekonomikos reforma Lietuvoje*. Vilnius, 1996, p. 17–18.

²⁶ Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 2001, p. 24.

²⁷ Šimėnas A. *Ibid*, p. 146–148.

could survive only when individual possessed farmland and a network to realise surplus product. For example, proprietors used to spend almost all of their free time from work in the collective or state farms for her own land cultivation and surplus product production.

Annual financial incomes of the employees of the collective and state farms (percentage.)²⁸

| Types of incomes | 1985 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| For the work in a farm | 47,0 | 48,1 | 45,8 | 44,5 |
| Wage | 3,4 | 3,3 | 3,2 | 3,3 |
| Grants, scholarships, etc. | 11,3 | 10,4 | 10,3 | 11,2 |
| From the private farm | 36,2 | 37,0 | 38,7 | 39,1 |
| Other sources | 2,1 | 1,2 | 2,0 | 1,9 |

The shadow status of the private sector influenced a perverted evolution of property relations, where resources for development of private sector were obtained by dubbing the functions performed by state sector. Sovietism in Lithuanian society has formed the specific understanding about economy, its administrative principles and rational behaviour skills, and also a relatively strict social differentiation. Economy management was understood as an execution of the directives from the superior power structures, allocation of tasks and control of their processing. Good execution of a task corresponded to bigger volume of material used and smaller amount of tasks received. This was achieved only when having good relations with power structures.

“One had to work then. The most important thing was to do, what one was being told to. Why do more than told, why to sweat for free.” (K. R., 68 yrs.)

According to different accession “rights” to the process of resources’ allocation, the privileged society groups had formed. In case of Lithuania, the privileged group consisted of representatives from soviet farm or state company ruling layer. Though the aforementioned layer had to follow the directives of Soviet power and to control the situation, it was active in private business activities too. The status and its indicative privileges guaranteed the immunity of this ruling layer.

Post-Sovietism: second stage of transformation in property relations

The majority of responders understood property as legally and socially regulated sphere, which consisted of personal and real estate as well as its production, which could be due to private or state sector. The cult of public property and embezzlement of goods, which resulted from this cult and was declared as the universally accepted phenomenon during Sovietism, affected the current understanding of property. The respondents distinguish the individually owned property the most strictly. It is not important, whether it is a personal or real estate, it is identified as personal ownership of a particular individual. Any impingement on it is handled only in a negative way.

The situation regarding the property that belonged to joint stock companies and individual enterprises is quite different. It is induced by a number of factors. Firstly, whether the company is local or foreign and how it has obtained the property. If the company cheaply bought up the property of personal and real estate collective or state firm, than the embezzlement is treated as legal activity.

For example, stock companies are the soviet farms, reformed to agricultural companies, the shares of which (*pajai*) belong to the majority of the villagers. The property of such a company is

²⁸ Lietuvos statistikos metraštis 1990. Statistinis rinkinys, p. 44.

conceived as common property of everybody working in the said collective or state farm. Any attempts to privatise it publicly are recognised as a direct trial to deprive the fairly earned possession. Respondents found it difficult to realise the economical function of shares *pajai*. They are not trusted, because their value does not correspond to what was earned *de facto*.

“Company is the company: it is the same collective farm. They only put all the property into papers and those, who were closer to the government or more cunning, had wangled some machinery. At the start, when the company functioned, it distributed some centner of grains. But now everything is finished, if one had not sold *pajai*, one can throw them at oneself.” (A. P., 55 yrs.)

The employees of the company, who managed to speculate lots of property (mostly of personal estate type) during the collapse of planned economy, are not condemned. They are reproached only in a way that they obtained property and profited from their former status. The illegal embezzlement of property or goods from the company or enterprise is perceived as a way of reclamation of legitimate earnings.

“Clean” vs “dirty” property

The understanding of property, the categories of evaluation emerges: real – unreal, clean – dirty, etc. These distinctions developed while the responders evaluated the activities of the aforementioned individual enterprises or joint stock companies as well as the role of businessmen in privatisation. The responders firstly pinpointed that currently, contrary to sovietism, every type of property is “real”. This reflects the transformation of mental categories that were being formed by former economical model.

The factor of obtained possession is treated otherwise. The first privatisation stage after the recovery of the independence is often remembered and cited. Years spent in the collective or state company formed a specific approach to-

wards the property of the company as “own”, the management and division of which should firstly rest on its employees.

“We have worked for that farm for ages, health was rendered and everything [...] was built by own hands. Whom does it belong more? Who had to parcel it the foremost?” (M. B., 62 yrs.)

The privatisation of former collective/state farm was inspected as through the reading-glass. Every purchase of private or real estate evoked wide attention of local community. Businessmen or newcomer farmer, who benefited from legal gaps of the first stage of privatisation, reaped ambiguous evaluation of the property procured.

The responders estimate the property according to the criteria of the way the property was obtained and managed. The dimension of “clean” and “dirty” is introduced.

The prevailing opinion about the farms, which are managed by individuals, who used to be the officers in soviet collective/state farms, is that their property was obtained in a “dirty” way, i. e. by exercising their status. It is emphasised that the successful farming or involvement into the business is determined not only by good education or management, but also by unequal start positions, which rest on illegally accumulated material base and former relationships.

“Now it is simple for the former zoo-technician to farm. As far as she knew that everything should have collapsed, she wangled best machinery, live stock for oneself.” (K. R., 68 yrs.)

The approach towards the businessmen distinguishes by the categories of soviet mentality in the most of the cases. Though the context is slightly changing in the past years, the majority of “brought up by sovietism” inhabitants still associate business with the speculation that flourished in sovietism and the revenues as well as property generated from that period are always “dirty”. Few elements influence this understanding.

First of these elements, is sovietism persistent image of businessmen/speculator, who, suppo-

sedly, eludes earning for the fortune by “real” work and exploits earnestly working people. Second element comprises the understanding of the “dirty” privatisation, which took place during the early years of recovered independence, when a part of farm properties were cheaply bought by businessmen and later on sold out more expensively.

“How can the property of “*biznierius*” be “clean”? They are the same speculators as they used to be under the Soviet Union. They cheat ordinary people, stick with expensive stuff and that’s all. The difference is that now they are called as businessmen and behave as big lords. Earlier on such persons were regarded as gypsies and police used to catch them.” (V. N., 57 yrs.)

Life according to the principles of market economy and larger involvement of people in one or other activity transforms the understanding and estimations of business. Businessmen themselves are segmented into “simple” and “*biznierius*”. The “simple”, small scale businessmen are positively approached. The property of such businessmen is treated as earned fairly. The so called “*biznierius*” or “*bosas*”, whose owned property resources cannot be clearly identified, are negatively approached. This most often relates the representatives for big business.

“Secure” vs. “insecure” property

The other aspect, evolving while evaluating the property, is the dilemma of its “security” and “insecurity”. Any property possessed during sovietism was insecure, because state acknowledged the possession of private property for only non-commercial activities. All other property, which exceeded the limitations allowed (e. g. increase of cattle, limited amount of real estate or production) or was earned by engaging into illegal (e. g. commercial) activities, could officially be confiscated by the state at any time. In reality, the appliance of the aforementioned situation was rather restricted by a number of cut-outs

such as useful acquaintanceship, relations, bribes and similar. The mostly secure layer was civil service, less secure – ordinary employees.

Many responders acknowledge that currently one may hardly figure a state, which could penalise a person for managing business or estate qualification by confiscating his property. In this way property is secure. From the other side, part of the habitants, who manage business or commercial activities, pursue to develop the efficiency of their activities and therefore are forced to take loans from the banks to finance the purchase or renovate the machinery or buildings. The real or personal estate is mortgaged as a guarantee. In some occasions, the production-generated revenues do not repurchase the credit received. Therefore, one may get into a vicious circle: either one borrows again, or other sources are searched. A threat to lose one’s property menaces.

“These times the property is equally insecure. If, at Russian, you had to mind the government not taking it away, now - you mind the banks and the production is bought up for cents. How the credits shall be re-paid then?” (R. P., 50 yrs.)

“Effective” vs. “ineffective”

During the occupation of the Soviet Union, the property relations were directly incorporated into a plan based modelling of the central economy, because of its direct influence on the market and base of communist ideology. In post-sovietism, when the state reduced its control on market relations, the escalation of social problems in the society posed particular approaches towards public and state sectors.

The dimension of “effective” vs. “ineffective” rests in the society since sovietism, when an approach towards state sector formed, which distinguished by an enforced derivative that sought to control the private activities by all means and advocated ineffective farming.

Just after the recovery of independence, the situation had totally transformed, as people believed that own government shall safeguard the demand for private activities and, furthermore, shall minister the welfare of the citizens. In the run, it was obvious that the expectance of "right ministration of the society" is not satisfied. During privatisation and land restitution processes people confronted the cases of obvious misuse of power, when process was artificial or implemented in "false" way. This evoked a frustration in new government and associated it with the relevant situations of sovietism.

Not every respondent realised the process of change in activities, performed by state sector. It is expected that the state sector would control and distribute the state resources and, at the same time, guarantee the realisation of the production fabricated. Active involvement of private sector has compensated partially the expectations of the inhabitants, which were directed to the state sector.

The intensification of private sector in the spheres of real and personal estates as well as inadequately big influence to initial distribution of resources minimised the role of state sector in further stages.

Conclusions

The objective of the compulsory collectivisation and industrialisation, which was performed in Soviet Lithuania, was to diminish the private sector, which produced the surplus production. Officially, the private commercial practice was treated as a pathology of the property relations. Realistically, the soviet government did not succeed in total elimination of the private sector as the producer of the surplus production.

The shadow status of the private sector influenced a perverted evolution of property relations, when the private sector developed while dubbing the functions of the state. This is reflected by increasing quantities of the individual farms and the transformation of the collective and state farms into co-operative associations by the end of the collapse of Soviet Union.

After recovery of independence, the conception of propriety relations has transformed only partially. The extant tradition of private business influenced more speedy formation of farmers and businessmen. However the shift in understanding of state and private sectors takes much more time.

During Postsovietism, the functions of distribution of resources and production as well as its control is ascribed to state sector. The functional conception of private sector encompasses the relicts of shadow state, when the existence of private sector necessitates the injections form state sector. The realisation of the reformed status of private and state sectors in the market economy is still being processed.

Understanding of private sector as of independent actor in market economy is still accompanied by a conviction that private sector must have possibilities to use state owned resources for its own sake. The implantation of collectivism in a part of "New Europe" countries has influenced the key principles and norms of society, though it did not destroy the tradition of private business. This resulted from the different scope of collectivism incorporation and intensity of marginalisation of commercial business, which was harder and more systematic in the Soviet states.

SOVIETMEČIO PALIKIMAS ŠIANDIENINĖJE LIETUVOJE: IŠKREIPTA NUOSAVYBĖS SANTYKIŲ SAMPRATA

Žilvinas Kačiuška

S a n t r a u k a

Žlugus Sovietų Sąjungai, Rytų ir Vidurio Europos šalys, kartu ir Lietuva neretai yra pavadinamos „antrąja Europa“, agrariniu regionu ar Vakarų Europos periferija. Kultūrinis ir ekonominis „naujosios Europos“ išskirtinumas dažnai aiškinamas „kitokiu“ šių šalių visuomenių mentalitetu, kuris buvo (su)konstruotas sovietinio kolektyvizmo ir planinės ekonomikos modelio. Neretai konstatuojama, kad Rytų ir Vidurio Europos visuomenėse lėtai kintančios mąstymo kategorijos daro įtaką ekonomikos ir jos funkcionavimo sampratai. Ne išimtis ir Lietuva.

Ideologinis ir fizinis kolektyvizmo diegimas ir privataus sektoriaus žlugdymas prieštaravo Lietuvoje įsitvirtinusiai verslumo ir privačios nuosavybės sampratai.

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad sovietmečiu buvo būdingas abipusis dviejų sektorių (kolektyvinio ir privataus) sutapimas, kai privačios nuosavybės samprata sėkmingai „adaptavosi“ komandinėje ekonomikoje ir per visą sovietmetį išliko aktyvi žmonių tarpusavio santykiuose.

Tačiau toks „šešėlinis“ privataus sektoriaus statusas veikia ir iškreiptą nuosavybės santykių formavimąsi, kuris pasireiškė valstybinio ir privataus sektorių funkcijų dubliavimusi. Atkūrus nepriklausomybę vykusios greitos žemės, nuosavybės ir socialinės reformos Lietuvos mieste ir kaime susidūrė su kolektyvizmo praktika ir „šešėlinės ekonomikos“, „šešėlinio verslumo“ tradicija, kuri buvo įdiegta sovietmečiu. Visa tai visuomenėje sąlygojo socialinio netikrumo jausmą ir susipriešinimą.

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