

## OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Anna Slavcheva Krasteva

By competition for the occupation of an academic position associate professor in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Public Management), field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences and national security

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Basis for drawing up the opinion: order No. RD-38-491/22.08.2022 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

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" This book is not a 'word of praise' for civic idealism, because, although the primacy of social values is fundamentally leading, the missions of organizations, the nature of the civic sector is complex. This quote from Dr. Petrov's monograph brings us to the center of his theoretical world of organizations, civic sector, values, interactions, policies and practices. To what extent Dr. Petrov's monograph and publication activity have managed to conceptualize, theorize and explore the 'complexity' of these phenomena is the subject of analysis of the present opinion.

### **Fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position "docent"**

One candidate took part in the competition - Ch. Assistant Dr. Simeon Atanasov Petrov from SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Ch. Assistant Professor Simeon Petrov fully meets the minimum national requirements for District 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, 3.7. "Administration and management" according to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. All the required

indicators are convincingly fulfilled - 150 points for the doctoral dissertation and habilitation work according to indicators from groups A and B, 202.5 points for articles and studies in Bulgarian and English languages out of the required 200 points, as well as 55 points for citations from the required 50.

### **Publications**

The corpus of publications is convincing. Its center is the monograph *Organizations with ideal purpose - nature, roles, management*, published in the publishing house of "St. Kliment Ohridski" this year. 15 more publications are attached, including a book chapter in English, studies and articles in scientific journals and magazines. The publications are on the topic of the competition and are based on a rich well-researched and correctly used modern scientific literature.

### **Scientific results and contributions**

The monograph is a significant contribution to the development of research on non-profit organizations and the non-governmental sector. Among its many merits, I would highlight a few :

- *The conceptualization of civil organizations as ' non-profit organizations ' .* Much can be argued about the concept, and I would participate critically in such a discussion, but it undoubtedly expresses the synthesis of normative and analytical in the author's approach, as well as the strong value pathos of the study. 'Idealism' itself is analytically balanced in the monograph with a strong emphasis on the effectiveness, management, organizational design, capacity of non-profit organizations.
- *The theoretical preferences for the new institutionalism* with its three directions – rational choice, sociological and historical. The choice of new institutionalism as a central theoretical paradigm is relevant to the study. It would be even better defended with a deeper reflection on the scope of validity of the new institutionalism.
- *analytical triangle of non-profit organizations - state institutions - market* enables a complex and balanced approach to the specifics of civil organizations.

Particularly productive is the research direction of the hybrid zones of the blurring of the boundaries between the three spheres such as the marketization of the civil, profit maximization, social enterprises and other dimensions of the hybrid zone between the civil sector and the market.

- The perennial *theoretical dilemma of structures or actors* manifests itself in two ways in effusion. The key emphasis is on the structures – functions, purposes and activities of non-profit organizations. The perspective of agency, of the actors, is less represented, but there are interesting conceptualizations such as volunteering, the motivation of these specific actors - the volunteers, a phenomenon still relatively poorly represented in Bulgaria, but with increasing activity and concern.
- *The comparative analysis of the civil organizations* in Bulgaria with those in Central and Eastern Europe is among the strong results of the study, because it allows to highlight both the specific and the European in the Bulgarian case in a more well-argued manner.
- I would also note an *original aesthetic-stylistic moment* – the visualization of concepts and ideas in works of visual arts, such as Pierre van der Borcht's painting of the fantastic animal with the heads of many other animals with the revealing title 'Allegory of the Difficulty of Management'. We know from Aristotle that form is not just a packaging of content, but is active, and this active art visualization of theoretical messages not only makes the text more attractive and the reading more pleasant, but enhances the messages through the interference of the affective impact of art and the analytical rigor of the theoretical text.

There is no research without theoretical deficits. I would like to point out one direction that is not sufficiently developed in the monograph:

- It is related to the significant change of the *public image of civil organizations*. At the beginning of the democratic transition, they were put on a pedestal and theorized as *differentia specifica* of post-communist democratization (as opposed to other waves of democratization) – development of civil society along with transition to a market economy and creation of the institutional structure of a pluralistic democratic system. In recent years, by contrast, the civil sector has come under strong attack from populist and far-right leaders and politicians, as

well as some media outlets. The fact of the extremist profile of most critics of the civil sector does not reduce the seriousness of the challenge of contrasting public interpretations of the role of civil organizations, which, in turn, has an impact on the assessment of their role and activity, on the readiness of state institutions to accept proposals for policies formulated by civil society organizations.

Contributions are correctly worded. Among the multitude deployed in various publications, I would single out two:

- Research and analysis of the profile of Bulgarian municipal mayors. It is outlined in both a national and a comparative European perspective. The analysis is multi-layered and multi-factorial and unfolds at the intersection of normative base, institutional tradition, social base.
- Analysis of the goals and results of the administrative reform in Bulgaria. It is extremely interesting to conclude that it reflects the development of ideas about public administration that influential international organizations spread, and the different stages of the reform correspond to the change in different ideas. This result undoubtedly deserves to be validated with new analyzes of changes in the administrative reform, as well as to be deepened as an interpretation.

### **Citations and circulation of scientific publications in the academic community**

Dr. Petrov's publications are cited both at home and abroad, both in scientific works and in reports of prestigious international organizations such as the OECD . Both the number of citations exceeding the minimum requirements and their diversity testify that the scientific production of Dr. Petrov is in scientific circulation, that the ideas and results of his research are validated and used in the Bulgarian and international scientific community. This is a very important indicator of habilitation.

### **Evaluation of the candidate**

Dr. Petrov has extensive teaching, research and scientific-editorial experience relevant to the competition for associate professor.

Worthy of note is Dr. Petrov's respect for his 'teachers', as he respectfully calls them - Prof. Tatiana Tomova and Prof. Todor Tanev, the understanding of individual academic growth as continuity and development of the scientific community, as sharing the most significant achievements and the drive to move forward. This respect is also shared by the 'teachers' who are among the modern classics of public administration, who collaborate with Dr. Petrov in collective publications and who constructively support him as reviewers of the monograph.

Sofia University can be proud of graduates like Dr. Petrov, who associate with him all stages of their academic development, demonstrating a desire for the highest standards and high achievements - completed with honors two bachelor's programs - "Public Administration" and "Political Science", as well as the Master's program "Public Management and Policies". These complementary thematic areas are enriched with a European Integration specialization as well as an International Relations qualification at SU's Center for Educational Services. The doctoral dissertation in the Department of "Public Administration" raises this rich palette of disciplinary fields to a new level through the study of the topic "The change of public policies. European employment policy"

University promotion from Assistant to Principal Assistant is also associated with the Department of Public Administration. The wide range of qualifications in various specialties is materialized in teaching commitment in four specialties - Public Administration, European Studies, Sociology and Political Science, as well as in the diversity of the topics of the 6 courses of which he is the holder and of the 4 courses in which conducts seminar exercises: "Theory of management", "Formation and implementation of public policies", "Methodology of public policy analysis", "Design and management of social programs" (Bachelor's degree "Public Administration"); "Public Policies", "Social Policy", "European Welfare State" (Bachelor's Degree "Political Science"); "Policy Analysis", "Policy Transfer Evaluation", "Methods and Techniques for Public Policy Analysis", "Public Project Management - in English" (Master's programs in Public Administration); "Projects in the field of employment and social inclusion" (Master's programs in European Studies); "Public Policies in an Urban Environment", "Methods and Techniques for Public Policy Analysis (Master's Programs in Sociology).

The academic report convincingly illustrates that the study and classroom employment of ch. Dr. Simeon Petrov, assistant professor, in the last five years, has significantly exceeded the basic workload defined by SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

All of Dr. Petrov's courses are related to the theme of the competition.

Dr. Petrov's academic portfolio includes both numerous projects and editorial work in "Public Policies. bg ", to which he invariably cooperates more than wittingly since 2010

## **Conclusion**

Ch. Dr. Simeon Atanasov Petrov, assistant professor - meets all the requirements of ZRASRB, the regulations for its implementation both in the country and at Sofia University. He has many years of experience and internship at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski", specialty "Public Administration". Quadruple expertise and experience – teaching, research, project and scholarly editorial – testify to scientific maturity and achievements worthy of growth in an academic career.

As a result of the high evaluation of the scientific and teaching activities of ch. assistant professor Dr. Simeon Atanasov Petrov, I strongly support his election as an "associate professor" in professional direction 3.7. Administration and Management (Public Management) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

18.11.2022

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Prof. Dr. Anna Krasteva )