

EXAMINER'S REPORT

on a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Theory and history of culture. Anthropology of contemporary cultural practices. Studies of material culture), announced in SG no. 67/04.08.2023 for the needs of the "History and Theory of Culture" department at the "St. Kliment Ohridski"

By the Assoc. Prof. Meglena Ivanova Zlatkova, PhD, Department of Ethnology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order of the Rector of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" No. RD-38-554/26.09.2023

Two candidates submitted documents for the competition, but in this review, the scientific production of Chief Assistant Prof. Velislava Yurieva Petrova, PhD will be evaluated. The scientific production of the other participant in the competition Dr. Rozaliya Georgieva Gigova, Ph.D., does not meet the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor", according to Art. 2 of the Act on UP Rules for the Development of Academic Staff and Art. 53 and Art. 54 of the Regulations for its implementation (PPZRASRB), and from Art. 105, para. 1 and Article 109 of the Regulations of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (PURPNSZADSU). The scientific jury at its first meeting unanimously decided with protocol No. 1 of 16.10.2023 to allow for assessment only Chief Assistant Prof. Velislava Petrova, Ph.D.

I. General description of the submitted materials

Chief Assistant Prof. Velislava Yurieva Petrova, PhD participated in the competition with a habilitation thesis - the monograph "Waste as a resource and imagination. Anthropological Perspectives", Sofia: Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House, 2023, 21 papers, articles and chapters from collective monographs published in academic publications in Bulgarian, English and French.

A list of 17 citations in articles, studies, and book chapters in refereed and non-refereed databases is attached. Dr. Velislava Petrova is the head of 2 and a team member of 11 international and national scientific projects. According to all indicators, the scientific production of Dr. Velislava Petrova not only covers but also in some respects repeatedly exceeds the points of the minimum national requirements, according to the Rules for Academic Development and the regulations for its implementation. For the competition, 9-course syllabi, a list of participations in scientific forums, a list of participations as a guest lecturer at other universities and summer schools, a list of evidence of expert activities, a list of participations in scientific networks, and organizations, etc. are presented.

1. Information about the candidate

From Velislava Petrova's CV, it is clear that she is a scientist and teacher with significant academic achievements and serious teaching experience, recognizable both in the Bulgarian and European scientific circles in the fields of social sciences and humanities. She is also a graduate of the "History and Theory of Culture" department of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", and of the "Descartes" University in Paris.

She defended her doctoral co-supervised thesis in 2010 under an agreement between the same two universities. Dr. Velislava Petrova was appointed Assistant Professor in 2010 and Chief Assistant Professor in 2011 in the department of "History and Theory of Culture" at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since then, he has actively participated in the academic and educational life of the department and also developed his scientific interests.

2. General characteristics of the scientific works and achievements of the candidate

The main interests of Dr. Velislava Petrova are in the field of urban studies, city markets, material culture, food and nutrition, and waste as a resource. Although divergent at first glance, in all research projects and publications, one can notice Dr. Petrova's aspiration to anthropologize the serious social and cultural problems related to aspects of modern life and to examine the local specificities of national terrains in a global plan of cultural and the social aspects of objectivity.

The candidate's points by groups are as follows: group A - 50 points (out of a minimum of 50 points) - dissertation for Doctoral Degree, group B 100 with a minimum required 100, group of indicators G 4-10 - 250 with a minimum of 200, group of indicators D (citations) – 125 with a minimum of 50) E Sum of indicators from 14 to the end - 290.

After checking with specialized software, no plagiarism was detected in the scientific papers submitted for the competition. Scientific publications are in peer-reviewed and edited editions and have also been checked for plagiarism.

3. Characteristics and assessment of the candidate's teaching activity

I want to highlight the serious teaching experience of the candidate because the position of "Associate Professor" at a university implies many more activities outside of our research work and above all skills to not only transfer knowledge and competencies but to "provoke" research interest in students, which will continue to develop from there on and independently.

From the list of taught courses, we see that their profile is related to the thematic area of the competition, but also to developing research competencies in students, which means a lot of additional work, joint field research, involvement in projects, etc. Among the courses, there are five compulsory and four elective courses for the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs of the Department of History and Theory of Culture, including and for Erasmus+ students.

Dr. Velislava Petrova develops her skills for new forms of teaching as a guest lecturer and teacher in summer schools, seminars, and lectures in partner Bulgarian and European, South, and North American universities, as well as with presentations in “citizen science”.

An important part of the scientific and teaching activities of every university teacher is extracurricular work with students. An important criterion for Dr. Velislava Petrova's certification is that she supervised 5 B.A and M.A. student theses that developed new research fields.

She also supervises numerous student fieldworks and involves students in projects. She works on and actively participates in the creation of future young researchers in the field of cultural studies.

4. Content analysis of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied achievements

I will begin the review of scientific works with the monograph "Waste as a resource and imagination. Anthropological Perspectives'. The book has 173 pages, it is structured in an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. Contains 12 figures with tables and graphs and 11 photographs.

In the first part, "Anthropology of garbage, anthropology of waste", the author defines the main approach of her research, namely, the anthropological perspective on garbage. Defines the research object, research hypotheses, and questions. Here I would highlight as innovative the unification of the three main aspects of waste and garbage in a cultural-anthropological plan, combining the three expertises of Dr. Petrova, namely – waste as materiality, waste as a social hierarchy, and waste as a resource.

To explore these complex relationships, in addition to being equipped with modern theories and research, the author looks at the local field and observes small details as a part of the global processes. Here I would agree with her assessment that she is developing a global ethnography insofar as, despite the local and national frameworks in which waste and trash are created and imagined, they are part of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the environment in which we live. Materiality is what connects, on the one hand, people globally, and, on the other hand, their waste.

The research problem leads to the creation of an interdisciplinary field in which it can be studied and necessitates the rethinking of the classic anthropological nature-culture dichotomy and in general the disciplinary boundaries between the humanities and the exact sciences. The proposal to use the approaches of Burawoy and Marcus allows us to successfully build a research methodology through which to conduct field and documentary research.

The outlined cultural history of waste and garbage with a summarized short history of the attitude to garbage in the Bulgarian context is a very serious basis for the subsequent analysis of transformations in Bulgarian society, presented through the case study of understanding waste as something unnecessary and as a resource. I would also single out this approach as a contribution that can be developed for other research fields combining common research objects between the social and exact sciences.

In the third chapter, "Towards a Cultural History of Waste", the focus constantly is zooming in and zooming out from the global to the local and vice versa, turning both to the "imagining" of waste as discourses and policies, and to its "creation and use" as cultural practices. The author also makes interesting observations on the local answers to the global questions of climate change through a change in the attitude towards waste, but also as a visualization and even a materialization of the future social problems and inequalities that are already "hitting" us.

To understand the conflicting positions of people in the local and national context, the next chapter is dedicated to the legacy, namely: "The Waste Legacy of Socialism: Material Culture, Networks, Economy". Velislava Petrova analyzes the policy of socialism towards waste, but also waste as biopolitics of the socialist state, to explain the transformations that took place in the 1990s of the 20th century and especially after 2007, when Bulgaria adopted European regulations.

For me personally, the analysis of the question "Is Socialism Wasteful" was very interesting, insofar as my studies of the city of socialism and the city in transition show similar observations about the forced change in the cultural practices of the "new urbanites" and the daily life of the socialist man in conditions of systemically reproduced shortages of the socialist economy. But in most cases of "enforced zero-waste" through socialism, sustainable models are created for domestic recycling and reuse of what has now become waste. I will be glad to hear candidate's opinion on that issue.

I think that this line can be developed in future research, and formulations of good practices that can be applied can be derived.

The specialization and expertise of Chief Assistant Professor Velislava Petrova, Ph.D. as a researcher of late capitalism, is also prominent in the innovative analysis of the Bulgarian transition through the transformation of waste in the chapter "Waste as raw material", in which the parameters of the "waste economy" are outlined as a general framework for the analysis of people's everyday consumption practices from the point of view of waste and its change in the transition period. This transformation is presented through an analysis of the "grey container" as containing not only general waste, but also transforming cultural and social practices in sync or contrast with different policies. Saturated with examples from the field and analysis of the case

study "Sofia's garbage" as a national solution is the next chapter "Waste as Materiality and Imagination", in the conclusion of which the author outlines the change of the social contract, one of the results of which is the change in the attitude towards waste.

In a similar methodological way, through the analysis of the debates about the garbage fee and the valuation of waste as a resource and as a commodity, the debates about how Bulgaria should be included in the global solutions for the processing of waste are analyzed in the last chapter "Waste as an economic category". In the conclusion "Our future. Our waste" Velislava Petrova also offers guidelines in the construction of public policies, restoring trust in the institutions that can make decisions and have expertise in the transformation of waste.

To the book, I would also add a group of publications 16.5.; 16.6; 16.7.; 16.12.; 16.13; 16.16.; 16.21, who outlines the innovative research field of an "anthropology of waste" as a "continuation" of the study of markets and market spaces in urban environments. They are also examples of how a research problem and approach can be "introduced" and developed in science.

Velislava Petrova has also contributed to urban anthropology and urban studies by analyzing the interrelationships between the images of the city and urban practices. The variety of research is presented in the following group, in which I would combine publications 16.9.; 16.14.; 16.20.; 16.22. I agree with the self-assessment of the contribution of the author's scientific works in the field of material culture and food to the extent that she adopts Daniel Miller's approach, and not the "traditional" Bulgarian approach to ethnography as a study of the material culture of traditional society - 16.4.; 16.8.; 16.10.; 16.15. Last but not least, I would highlight her scientific and scientific-applied activities in the study of cultural industries - publications 16.4.; 16.8; 16.9.; 16.10.; 16.15.

Regarding the applied results, it should be noted that Velislava Petrova presents almost all the theoretical and field results of her research to students, and even develops new courses.

From the scientific production provided, it is clear that Dr. Velislava Petrova actively participates in the academic exchange of knowledge by presenting the results of her research in 32 international and national academic forums, and I would say that she is one of the recognizable young colleagues in European cultural and social anthropology.

It is important to note in the review that Velislava Petrova has been a scholarship holder in numerous specialization programs, which has supported her academic growth and development of her research pursuits – Fulbright Visiting Scholar at ISEEEES, UC Berkeley (2020), Advanced Academia Program Fellowship, Awarding Institution: Center for Advanced Studies Sofia (2011), Research Fellow; doctoral program, Awarding institution: Maison des Sciences de l'homme et de la société (2009).

She participates in the editorial board of the online magazine Seminar_BG and is the editor of 5 specialized issues of periodicals.

The candidate is a member of authoritative scientific organizations, after which EASA, Association for Critical Heritage Studies, and InASEA. She is one of the founders of the Bulgarian Food Research Society and the Sofia Cultural Research Network.

The feedback from Dr. Velislava Petrova's work as a consultant in infrastructural projects, which also includes research into the social impact of the planned activities - expertise with which anthropologists can take a much more active part in decision-making and their application in different local communities.

I note these activities of the candidate not only because they aided her research process about her thesis, but also because it is another way to give publicity to humanities and social scientists about the exact and applied sciences.

5. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no objections, neither to the materials presented nor to the formulated contributions of the candidate.

6. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Dr. Velislava Petrova for more than 10 years and I have excellent impressions of her. I believe that she is a talented young colleague who already has an established name, positions, and recognition in the country, Europe, and the USA, she has helped many young researchers not only as her students but also as her graduates to go to different fields of academia and applied humanities knowledge, has substantial publishing experience, and would be an active postdoctoral member of the History and Theory of Culture department.

7. Conclusion on the application

After a thorough review of the materials and academic works submitted as part of this procedure, including an assessment of their significance and the academic contributions they contain, I am confident that a positive assessment is justified. I confirm that the scientific achievements of the candidate meet the requirements of the Rules for the development of academic staff, the Regulations for its application, and the relevant Regulations of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the candidate to occupy the academic position of "docent" under PN 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Theory and history of culture. Anthropology of contemporary cultural practices. Studies of material culture), announced in SG no. 67/04.08.2023 for the needs of the "History and Theory of Culture" department at the "St. Kliment Ohridski" and no plagiarism has been found in the scientific works submitted for the competition, nor is there any suspicion of such plagiarism. I have no publications in common with the candidate and I have no conflict of interest. I give my positive assessment to the application.

II. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Based on the above, I recommend the scientific jury to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to elect Chief Assistant Professor Velislava Yurieva Petrova, PhD to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Theory and history of culture. Anthropology of contemporary cultural practices. Studies of material culture).

12/16/2023

(Assoc. Dr. Meglena Zlatkova)