

OPINION

By: Professor Dr. Georgi Svetlozarov Petrunov, University of National and World Economy, Professional field 3.1 Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences
Regarding: Competition for Associate professor in Professional field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, (Theory and History of Culture. Anthropology of Contemporary Cultural Practices. Material culture studies)

1. Information about the competition

The competition was announced in SG № 67 of 4.08.2023 for the needs of Department of Theory and History of Culture at Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University. I am appointed at the scientific jury of the competition by the Order № RD-38-554 from 26.09.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University and Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy, minutes № 1 from 12.09.2023.

2. Brief information about the candidates in the competition

Two applicants have submitted documents for participation in the competition: Rozalia Georgieva Gigova, PhD and senior assistant professor Velislava Yurieva Petrova, PhD. In its initial meeting on 16.10.2023, the scientific jury reviewed the materials submitted by the applicants and came to the conclusion that one of them – dr. Rozalia Gigova – do not meet the national requirements for holding the academic position associate professor. Therefore, only one candidate was allowed to be evaluated in the competition – Dr. Velislava Petrova.

Dr. Velislava Petrova defended his doctoral thesis in 2010 at Paris Descartes University and Sofia University. Since December, 2011 she holds the position of chief assistant professor in department of Theory and History of Culture, Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University. In 2020 she has been a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at ISEES, UC Berkeley where she conducted research on subjects linked to her habilitation monograph.

3. Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

Dr. Petrova has provided the required by the Law on Academic Staff Development in Republic of Bulgaria and by the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in Sofia University a certificate of fulfillment of the minimum requirements, as well as a summary of her scientific contributions, to which the relevant evidence is attached. A list of all scientific publications and a list with selected for this competition publication are provided. The latter is also presented in tabular form with quantitative indicators, which are as follows:

In group “B”, the required 100 points have been completed through a habilitation monograph, which is provided in electronic format, accompanied by a note from the University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski" that the book is under printing.

The national minimum requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor" under group “G” have been met - achieved 250 by required 200 points.

In group “D” the minimum requirements are also fulfilled, despite the need to reduce some of the points due to the fact that some citations that are in publications not indexed

in Scopus and Web of Sciences (recognized by MES) were scored with more points. Of the required 50 points, the candidate has achieved 125 points.

Dr. Petrova also participated in the competition with points in group "E". Here are presented: management of two international and one national projects, as well as participation in ten projects (six of them international). The scores for this indicator are 290.

The submitted publications fulfill and even exceed the minimum national requirements and those of SU for occupying the position of associate professor.

4. Evaluation of the teaching activity

Dr. Petrova has an extensive teaching experience related to the topic of the competition, at the bachelor's and master's level. Currently, she teaches the mandatory course "Introduction to Cultural Anthropology" in BA Cultural Studies at Sofia University. Lecturer in several elective courses and methodological seminars in the master's programs "Cultural Anthropology" and "Media, Culture, and Communications." Guest lecturer at universities in Turkey, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Germany. Actively engages in the dissemination of scientific knowledge by organizing and giving public lectures.

5. Brief description of the presented academic publications

In this competition Dr. Petrova is participating with one monograph, 16 articles and studies in scientific journals, three chapters of collective monographs and two publications in collective volumes.

Although there are different research objects, what unites the candidate's work is her aspiration to understand the contemporary world through the influence of global processes using the lens of material culture. In most of her works Dr. Petrova uses an anthropological method to investigate topics such as waste, food, women and their relationship with urban space, the urban environment, and cultural industries in the context of market and capitalist relations. With ease, Dr. Petrova also resorts to the advantages of the interdisciplinary approach. This is evident in her habilitation monograph, which is on the topic "Waste as a Resource. Anthropological Perspectives". The research is an original and comprehensive work in which the author skillfully applies approaches and concepts from cultural studies, historical anthropology, global ethnography, and sociology. In the research, she applies various qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, discursive and visual analyses) and uses diverse sources of information (archival documents, magazines, photographs).

Through the prism of the cultural dimensions of waste, Dr. Petrova examines both the social changes in Bulgarian society (related to the post-socialist transition, global processes, and the development of the consumer society), the change in the nature-culture relationship, as well as the development of interdisciplinary relations and the need for this interdisciplinarity in the contemporary context.

In my opinion, two aspects to which the author draws attention, are of particular importance in a wider context, with waste being just another example of the direction of development of the modern world. It is about the decline of welfare states that occurs through a shift from collective/state to individual responsibility. And this applies not only to environmental policies, as Dr. Petrova points out, but also to every sphere of modern man's life. The latter is made to believe that control over his life is entirely and solely in his hands. However, this means, to the greatest extent, transferring the risks to the

individual himself. Failure is also suggested as a result only of personal skills (or lack thereof) and failure to put in the necessary effort. A concept that absolves political (and related economic) elites of responsibility and shifts the focus away from limited access to opportunities and the conditions that policies create.

The second particularly important aspect that Dr. Petrova brings out as part of the conclusion of her study is what she calls the principle of ignorance and relates it to the lack of information about waste. I would argue that this is a symptom of a more significant problem identified by some scientists¹. It is about the reduced potential of existing knowledge to contribute to neutralizing new risks. Today we are faced with the paradox that modern societies and economies, claiming to be knowledge based, continuously face crises caused to a large extent by a deficit of knowledge.

6. Evaluation of the main scientific contributions

Dr. Petrova has a correct and truthful assessment of her contributions, which I completely accept. Her contribution to the development of waste anthropology in Bulgaria should be highly appreciated. The theoretical conceptualization of waste and its placement in the field of social and cultural research allows to be revealed the influence of global processes on local communities and to understand societal changes in Bulgarian society. The international contacts with scientists working in this field, which Dr. Petrova managed to build during her work, and the activity (editor of thematic collections and journal issues; organization of seminars and lectures, etc.) for the growth of this scientific field in Bulgaria are qualities that our scientific community needs.

One of her contributions I would like to emphasize is the one related to popularizing science among society and following the principle of science for public benefit. It is the interaction between academia and society, where scientists introduce people to their analyses of what is happening around, that is one of the elements needed to reduce the knowledge deficit that has the capacity to "destroy worlds".

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical notes. Dr. Petrova's work is of a high level and with clearly expressed contributions regarding the understanding of the contemporary world through the prism of material culture. From the standpoint of my scientific interest, it seems important to me her statement that: "...understanding the topic of waste is also a path to understanding modern Bulgaria: through the topic, all modern processes become visible, in particular the economic transformation, the formation of elites, corrupt practices." (p. 45). Indeed, the topic of waste has enormous potential for understanding the intertwining of crime and power. I wonder if, with a reorientation of the research lens, waste could be used as a tool to reveal the processes of connecting power elites-organized crime? This is of course only an idea for future research and is by no means indicative of a lack in the research presented.

8. Conclusion

I am convinced that the candidate meets all the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations of Sofia University for holding the academic position of "associate

¹ Minev, D. (2011). *Sociology, power and societies*. Trojan: Aya.

professor". Dr. Petrova`s research and teaching activities, the active involvement in scientific life and her efforts to popularize scientific achievements among society give me reasons to vote with conviction Dr. Velislava Yurieva Petrova to be appointed as an "associate professor" in professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Theory and History of Culture. Anthropology of Contemporary Cultural Practices. Material Culture Studies) in the Department of Theory and History of Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University.

15.12.2023

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