

## STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elitsa Rumenova Stoilova, Paisii Hilendarski University, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Ethnology

in relation to the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, scientific speciality (Theory and History of Culture. Anthropology of contemporary cultural practices. Studies of Material Culture), State Gazette 67/04.08.2023

Assoc. Prof. Velislava Yuriyeva Petrova, PhD (Sofia University) is the only candidate admitted to the competition. She has submitted all the documents and publications according to the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and The Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions in at the Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski". Dr. V. Petrova participated in the competition with one monograph and 21 scientific publications related to the topic of the competition. The publications and citations she submitted meet the minimum national requirements as well as the additional faculty requirements of Sofia University for the academic position of Associate Professor.

The attached documents show Dr Petrova's activity in the field of teaching, work with students, publishing, participation and organization of scientific forums, as well as in the management and participation in research projects. She has also worked to promote anthropology and the social sciences to the wider public through organizing seminars and lectures, and by participating in projects that aim at interaction between academia and society.

As a testament to the candidate's scientific maturity, she has been involved in the editing of one issue of the journal *Sociological Problems* and four issues of the e-journal *Seminar. BG*. It is evident from her academic biography that she is valued as an expert consultant, but is also recognizable as a specialist in the field of the anthropology of waste, as evidenced by the lectures she has given as a guest lecturer at universities in Regensburg (2018), Cluj-Napoca (2019) and São Paulo (2023).

Her research interests are in a diverse of social science fields with a focus on the study of urban space, material culture and diverse cultural practices. Her main research areas are the anthropology of the city, the anthropology of food, the anthropology of waste, and economic ethnography. Her research focuses on contemporary processes, which she co-measures along the local-global axis.

Assoc. Prof. Velislava Yuriyeva Petrova, PhD participated in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" with a habilitation thesis entitled "*Waste as a resource and imagination. Anthropological Perspectives*", published in 2023 by University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski". The monograph is the result of many years of research and is the first monographic study

in our country on what the author defines as the anthropology of garbage. The author offers a systematization of different theoretical approaches regarding the human-nature interaction, the influence of human activity on the surrounding environment. She reveals different approaches and understandings of the cultural aspects of the definition of economic models, but also of the understanding on the meanings of clean-dirty. In the very context of the topic of the monograph – literature on what is considered as garbage and its cultural, political and economic interpretations is also presented. The research sets a certain paradigm through which to "look" at waste - as materiality, as defining and revealing socio-cultural structures and inequalities and as a resource (economic and symbolic). As an introduction to the actual research presented in three chapters describing a particular social case or process, the researcher defines a research problem, methods and hypotheses. That introductory part also presents various theoretical approaches to waste and garbage research, as well as a cultural history of waste. Such a systematization of the main authors working in the field is undoubtedly a contribution, but in the desire to cover different aspects of heterogeneous research approaches, Petrova does not manage to build a systematized and coherent text. There is a lack of scientific dialogue between the studies, and it is not clear how this theoretical part is commensurate or not with the Bulgarian terrain of V. Petrova. I understand that this task is difficult to achieve with so many different contexts that the author reveals. This part clearly aims to validate the significance and complexity of the research problem that deals with the materiality of garbage in order to reveal and presents it as a specific economic category (p. 15). I think that a systematization and periodization of the changes in scientific discourse regarding waste would make this introductory part of the text more understandable.

The hypothesis that the author defines is: "waste imposes boundaries, structures spaces and social relations, but also acts as a boundary itself" (ibid.). Her idea of organizing public (urban) and private spaces through the avoidance of garbage is also interesting "the effort to limit and organize waste and garbage because they are correlated with disorder, hybridity and liminality". The understanding of garbage as materialities requiring control and management, as a materiality that is pushed away from the center to the periphery is presented as interlinked with historical, cultural and historical patterns. Those connections are visible within the three main chapters of the monograph. These processes are presented through a different research focus in the three main chapters.

The first chapter "The Waste Legacy of Socialism: Material Culture, Networks, Economy" fills in a missing perspective in Bulgarian research on what the author defines as "the cultural history of waste in Bulgaria". The author presents the transformation in the thinking about waste in Bulgaria. During the communist era waste was thought as a resource and shared collective care and responsibility. Politics and visions that was replaced at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of the privatization of industry with a consumerist models. The author makes many interesting analyses, which are partly based on the work of Juzha Gille, but others are author's contributions. Unfortunately, in this part the sources are "hidden" and many of the statements made do not find additional support by referring to a document, interview or scientific study. Examples of such sounding almost as a declarative statements are: "Bulgaria also predetermines the centralized approach to waste, which is part of the economy and is thought of as an important resource for the state." (p.55); "Furthermore, for the state as an economic agent, packaging is an expense that can be saved" (p. 58) and others. Considering the author's already published research on that topic, I believe that her conclusions are based on the rich fieldwork and archival work, but unfortunately it remains underrepresented. In the context of the socialist period, policies are generalized as constant, without giving a clear

periodization and delineating different processes, which undoubtedly take place and set new policies and rethinking of garbage. A comparison with other socialist countries, or at least with the Hungarian context presented by the quoted Gile, would give a more complete picture of the presented Bulgarian specifics.

The next two chapters overcome what has been pointed out as a shortcoming of the first and reveal the richness of the sources and terrains used. The result is a full-blooded anthropological analyzes supported by arguments from the sources.

The second chapter "Waste as Materiality and Imagination" is based on a more locally researched and focused on contemporary processes surrounding the accounting of the capital city of Sofia. Here, the emphasis is on the imagination and meaning load around waste, as well as on different dimensions of material culture that are revealed in the case study. The relationship between the ways in which this materiality is constructed as well as the very construction of waste as a resource is the guiding light of the second chapter serving also as a connected to the third chapter. The last chapter is on a different empirical case that focus on economies around waste.

The research is a contributory, not only because of the exceptionally rich field material, but also because of V. Petrova's chosen research approach and analysis to the construction and uses of garbage in various economic, cultural and political periods of recent Bulgarian history and modern times. This is the first systematic study in Bulgarian science on the subject, which presents in-depth analyzes and systematization of large-scale theoretical and field material.

The scientific publications with which assistant professor Dr. Velislava Petrova participated in the competition are indicative of the multi-layered research fields in which she managed to build her own research identity and approach. The candidate also has significant research achievements in food and material culture studies, as well as in urban studies.

Based on the presented documents, I can conclude that assistant professor Dr. Velislava Petrov, is an established specialist in the field of anthropology of contemporary cultural practices and material culture studies. She fully meets the requirements of the current regulations for holding the academic position of "docent". Her scientific contributions, related to her teaching, scientific, publication and promotion activities, give me the reason to propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury of the current competition to support the selection of assistant professor dr. Velislava Petrova, for the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Theory and history of culture. Anthropology of contemporary cultural practices. Studies of material culture).

15.12.2023

Plovdiv

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