

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION IN CROATIA 1991-2007

Introduction

“Only a couple of years have passed since the analyzed period so it is justified to raise the issue of the (necessary) time distance, in other words the possibility of deducing an analyses that is as objective as possible. At the same time the issue of the personal (ideological) involvement in this period may present a certain difficulty, as can the fact that we are talking about individuals that are still active”. These sentences were written in the introduction of a more extensive study that focused on the development of the sociology of religion in Croatia from 1945 to 1990 (Zrinščak, 1999a:17). Whether and in what way did the study avoid the dangers perceived, will of course be judged by others. Still, I feel the need to again emphasize some of the methodological dangers related to the mapping of the development of sociology of religion in Croatia following its independence. It is an inarguable fact that this overview is being given by a person that has been active in the socio-religious scene and that has, in his public appearances as well as in a series of theoretical and research publications, differed from other sociologists of religion. The scientific differences, at least in social sciences, are not neutral, because they are related to the current, often ideological and emotionally characterized social issues. I do not intend to pass judgments on such issues here, although they should not be forgotten.¹ But, since we are unavoidably talking about a subjective evaluation of the development of the sociology of religion in Croatia that includes me as well, in this paper I will attempt to separate the facts from their reinterpretations as clearly as possible.²

Similar to the already quoted study, the development of the sociology of religion will here also be looked at through a prism of the development of sociology of religion worldwide. Today it is already completely clear that there can be only one universal criterion for estimating a certain scientific discipline. That, in return, does not mean that we should not keep the context in mind in two of its main aspects, the first one being the institutional preconditions for the development of a certain science. If they are significantly reduced, it is hard (although not completely impossible) to expect international results. However, the institutional preconditions can be just a part of the explanation, but not the reason to change a certain criterion. The second aspect deals with the understanding of the social context. It is perfectly clear that the

¹ Contrary to some statements (for example. Đorđević, 2008:110) I feel that the primary task of sociology is a detailed analyses of the social context, the analyses of the attitudes of different often confronted social groups/truths, the understanding of different positions, and only then the forming of one's own, necessarily reasoned position. If one's own opinion doesn't follow, the sociological analysis is not less valuable, and if it substitutes it, the question is what is left of sociology. For a similar view cf. Beckford, 2003, especially pages 20 and 25.

² The subjective assessment is not less worthy because it is subjective. Here we would only like to emphasize, on one side the legitimate and maximally intentional particularity of certain positions, and on the other side the methodologically necessary respect off and concern for different positions. This is precisely why it might be informative to quote a clearly reasoned position of Ž. Mardešić: „Some, unsatisfied with my text say that it wasn't so, for example good friends that I then socialized with. Of course it wasn't, but in their memory, not mine. And each of us has a right to their own memory if it doesn't have the ambition of become a replacement for an other, different memory“ (Mardešić, 2007:15).

specifics of the social development of a certain country or a region impose a specific theoretical (however not methodological!) approach to explaining phenomena. The time and space is judged through the perspective of that time and space, although that does not exclude the possibility of going beyond and outside it. The insider's view is very important, but it should be combined with the view from the outside, where that other perspective is just one of the possibilities. To put it more clearly, insofar as the religious situation in Croatia (with its dominant process of revitalization or the emphasized public role of the dominant religion) significantly differs for the religious situation in other European countries (although this too is not by itself entirely obvious), it does not mean that others are or have to be reference points. This is in accordance with, for example, Casanova's suggestion that we should overcome the unfruitful secularization debate concerning the American and European exceptionalisms and adopt a global perspective that helps us to historically base our categories, theories and stories on the religious changes and that we should separate the historical theory of the European secularization from the general modernization theories, since the European pattern of development is not universal teleological model of development that is necessarily followed by everybody else (Casanova, 2003.:22). In case of Croatia a further dilemma arises from the difficulty of its positioning within the general European trends.

In the end, we should state that here we are primarily talking about a mere outlining the development of sociology of religion in Croatia and not a systematic analyses.³ Since the same effort is being made in all ex-Yugoslav countries, it will be a special challenge to compare the development. It will, however, be very difficult due to the methodologically probably completely unharmonized approaches. Therefore we can rightly conclude that this is just the first step of the analyses and the evaluation, and that this paper should be viewed in the context of such an understanding.

In accordance with the stated introductory comments this paper will observe the development of the sociology of religion in Croatia in the context of four crucial challenges. The first one is the general shift of the social context, in other words the general relationship of science and context. The second challenge deals with the reflection of the change of the context in the theoretical and methodological approaches. The third challenge deals with the participation in the international research network in all its aspects. Finally, the issue of the role and the position of the sociology of religion within the scientific system as well as the relationship to the related disciplines that also research the phenomenon of religion also have to be at least mentioned.

Sociology and the Social Context: Facts and Processes

Sociology, it is completely clear, begins and ends with the social context. However, here we will first of all deal with the conditions within which the sociology of religion developed, the relationship between the context and the scientific infrastructure, and only later the context itself, or rather its reflection in the thematic, theoretical and methodological approaches.

The first relevant issue is the matter of heritage. As to the development of the sociology of religion, Croatia, as the whole of ex-Yugoslavia for that matter, along-

³ Although the paper quotes a number of publications, refers to a lot of research projects and gives a lot of information, this is definitely not an exhaustive analyses of the development, and I apologies in advance for all possible mistakes, or the fact that I didn't mentioned some of the publications that deserve to be mentioned in an overview like this. At the same time, I sincerely thank to colleagues and friends who read an earlier version and pointed to some deficiencies.

gside Hungary and Poland, can be proud of the development of the sociology of religion, its evident scientific status and achievements, that in many other ex communist countries weren't even closely present to that extent. However, that development had its particularities that can be, in a very ambivalent way, in interaction with the development following 1990. With a risk of extreme simplification it can be concluded that the Croatian sociology of religion, until 1990, was marked with a clear attempt of overcoming the Marxist approach to religion, especially in thematic and methodological approach, however, with the exception of Jakov Jukić (and Đura Šušnjić in the aspect when his work was related to the development of Croatian sociology of religion), Marxism in its various and often very soft variations, remained to be the framework of reference (Zrinščak, 1999a). This is especially visible in various combinations of Marxism and functionalism (a functionalist explanation of the legitimate religious role in the man's life, but almost exclusively within the humanist, partly even post-enlightenment, vision of the development of the society) and the domination of the secularization paradigm in the explanation of the religious changes that remained to be the reference point of explanation as well of divergent trends (the example of Vrcan's influential thesis on the „crises of religion“ and the „religion of crises“, 1986). However, perhaps (?) even paradoxically, what in the communist periods really happened under the pressure of scientific legitimization (recognizing empirical data most of all contributed to the widening of the given boundaries of explanation of social phenomena, in other words the development of sociology as a science), in the post-communist public perception becomes or remains to be an issue only “within the family”, in other words within the science significantly characterized by the communist ideology. The circumstances, of course, are not simple, but a set of parallel, and by its consequences very controversial, processes is visible.

First of all, on the social level, the process of the fall of communism and the final disintegration of the former state leads to the general politicization of the social life. The politicization is present in all the countries in which the fall of the former system occurred and it is, on one hand, a completely expected phenomenon in the circumstances of a maximal social engagement of the epochal shifts of the political regime while, on the other hand, resulted in a set of negative social consequences. These are, in all their aspects, the „revolutionary“, „heroic“ times, or the times that, in the sense of Tomašić's use, promote the „tribal-hajduk⁴ culture“ (Tomašić, 1993). Although it is hard to claim, without a more precise empirical inquiry, the circumstances surrounding the building of the nation state obstructed by the war could only contributed to an even higher degree of politicization in comparison to other countries, or at least if not a higher degree than a longer duration.

Secondly, Croatia in the 90s does not only experience occupation of the large part of its territory and war, but also political semi-isolation, especially by the EU. This, can, among other, be felt in science, in the difficulties and often in the impossibility to participate in the international science, especially in comparative projects and programs of exchange, and finally in the very modest possibilities of financing of domestic empirical projects. Fortunately, at the end of 90s the situation very quickly started to improve, although some other analyses will have do a more systematic research of the conditions and the consequences of the social circumstance of the scientific development in the 90s.

Thirdly, the sociology of religion was in 1990, especially in its empirical aspect, essentially connected with the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, although

⁴ The word “hajduk” depicts persons from the Croatian history engaged in an outlaw anti-Turkish rebel.

it was taught and intensively developed within other university centers, especially in Split and Zadar. At the end of 80s in Split a Center for socio-religious research was founded led by Professor S. Vrcan, that at the beginning 1992 ceased to exist due to the lack of financing. At the same time in Zagreb in 1991 a new Institute for Applied Social Research (with a branch in Split) was founded as a sort of a politically supported „competition“, and within the University of Zagreb the Croatian Studies, a new university institution that had sociology classes. The new Institute for Applied Social Research (in 1997 renamed into the Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar) founded a new journal called „Društvena istraživanja“. All the scientific institutes in Croatia starting 1993, by a legal decree, stopped being a part of the university and come under a more direct management control of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Although these facts can not be separated/understood outside the previously mentioned general politicization and a set of partial, politically motivated, scientific decisions, it would be very incorrect to deduce a thesis of the absolute power of the social circumstances. Therefore it is wrong to evaluate the scientific output, the scientific activities of certain sociologist of religion, as well as research groups within or outside both institutes, in that period (and especially later) through the political prism.⁵

Fourthly, the 90s brought a strong and general generation shift in sociology of religion. A part of the sociologists of the older generation retired, and a part of them stopped scientific activities. Some of the sociologists continues working and realizes a significant impact (most of all S. Vrcan and Ž. Mardešić⁶ and to a lesser degree E. Ćimić), but they do so more individually, mostly outside the university and scientific (research oriented) intuitions.⁷ On the other hand, the then younger and today middle generation of Croatian sociologists of religion begins its education in the field of the sociology of religion with a Master Program at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb and in mid 80s and (most of them) receive a master degree in the field of sociology of religion by the end of 80s, and a PhD degree in mid and second half of 90s. Therefore due to the limited participation of the older generation of the sociologists of religion in the international scientific community (except S. Vrcan), the wakening of the relationship with the world in the beginning of the 90s, and a slower scientific maturing of the younger/middle generation, that had to find its own way and prove itself⁸, I feel I can claim that the generational shift has long reaching con-

⁵ This statement should not be understood as an attempted „political self-rehabilitation“. Therefore, although personally very involved (in 1991 I was employed by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb, 1992, I transferred to the Institute for Applied Social Research where soon afterwards I was appointed for the editor-in-chief of the “Društvena istraživanja” (Journal for Social Research) and I stayed in the Institute until the beginning of 1995 when I received an assistant position at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb) I believe that there are too many valid reasons to judge each individual personally according to his/her personal actions, and not through simplified constructions. That, of course does not mean that all the previously mentioned (and not mentioned) social (political) facts and processes should be neglected.

⁶ It might not be known to all the readers that Željko Madrešić until the 90s published his work under the pseudonym Jakov Jukić.

⁷ This to a lesser degree is true for Ž. Mardešić, who is closely connected to the Ivo Pilar Institute and especially the branch in Split as well as various theological/church institutions, especially Theology in Split, the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace in Split and the Center for Promotion of the Social Teaching of the Church of the Croatian Bishop's Conference, although his work remains essentially individual and ultimately original.

⁸ To that respect we must emphasize the relationship of Vjekoslav Mikecin with the well known and renowned Italian sociologist of religion Enzo Pace, strengthened by the translation of his book to Croatian language (Acquaviva, Pace, 1996.), that partially helped the scientific affi-

sequences and that in that respect the Croatian sociology of religion significantly differs from the Hungarian or Polish one with which it would like and want to compare itself as they are perceived as the most developed sociologies of religion in Eastern Europe.⁹

Fifth, maybe unexpectedly considering the prospects of its beginning, however the 90s have brought an important and utmost promising affirmation of sociology within other sciences dealing with religion, especially within theology. More will be said about this later on, but it is important to know that the sociological expertise becomes desired in all the efforts to understand the social context.

The situation today is satisfactory in many aspects, at least as far as the scientific infrastructure and the recognition of sociology of religion in the society as well as in the scientific community goes. Someone else and at a different time will be writing about the achievements of the today's active generation. Therefore I will give only a couple of facts at the end of this chapter. Two nuclei of sociology of religion exist and are developed in the Institute of Social Research in Zagreb and the Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar. Sociology of religion is thought at the Departments of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Croatian Studies of the University of Zagreb. The Croatian Catholic University was founded in 2006 and although it has not started yet with the teachings, the department of sociology and of course sociology of religion is planned. Sociology of religion is being thought in the Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Zagreb and of the University in Split, Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus, Evangelical Theological Faculty.¹⁰ Sociology of religion is taught in a joint PhD sociology program organized by all the Croatian university programs of sociology and almost all sociological institutes, as a part of which the youngest generation of the sociologist of religion is slowly being formed.

Sociology and the Social Context: Research and Interpretations

It is not necessary to explain again that the beginning of 90s brought a new social context and a new role of religion in the society. At first, very weak, but with time stronger signs of revitalization of religion, were visible and to a smaller degree interpreted in the sociology of religion in the 80s. The discussion on why it didn't empirically start in Croatia (and was recognized) at the end of 70s, as was the case with Hungary and Slovenia, and how were the process of social crises and the role of religion in it, interpreted, was slowly being touched upon but was not exhausted (Zrinščak, 1999a:209-210; Zrinščak, 2001). However, at the very end of the 80s and the begging of the 90s, during the peak of the social crises, the revitalization of religion is empirically confirmed first of all in the research at the end of 80s (Marinović Jerolimov, 1993) and then in the popular census in 1991, and in the one in 2001 (Črpić, Zrinščak, 2005). The new social context brought a completely new social role of religion and the Church, of it not only existing at the level of individual religiosity. That role had specific connotations, especially due to the war on the territory of Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

rmation of then younger sociologists of religion into the International Society for the Sociology of Religion.

⁹ It is interesting to note that both sociologies are not so widespread if they are perceived in their „international“ form, however in the 90s there are two strong and recognizable personas who dominate not only the Eastern European sociology of religion, but even more so the *mainstream* (Western) sociology by presenting the post communist countries. These personas are, of course, Miklos Tomka from Hungary and Irena Borowik from Poland.

¹⁰ The list of the institutions that teach sociology of religion is based on personal knowledge and the internet overview of the curricula and therefore there is a possibility it is not complete.

How did the sociologist reflect the new social reality? It is really not easy to give an answer to that question. The answer is connected to the previously mentioned social presumptions of the development of sociology of religion, most of all by the fact that during the larger part of the 90s there was no empirical research. However, the new social circumstances are reflected in the works of S. Vrcan, Ž. Mardešić, E. Ćimić, within the circle that was active at the Institute for Applied Social Research, or rather its branch in Split led by I. Grubišić, as well as in the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb.

S. Vrcan and Ž. Mardešić, each in their own way continued with their original approach to the sociology of religion. In the case of Vrcan it is a matter of domination of the secularization thesis and the interpretation of revitalization through the secularization prism, which was already mentioned in his study of the crises of religion and the religion of crises (Vrcan, 1986). Therefore, the revitalization is significantly characterized by the social situation of crises in which religion appears as a response or even the arbitrary of crises. Related to that is the exploitation of the Robertson's thesis on the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics (Robertson, 1989), which is the interpretation framework for the role of religion in wartime and generally in social circumstances of crises. The (mis)use of religion, or rather the religious manipulation of the political, is the main line of thought in numerous Vrcan's studies dedicated to religion not only in Croatia but also in the whole of the former Yugoslavia (Vrcan, 1994, 1998). Vrcan follows the same approach in analyzing the research conducted in Croatia under the leadership of the Swedish professor Magnusson, especially focusing on the differences in the religiosity of certain Croatian regions, especially the difference between Istria and Primorje on one hand and west Herzegovina as area in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the majority of Croatian population on the other (Vrcan, 2001). Vrcan thinks that those differences clearly show the relationship of religion and nation, the role of all three dominant confessions (Catholic, Orthodox, Islam) in this area as true religions of borders. This thesis in the reinterpretation of the role of religion was finalized in what is probably the last publication before his death (Vrcan, 2006).¹¹

Ž. Mardešić, in accordance to his essentially phenomenological orientation, is still searching for the fait of the holy in the (post)modern world, but also in Croatia, tangled up in the premodern, modern and to a very small degree postmodern social circles that interconnect in a very hard to understand manner. The specifics, in other words the contradictions of the transitional period, are very successfully emphasized in the paper bearing a significant title „The October Before Bastille“ (Jukić, 1990). Therefore what follows, due to the clear signs of the return of the holy, even as early as during the period of socialism (Jukić, 1988)¹², is the issue of the future of religion (Jukić, 1991), or rather the fact of various manipulations with the holy in the contemporary society (Jukić, 1997). In that respect Mardešić can seem similar to Vrcan (for example when dealing with the mis(use) of religion), but here we are faced with a completely different theoretical starting point, that is in comparison to the in-

¹¹ This is a paper that was presented at the plenary session of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion 2005 Conference in Zagreb (Religion: Challenging Boundaries), and the presentation as well as the paper served as a farewell to the sociology of religion and numerous colleagues from around the world.

¹² Here we have to state that Mardešić very early constructed the concept of the forgotten religion (Jukić, 1973), meaning that religion does not disappear but can be only temporarily forgotten, and even with the return of the sacred the question is merely how it's going to be manifested.

ternational sociology of religion most similar to the concept of religion as a memory (and paradoxical the fait of memory in the (post)modern world, where modernity corrodes away some of the aspects of an individual's life, that only religion can fix) of the French sociologist D. Harvieu-Leger (2000). During the last period, taking up a large part of the 90s and the beginning of 2000s, Mardešić is dedicating more and more texts to the analyses of the Croatian religious/political heritage, in other words the fait of religion in the turbulent social events of the 19th and 20th century, which can best be seen in the book published after his death (Mardešić, 2007). Although it is not possible to summarize his work in such a short space, what really needs to be emphasized, from the perspective of the events in the 90s, is the masterpiece on religion and war (Jukić, 1994, 1996), and his engagement in dealing with the issues of forgiveness and reconciliation (Mardešić, 2002). At the same time, his influence should not be left unnoticed. While Vrcan's influence is unquestionable felt in the sociological (and political science) circles, Mardešić's influence is evident in sociology, but even more so in the theological/religiological circles. The publishing and the promotion of the issue 2/2006 of the journal "Nova prisutnost" (New Presence) (Mardešić was one of the initiators as well as the deputy chief editor), dedicated to Mardešić, testifies to that as does the publishing of the book to his honor (Vuleta, Vučković, Milanović Litre, 2005) and the organizing of a scientific meeting dedicated to Ž. Mardešić in November 2007.¹³

E. Ćimić was also present with his work and writing in Croatia, although most of all with his activities as a professor at Croatian Studies and at the Zadar Faculty of Philosophy, that later on became the University of Zadar. Ćimić published a set of publications dealing with the nation, religion and war (for example Ćimić, 1995, 1998a), and it seems that recently he is more active in Bosnia and Hercegovina than in Croatia (for example 1998b, but also several publications in *Forum Bosnae*).

By founding the Split branch of the Institute for Applied Social Research the reflections on the role of religion in the former system are inaugurated (Grubišić, 1993) and several scientific meetings are organized in Split that, among other things focus on the topics such as, religious confessions and war, the role of Church and religion in the process of transition, and religion and the process of (des)integration. The meeting on religious confessions and war brings together sociologists and theologians (some from abroad) and the other two meetings some of the renowned scholars of the sociology of religion (E. Barker, M. Tomka, P. Michel, I Borowik). The meetings resulted in several books (Grubišić, 1995; Grubišić, 1997; Grubišić, Zrinščak, 1999). The activities of the Center in Split (although it continues to exist) are slowly decreasing and since the second half of the 90s it does not have the role in the development of the sociology of religion that it had in the first half of the 90s.

¹³ Obviously this is a period of a lot of "commemorations" The workshop on Ž. Mardešić was organized by the "Christianity Today", The Catholic Faculty of Theology, The Catholic Academic Society, Croatian Sociological Association, and the Center for Promotion of the Social Teaching of the Church of the Croatian Bishop's Conference, and they managed to round up a large number of presenters and a very large audience. The journal "Nova prisutnost" is planning to publish the texts from the workshop and there are plans to continue organizing workshops/seminars dedicated to his work. In September 2008 a scientific conference dedicated to S. Vrcan will be organized by the Croatian Sociological Society and the Faculty of Law in Split. In June 2008 the Department of Sociology in Zadar will mark the 31 anniversary of its existence and on that occasion it will honor the work of Esad Ćimić and his contribution to the existence and the development of the department.

The Institute for Social Research of the University of Zagreb continued the researches from the end of 80s on small religious communities and on non-religiosity (Bahtijarević, 1991, 1993; Marinović Jerolimov, 1991a; Marinović Bobinac, 1991). This Institute in 90s started with and in fact initiated the research on minority religions and on different theoretical and methodological challenges in researching religiosity (cf. Marinović Jerolimov 1991b, 1995; Marinović Bobinac, 1994, 1995).

The issue of religion and war as potentially the most challenging topic of the post-socialist period was not fully covered. We get the impression that the sociologist, keeping in mind everything that was written, still in a certain way „run away“ from this topic leaving it, at least, as far as international community goes, to those less competent, in other words the efforts that are, to a large extent, characterized by political science if not even by political approach¹⁴ This is a topic that most definitely needs further research.

Further development of the sociology of religion or further reflection of the social reality can be observed through the empirical research in the second half of the 90s. It, paradoxically, starts with empirical research initiated by theologians, that raises the issue of the cooperation of sociologists and theologians as well as the issue of the position of sociology, that neglected to position itself in time, in the context of relevant international research projects.¹⁵ However the initiative for empirical research was most definitely welcomed and it gradually enabled sociologist to reflection the reality. It started with the research „Faith and Morals in Croatia“ under the leadership of a renowned moral theologian with an extraordinary inters for social reality Marijan Valković. The research was conceived based on the work and research done by a well known Austrian theologian P. Zulehner and several Italian researches, and several younger sociologists and psychologists worked on it. The publications have, for the first time, completely captured the social reality, although the research was, in one of its important segments, conceived in order to answer to the interests of the moral and pastoral theology (for example the detailed classification of various levels of belief, the attitudes of laics towards the Church, the issue of Church media and so on).

The second relevant research is a big comparative project led by P. Zulehner and M. Tomka in ten post-communist countries, entitled *Aufbruch*. *Aufbruch* has a so called qualitative component of the analyses of religiosity in times of communism, that in Croatia resulted in an almanac (Aračić, 2001) and the qualitative component, in other words a big empirical research that resulted in two comparative studies (Tomka, Zulehner, 1999, 2000), while the results for Croatia, are comparatively dealt with in a book (Aračić, Črpić, Nikodem, 2003). The specifics of this research is the focusing on the position of the Church in communism and post-communism, which partly change the common sociological approach in studying the religiosity.

¹⁴ The dominance of the political (and most certainly not sociological) approach is visible especially with Iveković (2002) and Perica (2002). Maybe these authors should not be mentioned here, but they have had, due to the media in which they publishing (Social Compass, and Oxford University Press) the opportunity to have a big impact. The reservation with which he views the domination of the political approach, or the domination of the thesis on the politicization of religion and religionization of politics, was shown in a couple of places of the author's publication, but definitely only in the passing and not elaborated enough (Zrinščak, 2002, 2006a and b, 2007a, Marinović Jerolimov, Zrinščak, 2006).

¹⁵ The first international sociologically relevant research, the International Value Survey, was conducted in 1995 by a group of sociologist led by V. Pusić, however this research, except for a couple of publications by A. Štulhofer, was not used, not even in the aspect of the analyses of religiosity.

The third relevant research, again led by theologians, or rather the Catholic Faculty of Theology, but this time with a more significant participation of sociologist (and psychologists) is the international comparative research – European Value Survey. The meaning of the Croatian inclusion in the third wave of the research 1999/2000 (the first two waves were in 1981 and 1990) was definitely extraordinary, because this is one of the most important all-European researches, based on which many articles were written, which in return makes it possible to compare the social, and then the religious situation in several European countries. After the preliminary analyses of the research and the articles based on it that were published in the “Bogoslovska smotra” (Theological review) (2/2000), a whole book was published in both Croatian and English language (Baloban, 2005). Although the role of religion is a topic that appears in many texts, a general presentation of the religious situation in Croatia was done in the article by Črpić, Zrinščak (2005), and it starts with the (a) system analyses of the religiosity through individual (partly interconnected, and partly not) dimensions and (b) inaugurates the thesis of the two dominant public roles of religion: (1) the understanding of the religion as a symbolic identity framework of the majority of the population irrespectively of the degree of religious identification and Church participation and (2) a strong connection between the national and the religious, which can also be recognized as the relationship between the choice of religion and the political orientation. The new fourth wave of the European Value Survey was done by mostly the same team of researchers in 2008, which will, for the first time, enable an insight into the dynamics of change in a longer period of time.

Other relevant research followed, enabling not only further insight into the dynamic of religious change but also researching specific aspects of religiosity. What followed was a certain specialization of two leading research institutions in the area of sociology of religion.¹⁶

The Institute for Social Research conducted two general research projects „Religious Changes and Values in the Croatian Society“ and „Social and Religious Changes in Croatia“ and the results of which were, in addition to other publications, published in the thematic issues of the “Sociologija sela” (Rural sociology) no 1/2 in 2000. and 2 in 2005. The publications, starting from the combination of the basic research concepts of the sociology of religion (secularization, revitalization, traditional cultural patterns, privatization) show the complexity of the religious situation in Croatia, but most of all the reflection of the social circumstances and the new social role of the religion on the state of religion that, is, reflected in the stabilization of the religious situation and the overcoming of patterns that can be labeled „believing in belonging“ (the basic framework of both researches and the basic results can be viewed in Marinović Jerolimov, 2000, 2005). The current research projects of that same Institute (since 2007) are called „Small Religious Communities as Actors of Religious Change in the Croatian Society“. The scientists working in the Institute (Dinka Marinović Jerolimov and Ankica Marinović Bobinac) have in addition, in several publications, dealt with the problem of religious education in Croatia (Marinović Bobinac, Marinović Jerolimov, 2006, 2008, Marinović Bobinac, 2007).

In the Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar the projects „Religious Communities in Croatia and Their Role in the Integration Processes“ and „Globalization and Postmodern Religious and Church Movements in Croatia“, were realised and currently (in 2007/2008) there are three active projects led by scientists focusing on religion (Stipan Tadić, Vine Mihaljević, Ivan Markešić) in various aspects „Religious Plu-

¹⁶ The information on the scientific projects and the related publications can be found on the web page of the Croatian Scientific Bibliography: <http://bib.irb.hr/>.

ralism, Postmodern Religious Movements and Croatian Identity“, „The Croatian Identity, Religion, and the Challenges of Religious Integration“ and „Religious, National and Political Identity of Croats in BiH“. This Institute is obviously, more directed towards researching laic Church movements, religious experience and the issue of identity (cf. for example, thematic issues of the journal „Društvena istraživanja“ issues 1-2/2001 and 1-2/2005 or Tadić, 2001, 2002; Marinić, Mihaljević, Tadić, 2006; Mihaljević, Tadić, 2004, Mihaljević, 2005 and so on).

This of course does not exhaust all the thematic dimensions that sociologists of religion deal with. The author of this paper, has, among other things, written about the Church-State relationship (Zrinščak, 1998, 1999b, 2004), Ivan Markešić on Luhmann, dialogue, identity (for example. Markešić, 2001, 2005 and so on), Željko Boneta on modernization, social disintegration and religiousness (for example, Boneta, 2004, Banovac, Boneta, 2006 and so on.), Ivan Cifrić and Krunoslav Nikodem on the dialogue of religion, identity and bioethic dilemmas (for example, Cifrić, Nikodem, 2004, 2005, Nikodem, 2004 and so on.), Neven Duvnjak on Churches, war, ecumenism (for example, Duvnjak, 2001, Duvnjak, Relja, 2002), Vine Mihaljević on religion in war (Mihaljević, Krezo, 2002), Nikola Duganžija mainly on different aspects of nation issues, but also on relations between religion and nationalism (Duganžija, 1997), Gordan Črpić is a coauthor of most of the texts that were published based on the research „Faith and Morals in Croatia“ and „European Value Survey“ (cf. thematic issues of the „Bogoslovska smotra“ issue 4/1998 and 2/2000, or Črpić, Kušar, 1998, Črpić, Kušar, Rimac, 1998, Zrinščak, Črpić, Kušar, 2000) and so on and so forth. It is worthy to mention here also the research from 2002 on forgiveness and peace done by the Croatian Caritas and the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace (Vuleta, Batarelo, 2001; Vučković, Črpić, 2007).

Croatian Sociology of Religion in the International and the Domestic Scientific Context

Although the participation of the Croatian sociology of religion in the international comparative researches has already been mentioned through the description of the most important research projects, several other facts need to be stated explaining its international position. The participation in other activities also starts in the second half of the 90s most importantly by participating in the functioning of the international scientific organizations. To that respect what is important is the ISORECEA organization (The International Study of Religion in Central and Eastern Europe Association), its founding was initiated at the beginning of the 90s through a series of conferences in Krakow and at the initiative of I. Borowik. Through a series of conferences (one of them was held in 2001 in Zagreb) and publications this organization became one of the most important spaces for interaction for the sociologists of religion, but also scientists of other religious approaches. Since autumn 2007, the Association was registered as an international association in Zagreb, and a group of Croatian sociologists actively participates in its activities.¹⁷ The second most relevant organization is ISSR (International Society for the Sociology of Religion) where Croatian sociologists of religion are also active, the 28th conference was held in Zagreb in 2005. Participation within the European (ESA) and International Sociological Association (ISA) is so far still marginal.¹⁸

¹⁷ Since 2006 the President of ISORECEA is the author of this paper, the Secretary is Aleš Črnič from Ljubljana, and the Treasurer is Dinka Marinović Jerolimov. The first president of the Association was Irena Borowik, and the second Miklos Tomka. For further information about the Association and its activities please see: <http://www.isorecea.net/isorecea/>.

¹⁸ On the Croatian participation in the Research Committee 22 for the Sociology of Religion ISA cf.: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc22.htm>.

Besides the already mentioned research projects, several other projects, that the Croatian sociologist participated in or are participating in should be mentioned as well, as for example the project „Church and Religion in an Enlarged Europe“ led by Detlef Pollack and Gert Pickel from the European University Viadrina Frankfurt Öder, at which K. Nikodem and S. Zrinščak participated (the book with the results of the project should be published by the end of 2008.), the project „WAVE: Welfare and Values in Europe: transitions related to religion, minorities, and gender“, also included Croatian representatives, „REVACERN – Religion and Values: Central and Eastern European Research Network“, project “Youth in Europe. An international empirical Study about Life Perspectives” (Črpić, Mandarić, Zrinščak, 2005; Zalar, Šaško, Črpić, 2006; the third paper on religion and values, written by Črpić, Zrinščak and Kay is in print) and some other projects.¹⁹

Although this kind of participation is extremely important, there is still the issue of an even stronger international visibility – the issue of an original contribution to the international science. This might prove to be a too ambitious of a goal for a small sociology of religion, but it has to be said that such original contribution (still?) doesn't exist.

The relationship with other sciences is, also, a very intriguing topic. Starting with the classic Beckford's comment of the isolated nature of sociology of religion within the major currents of sociology (1985) we can claim that, at least as far as Croatian sociology of religion goes, such isolated nature is (only) partially present. The sociology of religion is very visible within sociology but, it seems, although this needs further research, that the publications of the Croatian sociologists of religion are referred to very rarely within other sociological disciplines. That probably has something to do with the substantive sub-specialization of sociology. Beside that, the interest for religion, if and when it exists, is visible on the level of its dominant social role, and less so on the level of specific insights into, for example, the circumstances and the need of constructing a religious identity, or the relationship of that identity with other values. The interest for the religious ties with the political is an important aspect within the political science research, although on which level religion figures in it is still to be established.

The most intriguing issue of all is the issue of the relationship of sociology with theology, and most of all not only because of the interest of theology for sociological research, but also because of the active cooperation of several theologians and sociologists. Not to belittle all the scientific, and certainly, personal, results of such cooperation, it can be stated that sociology (as a science), at least in the 90s, found itself in a sort of an inferior position, because it did not succeed to autonomously position itself in the context of the most important international sociological research projects. However the cooperation does not belittle the distinctive nature of the discipline of sociology and provides a possibility of conceiving the research topic from other perspectives (to this effect the best role model is Željko Mardešić who was able to encompass the perspectives of both a religiologist and a sociologist) but at the same time manages to raise the issue of how to, for example, in a publication, clearly distinguish between the differences of the scientific interest and the scientific approach. However, the issue of a specific disciplinary approach is not limited to a concrete cooperation of sociologists and theologians. It is a mere hypothesis that should be further developed, but it seems that these positions are often combined in a very interesting way. The fact that the sociologists, in the socialist period, spoke mostly

¹⁹ Information on the projects: WAVE – <http://www.waveproject.org/> and REVACERN – <http://www.revacern.eu/>.

about the secularization, while theologians discussed the adjustment of the Church to the new social circumstances, but within the framework of the massively accepted traditional religiosity or the deeply embedded nature of the sacred in the everyday life, is interesting. In the period following the 1990 the sociologist (although often critically) started to increasingly discuss revitalization, while theologians were more often talking about secularization, concerned by the fractures in the increased religiosity and the dangers for the religion in the liberalized and individualized world. To again paraphrase Beckford (2003), the question at hand is how often do the sociologists, in studying the religious life, start with a normative thesis (for example the issue of religious rights, the teachings of the Church, the moral ideals...), and how often do they dedicate themselves to the studying of the cultural dimensions of the involvement of religion in everyday life. Therefore, the cooperation with theology raises several issues and they are, most of all and primarily, addressed to us.

Instead of a Conclusion

In several recent occasion (Zrinščak, 2007b, 2008) I quoted the work of I. Borowik (2006) on the development of sociology of religion in Central and Eastern Europe. The author, I would say, positively evaluated the post-communist development of sociology of religion, but remains extremely critical as to its accomplishments. The heritage, here still has a positive influence, since the Croatian sociology of religion (and the facts laid out in this paper witness to that effect) can be proud of several researches, studies, international participation. However, there are still many challenges. This paper is only an outline, therefore not a complete analyses of the issue of theoretical and methodological accomplishments. The issue of familiarity with the recent sociological activities, but even more so the issue of its creative application, remains a critical one. The positive fact is that the comparable and reliable research is increasing significantly. (Recently Croatia has been participating, via the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb in the ISSP – International Social Survey Project, and through the Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar in the project ESS – European Social Survey) however a multitude of empirical material raises the questions of its adequate analyses. The quantity, to paraphrase Marx, still doesn't result in quality. Reflection is significantly lacking. If nothing else the Croatian sociologists of religion are facing two urgent (and obtainable) tasks. One is writing a university level textbook for sociology of religion. There is a small amount of translated foreign textbooks and the international textbooks (beside textbook on general sociology, already mentioned Acquaviva and Pace, 1996; Knoblauch, 2004, Davie, 2005), no matter how good they are, do not adequately describe the Croatian and generally post-communist reality. The textbook of sociology of religion can significantly contribute to the positioning of sociology of religion not only in teaching but in the general scientific system as well. The other refers to initiating mutual dialogue and critical reflections. To put it simply, we learned how to talk to the world, but we haven't learned how to talk to each other. Only after these tasks we can turn to other, although more relevant, issues of theoretical and methodological achievements in the sociology of religion.

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