Original Contribution

SUBCULTURES: FROM SOCIAL TO POLITICAL

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ABSTRACT
The understanding of political structure and political institutions is not enough for grasping the political process. The latter can be understood by the study of political culture as well as political structure. But political culture of a nation is not homogenous. It has different manifestations, some threatening the existing order, while others are simply different from it. These manifestations can be summarized by the controversial term "political subculture". The purpose of the current paper is to trace the use of the term *subculture* in social science and its shift in political research by implementation of a comparative approach. The reviewed works indicate a strong relation between the terminology used in the social science and the usage of the term subculture in political studies. Although there are differences between the social and political as concern the prevailing usage of the term, in certain aspects the designations are completely identical in their use.

Key words: subculture, contra culture, political culture, political subculture

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades the term subculture has gained an increasing popularity. It started as an anthropological and sociological concept but now is also applied to political and management phenomena. The interest in subcultural studies in Bulgarian science is increasing and the number of works on the topic is growing in social, political and management sciences. Nevertheless, there is still need of deep and overall research on political subcultures.

Subculture is an imported term in the political science (1). It doesn't possess a unified definition and a variety of usages can be found among political studies. According to Dubet there is a risk of associating a subculture to every activity or practice and that way the concept may be blurred into an ongoing continuum (2). Another mistake that can be admitted is the usage of the term to be limited only to the popular social view of the subculture as a contra culture.

The purpose of this study is to trace the use of the term subculture in social science and its shift in political research. For the achievement of this task a number of studies of political subcultures are reviewed both in social and political science, some of which are from the first half of 20th century. By the implementation of historical-comparative approach a parallel is made between the initial social science usages of the term subculture and the modern usage of it in the political science.

SUBCULTURE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCE
NOTION OF SUBCULTURE

The use of term subculture is not limited only to the scientific area (social, political and etc) but also exploited in the common parlance. The scientific use of the concept requires more detailed understanding of what stands behind it. Although there is a lack of unified definition there are several tendencies in the understanding of subculture.

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In the middle of 20th century a number of articles which exploit the term subculture appeared. A more detailed and thorough work from that time is the article of J. Milton Yinger "Contraculture and subculture" (1960). As he states, the sociological works in that time use the concept of subculture pretty extensively- to analyze delinquency, adolescence, regional and class differences, religious sects, occupational styles, and other topics. (3)

To clarify the usage of the concept of subculture he reviewed over 100 works and he identifies three major meanings of subculture.

The first meaning of subculture refers to certain universal tendencies that seem to occur in all societies (3). In this sense *subculture* is used as a "pan-human phenomena that seem to occur everywhere" (3). This understanding of subculture is exploited in some anthropological works, but it is very rear and Yinger excludes it from future consideration and suggests replacing it with Sapir's term "pre-cultural" (3).

On second place Yinger puts the usage of subculture, which points "to the normative systems of groups smaller than a society, to give emphasis to the ways these groups differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger society of which they are a part" (3). He adds that the ethnic enclave and the region are the most common referents but some authors describe as a subculture much smaller groups, "even a particular friendship group" (3). He summarizes that the types of subcultures can be numerous because they can be identified on many grounds.

But as Yinger states this is not a problem. He rather recognizes two problems that might appear. First is the use of subculture as a substitute for role. To achieve a clarity he defines the role as "that part of a full culture that is assigned, as the appropriate rights and duties, to those occupying a given position" (3). A person who has a certain role interacts with others who have different role but they are part of the same culture. And Yinger continues that subculture is not connected this way in the larger cultural complex but rather refers to norms that set a group apart from the society but not those that integrate a group. (3). It should be noted here that a role and a subculture may coincide but not necessarily and shouldn't be used as equals.

The second problem that may occur is related to the unclarity of "culture" concept. It should be clarified if culture refers to the norms of expected or valued behaviour or to the normal behaviour in a statistical sense only (3). Although much of the works on subcultures associated culture with behaviour Yinger states that it shouldn't be assumed that "when the members of a group behave in similar ways, that cultural norms produce this result" (3).

The third meaning concerns the confrontation between the predominant culture and a group. Very often such group is called a subculture because of its conflict with a larger society. Yinger defines the third usage of the term subculture as it "raises to a position of prominence one particular kind of dynamic linkage between norms and personality: the creation of a series of inverse or counter values (opposed to those of the surrounding society) in face of serious frustration or conflict". (3)This usage includes social-psychological dimensions in addition to the norms. According to Yinger to view the cultural element in the delinquent behaviour is a step forward in explaining them (3). Of course he reminds that it is important to see also the non-cultural aspects (3).

This third usage of subculture he suggests to be called *contraculture*, adding "wherever the normative system of a group contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and maintenance of the group's values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture". (3)

Yinger's article is a significant contribution because it sets, in some way, borders between the different usages of the term subculture. His work gives a systematic view on what subculture is and is a base of following studies of subcultures. As he points the risks of usage of the term in each meaning, he draws the scholars' attention on them to prevent misleading.

Although Yinger sets a base for deeper subcultural studies "scientific work in this area remains at a primitive level" (4). Nevertheless, according to Short (4) the principles of subcultural formation had been identified and as a major contributor he points "social

separation". Short doesn't introduce different types of subcultures but he rather differentiates them on the basis of the attitude of the larger society toward them: indifferently, positively, negatively (4). He discussed mostly the subcultures which provoke negative attitude- a deviant type of subculture, the contra culture. He reviews the reasons of the appearance of subcultures, as if they are not an element of the society, the dominant cultural settings, but like they are something that appears under certain conditions. In his view "subcultures ... are linked to social change, serving at times as the engines of social change and at some times as resister to change" (4).

According to Short the criterion which distinguishes the subculture is neither the membership in particular category, nor the behaviour, but it is rather the "degree to which values, artefacts and identifications are shared among and with other members of a category, or among and with those who engage in a particular type of behaviour". (4)

Examining the concept of subculture Dubet focuses the attention on, what he calls, "mass culture". He says that "within the hierarchical framework of culture, the subcultures may be understood as the popular cultures, often marginal, and especially the mass culture engendered by the cultural industries". In this consideration subculture covers the "degraded or 'vulgar' forms of that culture". This is the position of the conservative tradition and the Frankfurt school which consider subcultures (referring to the popular cultures) as "inferior culture" (2).

As Dubet presents the relation between culture and action he explains subculture as result from the meeting of wider cultures and particular social situations and they can be viewed "as the way in which actors interpret whole cultural settings in the light of the situations and contexts in which they find themselves" (2).

The common of the three works discussed above is that they are concern subcultures in the society. In recent years a new type of subcultural researches has emerged. These researches are related to the so called "organizational culture" or culture of an organization. There is a number of works on this topic by now, which study the subcultures in an organization.

According to Kathryn Vercillo in the organizational structure of a company exist subcultures, jointly with larger culture or as an opposition to it. Vercillo notice that subcultures are often seen as "rebellious groups within an organization, groups that oppose the main organizational culture". Although this may be true this is not the only position of the subcultures. They also can have a significant role in understanding company's functioning and thus can help the entrepreneur to understand his business. "Analysis of the subcultures is a critical concept in understanding the company as a whole because it gives you insight into problem areas in the business" (5)

Boisnier and Chatman discussed the definition of organizational subculture and notice that most approaches to subcultures have common distinctions and features (6). They distinguish sub-groups and subcultures. According to them the difference between two is that the latter don't need a form around a subdivision or to be consciously or intentionally formed. They define subcultures as "groups whose common characteristic is a set of shared norms and beliefs" (6).

The similarities between the social understanding of subculture and the understanding of organizational behaviour science, management science, organizational communication and etc, are obvious. In these sciences the organization is perceived as a model of the society.

In the years of democracy, since 1989, Bulgarian scientists make tentative steps toward subcultures exploration. Maybe the first major work on this topic is Ivaylo Tepavicharov's "The Youth Subculture" (2000). In his book he explores the youth subculture in Bulgaria and he explores the mechanisms of its functioning and distribution. (7)

There are also several articles concerning the subcultures: "Youth subcultures in Bulgaria during 80s and 90s of 20th century" (Vihra Barova, 2004); "Culture/Subculture" (Diana Popova, 1999); "A subculture of violence" (Valentina Zlatanova, 2004); "For the teenage fantasy-literature as a subculture" (Svetlana Stoicheva, 2005) and etc.

A newer work related to the subcultures is a deeper study, made by Kristina Paytusheva in

her dissertation (2011). According to her "the subculture exists as a kind of extension to the culture and as its base stands the rebellion" (8).

There are also Bulgarian works studying subcultures as a part of organizational culture of a firm (9).

SUBCULTURAL TYPES
According to different authors subcultures can be identified on different bases.
Mira Komarovsky and S. S. Sargent refer to "class, race, occupation, residence and region". (3) Kimball Young and Raymond Mack refer to "ethnic, occupational, and regional variations" (3). As distinguishing criterion Yinger points the "language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger society of which they are a part" (3).

Dubet also identifies some of the bases on which subcultures can be distinguished. He speaks of youth subcultures, peasant subcultures, class subcultures, the subculture of chic or delinquent city quarters, and even professional subcultures. (2).

As bases for social separation and the following formation of subculture Short recognizes "age, race, ethnicity, social class, specialized training or interests and particular types of behaviour" (4).

The list is not exhaustive but it gives a direction of the wide range of groundwork for subcultural identification. In the studied works the most common bases for differentiation of subcultures are *class* and *occupation*. They are followed by *race, ethnicity, region* and *age*.

Although the "age" is not on first place, in the last years the most popular topic for subcultural studies are the youth subculture. Of course there are variations of content of these studies but they are focused on the subculture of the young. One of the major works in this area is Hebdidge's "Subculture: the meaning of style" (1979, 2007).

More contemporary work is "After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture" (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004). As its description points it "offers students an up-to-date and wide-ranging account of new developments in youth culture research that reject, refine or reinvent the concept of subculture". (10)

A significant part of the social studies of subcultures in Bulgaria also are focused on youth subcultures as they are described above.

POLITICAL SUBCULTURES
NOTION OF POLITICAL SUBCULTURES
According to Tanev (11) the concept of political subcultures became popular in the political science works regarding the youth riots in 1968. At that time the term subculture is used to describe the rebellious generation, which represent a new culture which opposes the wider culture. Tanev summarizes that the researchers from that time argue that there is an official, public political culture and another recently emerged subculture, which is something like quasiculture, partial culture, which characterizes a social group, opposing the established values and habits. These two cultural levels are not related as part to whole and it is unclear which is common between them and where their differences begin (11).

Tanev continues that proponent of this view is Walter Rosenbaum, who argues that subculture creates continuous problems to political governance and can be destructive to the system. According to Rosenbaum political subcultures are groups of individuals in a political system whose political orientations differ from the majority culture, or at least differ from the cultural orientations prevailing in the society. According to such views the subculture is not a set of abstract orientations, but a real social group, integrated on the basis of its culture (11).

Rosenbaum's usage of political subculture as contra cultures corresponds with Yinger's study on subculture. As discussed above, Yinger identifies three types of usages of subculture and for one of them he suggests exactly the same term- contra culture.

The second usage of subculture which Yinger identifies ("the normative systems of groups smaller than a society, to give emphasis to the ways these groups differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger society of which they are a part") is also adopted in the political science.

An example of this adoption is the understanding of Daniel Elazar of political subcultures. Elazar explores the distribution of expectations toward the government in different states in the USA. He defines political culture as "the particular pattern of orientations

to political action in which each political system is imbedded". He uses the term "political culture" in the sense of attitudes, beliefs and expectations of the role of government and defines American political culture as a "synthesis of three major political subcultures that jointly inhabit the country"- individualistic, moralistic and traditionalistic (12).

Most of the political scientists refer to the political subculture not as a contraculture. Some of them share that national political culture can be homogenous but also organized in subcultures (13) and other describe this national political culture as "a set of competitive subcultures" (14).

According to Enyedi (1) "political society is perceived as a framework within which different subcultures coexist". In his work he uses the term political subcultures as "groups that not only have similar attitudes towards political phenomena, but also some uniform patterns of behaviour outside politics (lifestyle, customs, cultural consumption), guided by common values, norms and moral convictions; group selfconsciousness (collective identity); common symbols and an established usage of these symbols (a specific 'language'); feelings of solidarity and loyalty to one another; and (as a manifestation of the subculture) politically relevant institutions." (1)

Tanev suggests a descriptive definition of political subcultures. He defines political subcultures as groups integrated by specific value constellations, determining their place and role in the political process, which on this basis can be easily mobilized politically. Subcultures in a society are not an exception but a norm - different political subcultures exist together which unifying cultural characteristics derive from a variety of sociological characteristics such as age, territory, education, etc. At the same time, subcultures are not systemic elements of national culture but its specific manifestations. Summed up, subcultures do not cover the national political culture. The same individual may be a member of various subcultures" (11)

It can be summarized that the prevailing usage of the term subculture in the political science is as a group with common understandings, values and behavior (when a situation occurs), which don't require membership but the individuals belonging to the subculture will act similarly in a certain political situation.

TYPES OF POLITICAL SUBCULTURES
The bases on which political subcultures are identified are also borrowed from the social science.

Attila Agh discusses "three levels or modes of organization" of subcultures: "First, *customs* understand as sets of general behaviour patterns of a given class or group, and which operate entirely on an unconscious and metacommunicative level, i.e. which are expressed mainly in emotions, attitudes and prejudices. Second, the *worldview* and its expression and formulation as political discourse, which is a message only members of a particular group may decode, and which therefore serves as everyday vehicle for communication or practical philosophy re-asserting group identity and identification. Finally, the particular competitive *ideologies*, which lend more or less coherent theoretical expression to worldviews and are advanced by representatives of a given social group on the level of national political community, in the public arena, at political manifestations and in the form of protest from abroad." (14)

Tanev makes a review of several works on political subculture and extracts the opinions about the bases on which subcultures are being identified. Clifford Geertz suggests as a criterion *class status*, *ethnicity, region, rural or urban*. Heinz Eulau points as bases of demarcation the *region, religion, social status, language, generation* or *profession* (11). According to Tanev (11) the most popular types of subcultures are the *elite and mass subcultures, generational subcultures* and *political party subcultures*.

CONCLUSION
The interdisciplinarity of the term subculture is determined both by its cultural root and by its extensive use. But the political analysis requires a clarification of its meaning. The two most popular and exploited usages of subculture in the social science are on the one hand, as a group with common understandings, values and behaviour and as a contra culture on the other.

These concepts can be identified in the political science as well, when describing the political subcultures. But if in the social science the term subculture is mostly used to

describe a deviant, provocative behaviour (often of the youth), in the political area subcultures are explored as specific cultural manifestations. These manifestations can be identified on very wide range of bases.

The reviewed works indicate a strong relation between the terminology used in the social science and the usage of the term subculture in political studies. Although, there is difference between the social and political as concern the prevailing usage of the term, in certain aspects the designations are completely identical in their use.

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