Green Agenda and Green Consumerism in the Function of Plural Society in the Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Energy Security

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Abstract: The problem is the lack of social consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter B&H), as a plural society (hereinafter PS), which is why it is directed with its segments to the only sustainable joint activity of the segments - the market, and related economic activities. The subject are the characteristics of alternative development solutions - Green Agenda (hereinafter GA), green and circular economy (hereinafter GE, CE) and green consumerism (hereinafter GC), which are in the function of PS. We accept the hypothesis that the unresolved pre-political (cultural) issues of B&H even in the 21st century condition the application of alternative development solutions - GA, GE, CE and GC, which are in the function of PS and its ES. Analytical-deductive and comparative methods are used, along with the case study of B&H. The main result is the discovery of the functionality of GA, GE, CE and GC for the functionality of PS in B&H and its ES.

Keywords: PLURAL SOCIETY; GREEN AGENDA; GREEN AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY; GREEN CONSUMERISM, ENERGY SECURITY

1. Introduction

A PS, such as B&H, is composed of two or more segments, social orders, which live together in the same political community (state) without interference [18]. The specificity of PS is that among these segments, social communities, there is no social, national consensus, that is, a common social demand, due to the incompatibility of the value systems of these communities, that is, cultural groups. In PS, there are frequent public expenditures with benefits for one community and opportunity costs for others, whose demands are thus negated. Therefore, according to the PS theoretician, J.S. Furnivall, the only common meeting place of different cultures in the PS is the market [18, p. 12], because the economic desire for profit is characteristic of everyone, regardless of cultural differences. Therefore, in the absence of national consensus, economic competition between separate communities is the only viable joint activity. Therefore, their mutual relations must be guided only by the economic process, in which the production of material goods is the primary goal of social life.

Hence, the future of this country is not in conflicts but in collaborative consumption [5], which is at the center of CE and GE, as well as GC, with numerous advantages for B&H and its inhabitants: return to nature, economic savings, energy and resource savings, mitigating climate change, new jobs and similarly.

Through a common social demand - the market [22], as well as reflexive ("conscientious") consumerism [4, p. 22], it is possible to claim sustainable development and free oneself from slavery to an irresponsible, linear economic model and material pleasures. All this thanks to the fact that "we have developed the human ability to be reflective, which is to say, we have learned to look at ourselves with greater awareness and insight than before" [12, p. 11]. Therefore, "destructive consumption" needs to be replaced by "responsible consumption" [13, p. 213], where one buys "intelligently" as a subject, not as a consumer-puppet" [13, p. 216].

What GC is and how it is connected to GA, i.e. GE and CE, and how it functions in PS in B&H and its ES, we will find out from the theoretical and methodological framework of the work that follows.

2. Theory and methods

The research problem is the lack of social consensus in B&H as a PS. That is why it is directed with its segments to the only sustainable joint activity of the segments - the market, and related economic activities.

The research subject are the characteristics of alternative development solutions - GA, GE, CE and GC, which are in the function of PS. In other words, it is the question of the analysis of alternative development proposals and their potential integrating effects. The research hypothesis assumes that the unresolved pre-political (cultural) issues of B&H even in the 21st century condition the application of alternative development solutions - GA, GE, CE and GC, which are in the function of PS and its ES.

The scientific goals of the paper are:

1) description of the peculiarities of PS in B&H;
2) understanding the importance of GA for the Western Balkans and the differences between the linear economic model and GE and CE, and between shallow and deep GC, and 3) explanation of functionality of GA, GE, CE and GC for PS and its ES.

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1) description of the peculiarities of PS in B&H;
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3) explanation of functionality (functionalist scientific explanation) of GA, GE, CE and GC for PS and its ES.

The social goals are: expanding the fund of knowledge about PS and its problems, and popularizing new approaches to consumption and affirming the model of sustainable development for PS in B&H.

The analytical-deductive and comparative method [15] is used, along with the technique - a case study [9] of B&H, which is most often used in social sciences for researching "cases of greater complexity" [14, p. 214], such as the arrangement of B&H. A "heuristic case study" was used, which serves to "verify a certain theory or hypothesis" [24, p. 64].

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2.1. GA, GE, CE, GC and ES

"To consume also means to destroy. In the course of consumption, the things consumed cease to exist, literally or spiritually. They are either physically "used" to the point of complete destruction, for example when things are eaten or worn out, or they are stripped of their appeal, so they no longer arouse or attract desire and lose their ability to satisfy one's needs and desires - for example, an overused toy or a listened to record - and thus become unsuitable for consumption" [16, p. 23].

GA for the Western Balkans. It is a new growth strategy for the region, which implies a transition from a traditional economic...
model to a sustainable economy, in accordance with the European Green Deal; GA is fully owned by the Western Balkan region: the six leaders adopted the declaration on the common market of the Western Balkan countries and the declaration on GA for the Western Balkans at the summit in Sofia, Bulgaria, in November 2020, in the context of the Berlin process [6]. Along with B&H, this declaration was also signed by Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia, which pledged to contribute to the goal of Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent, by 2050, thanks to the introduction of clean energy and the reduction of the negative impact of the use of fossil fuels in production and consumption, the promotion of carbon dioxide emissions tax, the abolition of coal subsidies, the development of market models for the use of renewable energy sources, and social benefits.

Therefore, at the center of GA is the green transition, that is, the transition from non-renewable energy sources, such as “coal, oil”, whose final reserves are depleted, to renewable ones, such as “solar or hydropower” [26, p. 99 - 100].

The green transition is one of the 5 priority areas of the new Consumer Agenda, which represents the vision of EU consumer policy from 2020 to 2025 [7], which is essentially based on promoting a sustainable economy of reparations and product circulation.

Due to the war in Ukraine, European developed countries (Germany and Austria) are returning to coal, as an energy source, in order to overcome the crisis caused by the problem with the supply of gas and the sanctions imposed on Russia, because the European Union is still dependent on Russian gas. It only means that this war has caused major disruptions in the energy markets, which is also reflected in the implementation of the GA.

B&H lags behind developed countries in transition processes, including in terms of green transition, even though it faces a serious degree of pollution and low utilization of waste through recycling.

**GE and CE.** The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) defines GE as an economy with a reduced risk of environmental degradation and deterioration of human well-being [1]. It is an economy focused on transformation towards smart, inclusive and sustainable development [according to the Europe 2020 Strategy in 1].

**CE** is also connected to GE. It refers to the prevention of waste generation through recycling and reuse as raw materials for further production. In 2015, the European Parliament adopted the Resolution on CE in order to use resources more efficiently, through the most important goal - 70% recycling and the abolition of incinerators and waste landfills, Therefore, it is necessary to circulate resources from nature back to nature and eliminate waste (Zero Waste) All in order to preserve the environment from human exploitation and thereby improve the quality of life on Earth.

By the way, Germany, Scotland and Sweden are just some of the European countries with implemented CE, and Germany is at the top of the European top list in this regard, because it is characterized by as much as 65% of recycled and composted waste from the total amount of waste materials.

Like most of the countries in the region of Southeast Europe, B&H is a developing country, so it faces significant "challenges in exploiting the advantages of the GC" [25], if it does not want to lose market share in an important export market, such as Germany, or share of green capital investments (finance for climate change, waste management, environmental protection, etc.).

**GC.** If consumption, and thus consumerism, refer to the consumption of things - "eating them, wearing them, playing with them and otherwise causing them to satisfy one's needs or desires" [16, p. 23], then what would GC be? GC could be defined as an ideology about consumer activities that should be accompanied by environmental awareness about the importance of preserving public goods (primarily natural) from which everyone benefits. GC seems particularly important in the current social constellation of neoliberal capitalism, which "has entered its most brutal phase when we are slowly and perniciously getting used to the fact that resources and services that were previously available to everyone (water, education, health and others) are becoming more and more privileged for the rich elite and are treated as the most common commodity, not the human right of every person on the planet" [17, p. 78].

GC is consumption based on ecological criteria [20; see also 23. p. 200 - 226], thus being associated with sustainable development. It is the activity of purchasing products that most likely "do not endanger human health and do not harm the natural environment" [27, p. 21]. "Those who are aware of environmental issues will be able to demand from product manufacturers and service providers that their products and services are environmentally safe or neutral" [23, p. 202].

There is "shallow" and "deep GC" [20, p. 26], where the first does not refer to the reduction of total consumption, but only to the awareness of the importance of buying environmentally friendly products. While real GC refers to the awareness of the importance of making purchasing decisions based on ecological criteria, but also to the concrete action of reducing overall purchases in order to foster a minimalist lifestyle "consume less and live better" [23, p. 216].

**ES.** It represents "non-military security" [11, p. 210], more precisely environmental security [11, p. 211]. The national security of every country depends on energy stability and independence. Through GA, it is possible to provide long-term energy stability, which is why GA remains the main global process.

With the increase in consumption and the advancement of technology, the risks for ES also increase, such as: cyber attacks, terrorism, uncontrolled use of drones and the like (Radovanovic, 2019).

### 2.2. Obstacles to (green) consumerism

According to Roach, Goodwin & Nelson [20, p. 16 – 18], the limits to consumerism, as a universal consumer style, are global poverty and non-consumer values.

They state that over 700 million people, about 10% of humanity, live in "extreme" poverty, which the World Bank defines as living on less than $1.90 a day compared to the $10 a day income considered the minimum necessary for a certain degree economic security.

Second, in many places around the world there are traditional cultural, secular or religious values that tend to restrain, or even reject, the consumer society, such as among Muslims - the prohibition of charging interest on loans or in Buddhism - the "middle way" about material simplicity, non-violence and inner peace or in Christianity, in the New Testament, about the spiritual dangers of wealth ("it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter paradise").

In some countries, consumerism is associated with foreign, typically American, values.

Due to the expansion of consumption, which can lead to some level of global homogenization of culture among consumers, there are negative reactions to globalization. As cultural goods are also consumer goods, the expansion of consumption of imported products and services often leads to an exaggerated sense of "panic", a cultural "invasion" which, allegedly, if not contained, will result in the decline of local culture.

European policies on vacation time, parental leave and flexible working hours emphasize work-life balance. Many retail stores in France, Italy, and other European countries are usually closed at lunchtime and on Sundays.
Even in the United States of America, the spread of consumerism was not a continuous process due to periodic anti-consumerist movements that advocated a simpler, less materialistic way of life: the Quakers in the 18th century, the Transcendentalists of the mid-19th century, the Progressives at the turn of the 20th century, and the Hippies of the 1960s, to the early 1980s idea of voluntary simplicity to reduce the impact on environment and greater focus on family and social ties, healthy living and stress reduction.

Bonini & Oppenheim [3, p. 58] wrote about the obstacles to environmental protection, stating that they are: 1) lack of awareness of environmentally acceptable goods and services, 2) their negative perception, 3) mistrust of them, 4) their higher prices and 5) their low availability. So they offered simple solutions: 1) to educate consumers, 2) to make better products, 3) to be honest, 4) to offer more, and 5) to bring products to the people.

3. Research results and discussions

How do GA, GE, CE and GC function for the benefit of the PS in B&H and its ES?

The implementation of the GA for the Western Balkans refers to 5 main areas:

1. Cleaning of energy sources, protecting the climate (decarbonization);
2. Transition to CE;
3. Removal of air, water and land pollution,
4. Building sustainable agriculture (rural areas) and food systems,
5. Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

So, at the center of GA is the green transition, that is, the transition to renewable energy sources.

The development of GE and CE would contribute to the creation of new companies, thus increasing employment due to the creation of new jobs and an increase in the standard of living in Europe and the world. Thus, the green transition or transformation brings competitiveness on the (European) market and survival on the road of consumption that are growing degradation [19] because “the limited resources of the planet are too low and the demand for them is growing”. So they offered simple solutions: 1) to educate consumers, 2) to make better products, 3) to be honest, 4) to offer more, and 5) to bring products to the people.

4. Conclusions

People and the environment in B&H are increasingly affected by the global climate crisis, which in particular is noticeable in the fires. This is because in B&H over 60% of energy is still produced from coal, its use is not the most adequate solution because of the extensive use of coal and its negative consequences on the environment. Therefore, B&H is quite energy dependent due to the large reserves of coal that it uses in primary energy consumption, but because of this, it is also ecologically threatened because of the use of coal leads to environmental pollution. That is why the use of renewable energy sources is sought, in accordance with the energy policy of the Energy Community, of which B&H is a member, because they “contributed to increasing energy security” [19, p. 197].

She further points out that primary energy production in B&H is mostly based on coal (43.5%), oil and oil derivatives (20.9%), biomass (15.5%), electricity (11.6%) and natural gas (7.6%).

Electricity production in B&H is connected exclusively with domestic resources - coal and hydropower. Currently, 15 large and small hydropower plants and 5 thermal power plants are active. Total electricity is produced from hydroelectric power plants (51.6%), as the cleanest and safest source of energy, and thermal power plants (49.4%).

Finally, B&H is completely dependent on the import of crude oil, but has the capacity to produce oil derivatives, thanks to Oil Refinery a.d. ”Brod”. B&H does not have its own sources of natural gas, so it depends on the import of this energy source, exclusively from the Russian Federation, through transport systems via Ukraine, Hungary and Serbia.

Faster and more efficient development of capacities that use renewable energy sources and raising energy efficiency are one of the ways for each country to be independent. The bottom line is to do everything we can to be completely independent in electricity production in the coming decades.
alternatives would ensure a cleaner and better quality of life, as well as the stability and prosperity of the inhabitants of B&H.

The war in Ukraine made the countries of the Western Balkans more vulnerable in terms of ES. Due to the global energy crisis, the energy transition it is very important. The transition envisages the gradual phasing out of thermal power plants, i.e. the abolition of electricity production from fossil fuels, such as coal, and the introduction of fees, taxes for electricity exporting countries that do not comply with these and similar directives.

In order to overcome the energy crisis, the countries of the Western Balkans will have to improve mutual cooperation within the framework of the Berlin process, e.g. in the form of joint investments in renewable energy and integration of electricity and gas markets.

Although the energy market of the Western Balkans is small, it can play a key role in European energy stability. So, for example, the Republic of Srpska is one of only a few subjects in the whole of Europe that exports a large part of the produced electricity.

Finally, the assumption was confirmed that the unsolved pre-political (cultural) issues of B&H even in the 21st century condition the application of alternative development solutions - GA, GE, CE and GC, which are the function of PS and its ES. Green Agenda, Green consumerism and green economy, because of the dangers of the economic crisis following the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, is all the more important to integrate diverse groups in B&H.

5. References


