CHAPTER 3

Exploitation of the Intimate Sphere in Socialist and Post-Socialist Ukraine

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Introduction

One can venture to say that the study of Ukraine as an Eastern European society might become the place of intersection for all kinds of theories to explain changes in the family, which could significantly contribute to the development of a potential modified second demographic transition theory. The demographic transition process in Ukraine takes a different form than in Western European countries, creating a form of family that is not necessarily associated with marriage, and also creating a remarkable gap between family values and anti-family tendencies.

Nonetheless, before studying the case of Ukraine, we suggest that an interesting hint can be found with the help of the notion of the ‘two cultures’ coined by Vladimir Paperny. By doing so it becomes much easier to identify structures and also to understand better the changes that took place in the twentieth century.

Whereas Vladimir Paperny was a historian of architecture, his research went far beyond solely architectural material and included features of political, social, and cultural change. He generalised these spheres and distinguished two types of cultures: Culture-1 and Culture-2. These refer to distinct periods in twentieth-century Soviet history that have the features of either the first or the second cultural type:

- Culture-1:
  - ‘Proletkult’ (proletarian culture), 1919–32;
  - Khrushchev’s Thaw, 1954–64;

- Culture-2:
  - Age of Stalin, 1932–54;
  - Brezhnev stagnation, 1964–85;
  - Post-Soviet states, 1994–present.

1 Paperny (2002).
Paperny’s theory on the periodical turnovers of Culture-1 (characterised by the state's weakening control over the economy, civil society and the intimate sphere) and Culture-2 (characterised by the state’s strengthening control over the three aforementioned domains) appears to be a useful theoretical framework for studying family and social change in contemporary Ukraine, especially when it comes to the study of demographic transition.

Demographic transition is an emancipatory process with regards to individuals. Thus, as in any emancipatory process, it is not a smooth transition and conflicts between various powers often occur. This usually applies to institutional resistance from the state in a totalitarian society, and this has different dynamics in different periods.

If we try to use the typology of Culture-1 and Culture-2 to describe the social situation in Ukraine, then we can understand that within Culture-1 old rules and institutions that regulated demographic behaviour were being criticised while new forms of its organisation and realisation entered the public sphere (new types of family, marriage, reproductive and contraceptive practices, types of sexuality, ritualism). Culture-1 is a time of weakening of rules and practices, and new opportunities to change. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, during Culture-1, the institution of religious marriage was denounced, and traditions of patriarchal life became the subject of withering criticism, creating a field for new communist rules and rituals. At the same time in society itself, where extended and multi-child families are still found, modern small families appear and issues such as sexual education, non-heterosexual practices, and new forms of cohabitation are discussed.

Discussion concerning new rules and new forms of demographic behaviour begins, and such discussion might either facilitate the subsequent legitimation of such rules and forms, or lead to their rejection and prohibition.

After this period of discussions and debates comes to an end, a new more or less coherent ideology of Culture-2 is established. It provides resources for rules and practices that are considered to be beneficial for the interests of the state and the ruling class, and marginalises or destroys all competitive practices.

In Ukraine’s twentieth- and twenty-first-century history, Culture-2 established a statist, totalitarian ideology. Therefore, it rather supported, through discourse and institutional methods, previous, patriarchal forms of family relationships, such as having many children, and an obsession with women’s responsibility for children, everyday life, etc. Culture-2 vilified and prosecuted alternative forms of family life or attempts at criticism of the established order. However, it was at the same time interested in such a marginalised existence of ‘otherness’, because this was the way to have some object to blame and to make an internal enemy, thus ensuring the loyalty and consolidation of the majority.