

VALUATING AS AN INSTRUMENTAL-RATIONAL SOCIAL ACTION (ON THE REPRESENTATION OF LOCAL BREEDS OF FARM ANIMALS AS CULTURAL HERITAGE AND OF BREEDERS AS GUARDIANS OF TRADITIONS)¹

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Abstract: The common agricultural policy of the European Union emphasizes the protection of biodiversity and creates conditions for subsidizing the breeding of animals of endangered local breeds. In the period 2000 – 2020 in Bulgaria, this led to an increase in the number of breeding associations and farmers in this niche, as well as to a growth in breeds and farmed animals.

The determining factor for the dynamics of the analyzed processes are the values with which the endangered local breeds are associated. On the one hand, these are ecological values according to which local breeds are part of the European and world genetic resources. On the other hand, these are cultural and national political values that define them as cultural heritage and, accordingly, as an element of national identity. What “tricks” do farmers apply in the struggle for access to financing, in order to value the breeds they raise and, accordingly, to give importance to themselves as “guardians of Bulgarianness” – this issue is the subject of discussion in the text.

Keywords: valuating, social action, pragmatism.

The cultural significance of animal husbandry has long been recognized and substantiated in Bulgarian ethnography. However, it is also recognized by representatives of agricultural and biological sciences. Some of them note that “all man-made breeds are of cultural and national value” (Nikolov et al. 2004: 11). Moreover, in the mid-1970s, indigenous breeds were defined by leading Bulgarian agronomists as “living monuments”, and their loss as “mutilation of history” (Zhelev 2006: 5). Following the latest trends in cultural policy, the knowledge of breeding native breeds can be described as part of the preservation of intangible cultural wealth and heritage, as I will show further.²

¹ For an earlier version of this text in Bulgarian, but with a different theoretical interpretation, see Dimitrov 2021.

² This is not a Bulgarian phenomenon. Thus, for example, German anthropologists conducted

The loss of native breeds began as early as the late 1940s. The main reason is the characteristic state policy for the entire socialist period for the selection and breeding of more productive breeds. By the mid-1970s, the state realized the risk of the irreversible disappearance of local genetic resources and, like any socialist country, “was the first in the world to create economic conditions for their preservation” by determining additional subsidies for breeding local breeds of sheep and cows (Hinkovski, Makaveev, Danchev 1984: 6–7, 50–51). After 1989, in just a decade, animal husbandry in general, and the breeding of local breeds in particular, suffered an extremely negative development. The summarized statistics for the period from 1989 to 2001 show that the number of livestock decreased from 1.7 million to 640 thousand, of pigs – from 3.9 million to 1.1 million, and of sheep – from 9.7 million to 2.3 million (Koprarev 2002).

At the beginning of the new century, changes occurred again in the composition of local breeds, but this time related to the increase in their number. The framework factors determining the interest in local breeds changed especially after the accession of our country to the European Union (EU). They were defined by the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which aims to protect the environment and conserve genetic resources. In 2006, within the framework of the EU’s pre-accession program for the development of agriculture and rural areas, SAPARD, Bulgaria received accreditation from the European Commission for the implementation of the Measure “Development of agricultural activities aimed at environmental protection”, which covered four types of activities, one of which was “Protection of Endangered Native Animal Breeds”. After the accession of Bulgaria to the EU in 2007, the Rural Development Program created on the basis of CAP enabled livestock breeders raising endangered local breeds to receive subsidies in several directions in carrying out one or more agro-ecological activities. Formally, the most important for them was the agro-ecological activity “Protection of endangered local breeds important for agriculture” under Measure 214 “Agro-ecological payments”, which came into force in 2009.³

A general idea of the importance of subsidies is given by the story of a farmer from Kresna:

critical research examining horses and the knowledge of their breeding as a cultural asset of the Federal Republic.

See <http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/532157.html> (15.08.2024).

³ Under this direction, farmers receive 200 EUR per animal per year for cattle and buffaloes, 143 EUR for horses, 22 EUR for sheep and goats, 61 EUR for breeding pigs and 41 EUR for other pigs. The criteria of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) link a given breed to the European subsidization of indigenous breeds threatened with extinction within the framework of the Rural Development Program (RDP) as well as pre-accession programs (e.g. SAPARD). According to FAO, the threshold numbers below which a native breed is considered threatened with extinction (number of breeding females) are: 7500 for cattle, 10000 for sheep, 10000 for goats, 5000 for equines, 15000 for pigs, 25000 for poultry. The term “native” refers to all breeds whose country of origin is Bulgaria (Law on the Protection of New Varieties of Plants and Animal Breeds of 05.01.1997).

*“A family is supported with money, not with love for animals. If they take away the subsidies, I’ll be the first to give it up. Here in Kresna, until a few years ago, before the subsidies, there was not a single farm. And now there are already quite a few such farms. Who can come and tell me that they will make money without the subsidies? I don’t have that option”.*⁴ The findings of this respondent are confirmed by the information in the regulations prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) for the implementation of agro-ecological measures for the two program periods of the Rural Development Program (2007 – 2013, 2014 – 2020). In each of the mentioned regulations, a list of endangered local breeds is attached, each new list being an update of the previous one. In the first list (2009) there were 27 local endangered breeds, in the second list (2013) they were 34, and in the last one (2015) – 44. It can be seen that in just 6 years the number of endangered native breeds whose breeding received subsidies increased by 63%. Thus, European funding is the reason behind the increasing number of farmers, local breeds and breeding associations. In order to understand the processes, the following circumstances and dependencies need to be clarified: only an animal that has a zootechnical certificate of breed affiliation receives a subsidy; certificates are issued by breeding associations licensed for the purpose; and when the breed loses its risk status, it also loses the basis for being subsidized; breed affiliation is justified not by genetic markers, but by the external characteristics of the animals and especially by the narrative about them, which is why it turns out to be a possible means of securing access to financial resources.

The object of the present study are animal breeders raising endangered local breeds of farm animals. The subject of the analysis is the valuating of these breeds by loading them with a symbolic value as cultural heritage, their cultivation itself as a livelihood that preserves traditions, and farmers as subjects of this livelihood. I will show that the valorized breeds are described as valuable because they are Bulgarian, which means that they are defined as an element of the national identity, and the breeders – as guardians of “Bulgarianness” and tradition. Therefore, it is all about the instrumentalization of national political values, bearing in mind that the past, traditions and cultural heritage are an indispensable foundation in the construction and maintenance of national identity whenever and wherever it exists, as we know from Anthony Smith (Smith 2000: 26). In the article, I have set two main

⁴ Apart from European subsidies, since the mid-1990s, a significant number of animal breeders raising endangered local breeds have received various forms of support, including financial and marketing support, from a number of other sources. In my research, I came across more than ten funding sources, including: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; the Liechtenstein’s Fondation pour les Animaux du Monde; the Swiss family foundation Grünenfelder (Grovni Stiftung) and the European foundation Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe (SAVE Foundation); the German foundations Europäisches Naturerbe (EURONATUR) and Zoologische Gesellschaft Frankfurt; the Small Grants Program of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Program; World Wildlife Fund (WWF); “Slow Food Bulgaria” (part of Slow Food International); the Dutch National Postal Lottery.

goals: first, to examine the narrative techniques through which valuating is carried out; and second, to analyze the motivation of the valuating subjects.

Theoretical and methodological guidelines of the study

My research is based on fieldwork conducted in the period 2014 – 2016.⁵ The chronological limit of the observed processes and the conclusions drawn about them, however, can be projected to at least 2020, both because these are long-term and inert processes, and because the second program period of the Rural Development Program (2014 – 2020) continued until then, which, as it was noted, is the main factor for the processes in question and, accordingly, a condition for the possibility of the subject of research. I visited 17 farms for breeding endangered local breeds in 15 settlements in 9 administrative regions.⁶ I conducted mostly semi-structured interviews with a total of 38 respondents (28 men and 10 women), among them 22 farmers, 5 employed shepherds, 1 chairman of a farmers' union, 3 chairmen of breeding associations, 2 secretaries of a breeding association, 1 veterinarian, 1 breeder at a breeding association, 1 holder of the title “zooengineer of the year” and 2 scientific workers – specialists in sheep breeding at the Institute of Mountain Animal Breeding and Agriculture at the Agricultural Academy (IMABA – AA) in the city of Troyan.

Based on the functional importance of narratives as a means of achieving a goal with concrete consequences, through persuasion and building a certain image in the audience and in the “significant others”, clearly manifested in the field material, as a starting point for my reasoning, I consider narrative as a “strategy”, drawing on Klaus Roth's definition: “a sequence of practices or a course of action chosen to achieve a particular goal which contains ‘implicitly a certain degree of rational planning’” (Roth 1998: 226). Since the cited definition is an obvious reference to Max Weber's ideal typology of social action, and more precisely to a certain type of social action that Weber calls “instrumental-rational” and “economically oriented”, Weber's theory of social action is particularly useful for describing and explaining the act of valuating in question. First of all, following Weber, it should be kept in mind that an action can only be spoken of when a subject is present. The presence of a subject is known according to a clearly formulated criterion – “action” is any

⁵ I carried out the fieldwork in the framework of the scientific project “Transformations of local agricultural practices in the conditions of Europeanization and globalization” (2014 – 2017) with supervisor Assoc. Prof. Petar Petrov from IEFSEM – BAS. The empirical material cited in italic has been deposited in the Scientific Archive of IEFSEM – BAS under number 996-III.

⁶ In chronological order, these are: the village of Plana, the town of Koprivshitsa, the village of Leskovets, the village of Makedontsi, the village of Razenovo, the village of Topolovo, the village of Smilyan, the village of Momchilovtsi, the town of Kresna, the village of Vlaha, the village of Vasil Levski, the village of Kaleitsa, the village of Balyuvitsa, the village of Kopilovtsi and the village of Barzia.

human behavior if the actor associates “some subjective meaning with it” (Weber 2001: 12). Whether the action is social depends on the orientation of the subjective meaning: “a social action will mean such an action which, according to the meaning intended by the actor or actors, refers to the behavior of other persons and in its course is oriented towards them” (ibid.: 15), and only the understanding of the subjective meaning of a given action can reveal to us the motivation of the actors, on which the typology of social action depends. In Weber’s ideal typology of social action, if an action is purposeful and related to the satisfaction of one’s own needs, then it is a rational action. For him, the expectations about the behavior of the “significant others” who are the object of the action are of great importance for the actor’s behavior and decisions, because they are the ones to whom the action is directed and because of whom the action becomes a social act. If the expectations about the behavior of the “significant others” are used as ‘conditions’ for rational, pursued as an outcome and judged as ‘own’ ends, then the action is called ‘instrumental-rational’. It is an expression of people’s ability to act expediently, taking advantage of experience and foresight. In the instrumental-rational social action, the main concepts used to describe the actors’ motivation are “goal” and “means” (ibid.: 38–39). It is no accident that Weber used the expressions “instrumental-rational” and “planned economic oriented” as identical. Any action that contains the “subjectively recognized need for economic prudence” should be considered “economically oriented”. Of course, not every rational action is economic, but every economic action is by definition rational (Weber 2021: 130–133). And “every economic activity in the market economy is undertaken and carried out by individual economic agents in the name of their own ideal or material interests” (ibid.: 374). In any market economy, says Weber, “the pursuit of income is the inevitable final driving force of all economic action” (ibid.: 376). Considering that the basis of every economic action is calculation (Weber 1920: 6), we must accept as economic relations both the breeding of endangered local breeds of animals, because it is a livelihood, and its valuating, because it aims to generate symbolic capital and hence provide access to European funding, as it will become clear further in the text. In this sense, the concrete act of valuating will be seen as an instrumental-rational social action.

Another suitable theoretical tool for achieving the stated goal of the article (analysis of the motivation of the subjects of the instrumental-rational social action) is the intellectual heritage of Charles Sanders Peirce. A chemist by education, with fundamental contributions in mathematics, logic, epistemology and linguistics, the founder of semiotics and pragmatism in philosophy is one of the most influential and at the same time least quoted authors. It must be emphasized that the range of Peirce’s contributions is difficult to estimate. His work, as de Waal notes, covers the entire range of philosophy and much of the natural sciences (de Waal 2015: 7). The ideas of the present text refer mainly to Peirce’s reflections from the late 1860s and 1870s, which marked the beginning of a new current in philosophy, which received the name “pragmatism”, but which Peirce insisted was neither a theory nor a philosophical system, but a logical method for separating meanings, verifying judgments,

and clarifying thought (Peirce 2022a: 147; Peirce 2022b; see also Mladenov 2022: 10–11 and de Waal 2015:46–47). Pragmatism was born in the above-mentioned period in the so-called “Metaphysical Club”, which was an informal club of young intellectuals in Cambridge (USA), mainly mathematicians, philosophers and lawyers, in which Peirce played a leading role. One of the main issues discussed in this club was the importance of motivation for human action and, accordingly, the need for a universal method for its explanation. It is a question of what a person believes or imagines in order to be willing to act in a certain way. Identifying as the most distinctive mark of pragmatism the understanding of “the inextricable connection between rational knowledge and rational purpose” (Peirce 2022b: 349, 360) and postulating that “[...] the purpose of action is to produce a tangible result” (Peirce 2022a: 152), Peirce concludes that knowledge of motivation is possible and meaningful only in revealing the goal-setting of subjects. This, in short, is the way in which Peirce, in his search for an answer to the above-mentioned question, arrived at the formulation of the “most important tenet” of his philosophy (Mladenov 2022: 10). This he did for the first time in his essay “How to clarify our ideas” (1878), where he developed a qualitatively new, very convincing doctrine, according to which the knowledge of any object of study can be reduced to the consequences of the characteristics of the object, however unfathomable these characteristics may be. The exact quote of this foundational formula for pragmatism reads: “By reflecting on the effects of an object which are likely to have practical consequences, we understand the object of our conception. Then our conception of these effects is our whole conception of the object” (Peirce 2022a: 153–154). Moreover: “it is impossible to have a thought in our minds which does not refer to conceivable tangible effects [...] and our idea of a thing is our idea of its tangible effects” (ibid.).

How far does the influence of these ideas extend? It is difficult to say, but here I will note two implications of Peirce’s pragmatism that are key to the theoretical-methodological framework of the text. First, based on the quoted tenet of pragmatism, a law of logic, referred to as abduction, is formulated, by which something is inferred to be true based on some of its consequences. Methodologically, abduction is particularly important for the social sciences and humanities, because it enables generating highly plausible explanations for what we observe and study precisely by virtue of the implications of the subject of research.

And secondly, it is the great importance of pragmatism for the theory of speech acts formulated by the English philosopher John Langshaw Austin in the 1950s (Austin 2014), which makes a significant contribution to clarifying the question of the nature of communicative intentions and offers a useful analytical perspective in view of the other aim of the article (analysis of narrative approaches to the implementation of valuating). Austin offers a new method of considering the meaning of words by shifting attention from linguistic semantics to the pragmatics of linguistic communication. At the heart of this concept is the notion that the best way to assess the meaning of any words is to consider their purpose and to assess their weight according to the consequences and effects of their use in a given situation. According

to Austin, utterances consist of speech acts, which are a type of intentional action with different types of purpose and different degrees of impact. On this basis, the author distinguishes three types of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Locutionary acts are those whose function is limited to the “delivery” of information. For example, X says to Y “I will come tomorrow” and thanks to this utterance Y simply learns that X will come tomorrow. If the utterance is perceived by Y as something more than information, for example as a warning, a promise, a threat, etc., then it not only says but also does something and is therefore not only words but also an action, and in this case the speech act is illocutionary. The next level of impact of words is when they persuade, create expectations and form ideas, resulting in some reaction, action on the part of the one for whom they are intended. If Y responds to X’s utterance “I will come tomorrow” with concrete actions, for example, takes some measures to welcome X, then the speech act is perlocutionary (Austin 2014: 7–9, 25–87, 164–165).

Since, on the one hand, livestock breeders use narratives to increase their chances of accessing economic capital (European funding), and on the other hand, as a means of participating in competition, they mobilize cultural and social capital or accumulate symbolic capital, in my research an indispensable analytical key is Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the four types of capital. Considering capital as a fundamental principle of the regularities of the social world, Bourdieu explains the possible mechanisms for changing social status precisely through the potential of capital to transform from one type to another (Bourdieu 1983: 183; Bourdieu, Vacan 1993: 70–71).

So what narrative devices, thematic elements, and expressive devices do agents use to construct a narrative that works for them? Why is this an act of valuating and why is it an instrumental-rational social action? What is the purpose of this action, who is its object and, accordingly, what is the motivation of the agents?

Narrative strategies for generating symbolic capital

The cause

The main motif in the farmers’ narratives about their choice of livelihood and self-realization is in direct symbolic relation to the value of the breed. This is the motive behind breeding the respective breeds as a vocation and a cause. It is particularly characteristic of the livestock breeders who are beneficiaries in projects of the funding organizations mentioned in footnote number 4. It is curious to observe that few among them talk about the funding, free advertising and other types of support they have received, but all of them categorically point out as the main reason for animal breeding, their love for animals, and precisely for these breeds, and the need to preserve them. There is almost no advertising text or media appearance of farmers raising local breeds where their occupation is not presented as a cause: “The rare local breeds – ‘Bulgarian Murrah’ buffaloes and ‘Karakachan sheep’ are threatened

with extinction, so the family has taken up conservation as their cause“, we read in the advertising business card of a farm in the village of Vasil Levski, published under the project “For the Balkans and the People”, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

In the narrative about raising native breeds as a personal cause, the problem of the market realization of the production also finds place. Most farmers complain of low profit because they sell at low prices and because their products are in small quantities (local breed equals low productivity): “*The Karakachan sheep does not have milk, it is not like the dairy sheep, but we breed Karakachan sheep. The other day I sold a 25 kg 4-month-old lamb. We don’t make any money from the lamb or the milk*“ (Smilyan village); “*We throw away the wool. And you can’t get any money from the lambs, either. They buy it 3–4 BGN per kilo. Milk starts at 1.20 and suddenly it became 0.65 leva*” (Makedontsi village). It turns out that the breeding of local breeds is an unprofitable activity and therefore it is carried out with an ideal goal – the preservation of the breed.

Identity

The motif of the cause is directly related to the motif of identity, because in the narratives the cause is justified precisely through the idea of identity. The respondents build such a narrative to show that they love the animals of this local breed and have dedicated themselves to their breeding, because they understand the breed as a “Bulgarian value”: “*I like these sheep as animals and as a heritage,*” says a breeder from Vlahi village. Thus, farmers present or stage themselves not simply as “protecting the old Bulgarian breeds” and producing “quality authentic dairy products that have preserved the Bulgarian taste”⁷, but also as “guardians of Bulgarianness”, which is a typical example of building symbolic capital. There is no exhibition of breeds or an animal breeding meeting possible without some folklore performance under a title such as “Let’s preserve Bulgarianness together”.⁸ There are also events at which an outside observer without prior information could be confused about the occasion, the hierarchy of roles and the related status of the actors, such as the Bulgarian farmers’ market in Brussels in September 2016, where products of local breeds were also advertised: “The event took place on the Day of the Unification, as part of the campaign ‘Let’s protect the Bulgarian taste’”. The market was located right in front of the European Parliament building, giving the officials there the opportunity to try the non-standard tasty offerings and enjoy Bulgarian folk dances. Passers-by were also attracted by the interesting aromas, tastes and dances”⁹, as

⁷ With these words, in 2015, the farm in the village of Vasil Levski was praised on the websites bbf.biodiversity.bg and abv-selo.bg.

⁸ In this case, a quote from the leaflet of the Seventh National Council for the Protection of Local Bulgarian Breeds on September 22, 2012, in the city of Kalofer. See also <https://kalofer.bg/?p=2445> (18.02.2021).

⁹ A photo report published on the website of the Bulgarian National Radio from 13.09.2016 (<http://bnr.bg/post/100736399>, 15.08.2024).

well as by the colorful folk costumes of the market participants. Was it a folkloric-patriotic event with farmers in the supporting role, or was it a farmers' market with folkloric elements?

Therefore, local breeds and folklore are perceived as part of valuable traditions and therefore as elements of identity. On the website of the Balkan project ES-SEDRA ("Natural and sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas") of Slow Food we read that, in addition to "authentic traditions", and "man-made landscapes and gastronomic knowledge" (this includes local breeds) are "an integral part of the identity of the local communities", and the preservation of this knowledge "could support the process of integration of the Balkans into the EU, including culturally". Accordingly, farmers raising local breeds, along with people engaged in folk music, singing and dancing or traditional crafts, take on the role of "custodians of tradition".¹⁰ Indicative in this regard are the names of festivals such as the festival of the Chiprovtsi carpet in 2015 – "Festival of the Chiprovtsi carpet and the local breeds of animals", and Rozhen Folklore Fair in 2016 – "Fair of folk creativity and animal husbandry – Rozhen"¹¹, especially given the fact that in 2014 the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage inscribed the "Tradition of carpet-making in Chiprovtsi" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.¹² Thus, local breeds are valorized as cultural heritage, and if these breeds are threatened with extinction, the need to preserve them (that is, traditions, i.e., identity) is considered self-evident, and their breeding is deemed not only a noble cause, but also a duty to the Bulgarian/the nation: "We are obliged to preserve our local breeds for the future generations", declares the invitation 'Let's preserve Bulgarianness together'.¹³

Of course, autochthonous breeds are presented as the most local and the most Bulgarian, and the more ancient, the more Bulgarian. In the same way, those traditions that are "closer to the past" are perceived as "more real", as Ilia Iliev shows in his study of the reconstruction of the "kalusha" tradition (Iliev 1998: 68).¹⁴ Thus, for

¹⁰ <http://www.essedra.com/bg/> (15.02.2021).

¹¹ <http://www.bta.bg/bg/c/BO/id/1063856> (15.02.2021), <https://shirokalaka.net/rozhenkisabor> (15.02.2021).

¹² <http://www.kilim.bg/unesco.php> (15.08.2024).

¹³ Invitation "Let's preserve Bulgarianness together" from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction in Livestock Breeding, Kalofer City Hall, Non-profit Association of Breeders of Autochthonous Breeds of Sheep in Bulgaria – Kalofer and Livestock Breeding Association "Old Balkan" for the Tenth National Council for the Protection of Local Bulgarian Agricultural Breeds, 26.09.2015, Kalofer.

¹⁴ A traditional ritual consisting of ritual dances, the purpose of which is bringing health, fertility and providing help to people who have come under the influence of female demons, called "samodiv/rusalijki".

example, the Karakachan sheep is declared “especially valuable” because its “origin is lost in the years dating back to the time of the Thracians”.¹⁵

Another nuance in the use of the motifs of the cause and identity, in which the potential of tradition as a source of personal authority is used, and its knowledge (in this case – knowledge of the breed and breeding of “real” animals) is experienced as a valuable, personal self-realization, is the construction of narratives containing a claim to pioneering the preservation of the breed. In my fieldwork, stories like the following one were not an exception: “*State institutions officially declared that the Karakachan sheep was extinct, and I knew that it was not, and I knew where they could be found in order to restore the breed. I’m talking about the original Karakachan sheep. We collected a handful of animals from some remote parts of the country and thus restored the breed. It was 1999 – 2000*” (Vlahi village).

Speaking of symbolic capital and prestige, I also find it indicative that the participation of farmers in various exhibitions, meetings and farmers’ markets (including national and international ones) makes them an object of attention and interest from the media and politicians. Here, too, the parallels with Iliya Iliev’s conclusions regarding the “keepers” of “kalusha” are considerable. He notes that after the “kalushars” started taking part in the National Folklore Festival in Koprivshtitsa, they received media attention and respect from officials: “At the festival they appeared on television, various high-ranking officials and politicians came, read congratulations, i.e. it was unequivocally shown that tradition is something important for the state” (Iliev 1998: 71). I have witnessed a similar situation at the opening of a farmers’ market in Sofia, where senior government and municipal officials were quick to praise and take pictures with breeders who raised local breeds and produced products from them, even though these very farmers had taken the risk of being sanctioned due to non-compliance with the regulations. Here is what a farmer from the village of Plana shared with some irony: “*We make dairy products according to traditional recipes. But we are illegal. The requirements in Ordinance 26 are such that they force you to be illegal. For 7 years we in Bulgaria have been in the gray sector and feel like bandits. All our customers are very satisfied, but when they come to us for an inspection, they can give us a fine of 50,000 BGN [...] And the minister has come to our stand, and the mayor has come to our stand, but there is no law, no regulation. Everything is dust and smoke for the sake of the people.*” Just as the ritual helps the “kalushars” to build and assert their personal authority (Iliev 1998: 74), and hence their social status, so do breeds become for farmers a means of upward social mobility by generating symbolic capital and the corresponding opportunity to transform symbolic capital into economic one (Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu, Vacan 1993).

¹⁵ This statement is highlighted in the project for a breeding program for the Karakachan breed of one of the breeding associations, which was given to me by its chairman in 2015.

The authenticity of the breed

As I mentioned, the prestigious knowledge of the tradition in the case under consideration is expressed in competence for the breed and the breeding of “real” animals. This is the motif of the authenticity of the breed. It is significant in that it declares one’s own animals as “*pure-bred, genuine, authentic*” and even “*original*” and at the same time, it undermines that of others, those under the breeding control of another breed association, by declaring them “*fictitious, mixed, inauthentic*” and accordingly to have unfairly received a certificate of pedigree. On this issue, a real battle of narratives is observed, with both symbolic and (hence) economic capital at stake. Thus, for example, the dispute over the authenticity of the Karakachan sheep began before the certification of the animals and was initially fought not over access to European subsidies, but over the sources of funding listed in footnote 4. Already in the late 1990s, there was talk of “original” and “ennobled” Karakachan sheep: “The question of the breed purity of the herds with Karakachan sheep in the state institutes should be finally clarified and in any case it should have selection consequences – the separation of two breeds: ‘original Karakachan’ and ‘ennobled Karakachan’ sheep”¹⁶. This quote shows that in the eyes of the funding foundation (SAVE Foundation) one of the narratives has already won the battle, considering that the beneficiaries of projects funded by this organization were precisely those who defined their own animals as “original”, whereas the “institutional” ones – as “ennobled”, therefore “unoriginal”, thus presenting themselves as connoisseurs and guardians of the true tradition. Here are the descriptions and arguments of some of the representatives of the competing sides: “*The real Karakachan sheep in Bulgaria are no more than 2000 – 2200 head. Karakachan sheep are actually only found here in Kresna. 90% of Karakachan sheep are black*” (a farming family from the village of Vlahi); “*It is nonsense that they are mostly black. There are both white and black. More important features are wool and weight*” (a scientist at the Institute of Mountain Animal Husbandry at the Academy of Agriculture, Troyan). Besides, the reconstruction of the typical marks of the breeds is not particularly different from that of other elements of the cultural heritage. And rituals offer a similar opportunity for multiple interpretations and variations of individual specifics. The occasion for such an analogy is again found in the study of “kalusha”, where competing versions of the typical features of this local ritual were described in one village (Iliev 1998).

The way the animals are raised can also be “original” and, according to some, a condition for the authenticity of the breed. In the words of the director of the Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction in Livestock Breeding, “there are two ways of preservation: *in situ* – in the breed’s own habitat – where it was created, and its cultivation is most expedient, and *ex situ* – outside the habitat. We have to

¹⁶ The quote is taken from the first phase of the project “Conservation of the Karakachan sheep, the Karakachan horse and the Karakachan dog – some of the oldest breeds in Europe”, which ended in December 2002, with Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Biological Diversity (BSPBR) “Semperviva” as its beneficiary, see <http://www.save-foundation.net/images/projekte/balkan/karakachan-2.pdf> (15.02.2021).

decide: either we subsidize the programs *in situ* – in the original regions, the most original animals, which, bred in these regions will remain as original as possible, or we do not subsidize anything”.¹⁷ This argument is used to prove the authenticity of the breed: “The Karakachan sheep preserved by the *in situ* method of the Semperviva project have similar values of the main exterior parameters to those established by Khlebarov (1942)”, wrote two breeder brothers from the village of Vlahi (Sedefchev, Sedefchev 2011: 57). The reference to Khlebarov confirms the breed’s belonging to the cultural heritage, because his description is a historical source.

Mobilization of social capital

Those who succeed in mobilizing social capital that validates the typical marks of the breed have the greatest chance of acquiring symbolic capital (“heritage guardians”). Thanks to their contacts in scientific circles, the narrative of some of the owners of small, black Karakachan sheep finds place in scientific publications, in which the authors have the opportunity to discredit other Karakachan sheep as atypical and therefore – inauthentic, untrue, not deserving of a breed certificate, and hence subsidization: “The predominant exterior type of the sheep in these flocks¹⁸ differs from that given in old descriptions and photographs of the breed. White animals with uncharacteristic spotting, atypical wool, larger stature are observed [...]. At the same time, in separate, lightly urbanized mountain areas [...] still preserved small dispersed groups of Karakachan sheep with typical marks of the breed are observed. In order to preserve this genetic material and restore a viable population of the typical Karakachan sheep, urgent action was taken by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Biological Diversity (BSPBR) “Semperviva” with the support of SAVE foundation” (Sedefchev, Sedefchev 2011: 53).

Conclusions

In the light of Austin’s theory of the “power” of words, the narratives of the agents involved in the raising of endangered native breeds can be seen as highly performative, and their speech acts as illocutionary and even more so as perlocutionary because they aim to convey to the “significant others” the idea of the breed affiliation of the animals, of the origin and authenticity of the breed and of its value as cultural heritage. This idea should carry information and provoke a reaction. The information is that one’s own animals, unlike some of the others, are “true” representatives of their breed, that one’s own knowledge of the authenticity of the

¹⁷ Interview for the National Union of Cattle Breeders in Bulgaria published on its website *govdovud.eyu* from 26.08.2016.

¹⁸ These are herds selected in scientific institutes.

breed is reliable, that the breed is valuable and its breeding is a worthwhile and noble pursuit like any activity, related to the preservation of cultural heritage. The “significant others” are all institutions, non-governmental organizations and media that can contribute to legitimizing the status of the breed and valorizing its breeding, as well as, of course, all sources of funding. The desired reaction is precisely legitimization, valuating and financing. Narrative thus turns out to be a means of generating symbolic capital, either through its direct, positive influence on the social status of farmers, granting them the prestigious role of ‘keepers of tradition’, or through its potential to transform symbolic capital into economic one, providing farmers with access to European funding (subsidies and projects of various non-governmental organizations), as well as improving their market positions.

I again emphasize that the pursuit of income is an inevitable driving force of any economic action and that *a family is supported with money, not with love for animals* (see page 13). And since the discussed strategies for generating symbolic capital undoubtedly presuppose social interaction and a social context, according to Weber’s typology of social action, we observe a instrumental-rational social action whose subject is the livestock breeders. Their main goal is the protection of personal or collective interests and, more precisely, the provision of access to European funding as a direct consequence of the valuating in question, and the object of the action is the funding institutions and organizations.

The evidence for the described goals and therefore for the actors’ motivations, according to Peirce’s logic and by virtue of abduction, can be sought in the consequences of the described social action (valuating). The above-described narratives – about the cause, about the identity, about the authenticity of the breed, and hence about the competence of the breeder as a valuating subject – result in securing the status of the actors as beneficiaries in projects supporting the raising of endangered local breeds, as well as in getting access to European subsidies for raising the specifically designated breeds, and last but not least – in improving their chances for marketing their products. In this sense, the struggle of livestock farmers to generate symbolic capital through narratives in order to transform it into economic capital is obvious.

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