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IS THERE A PLACE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES EXPERTS IN THE IT WORLD?

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Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (CIR) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek was founded in December 2019. During spring of 2020, members of the Centre's administrative Committee have established and organized a cycle of popular scientific online lectures named *scientific inter_view*. The cycle *scientific inter_view* is Centre's first project and it is in accordance with the Centre's fundamental mission, which consists of overcoming the formal division of social sciences and humanities and the so-called STEM as an answer to the challenges which 21st century poses. The goal of the first cycle was to answer the following research question: "Is There a Place for Social Sciences and Humanities Experts in the IT World?" In order to do so, we have invited five experts to share their knowledge and experience with the general public.

The first lecturer of the cycle was Boris Rauš, Master in Computer Engineering, co-founder and CEO of an IT company named *Bamboo lab*. His answer to our research question was affirmative. In his experience, IT companies who hire only STEM experts are less successful than those who have social sciences and humanities experts in their teams. Furthermore, Rauš pointed out that the key to success lies in the synergy and complementarity of IT, social sciences and humanities worldview. As Rauš accentuated, IT companies are in need of experts in economy, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, linguistics, philosophy and arts. He ranked his criteria of assessing new employees as follows: personality traits; academic competencies; ability to work in a team; technical competencies. Finally, he concluded that IT companies should nourish interdisciplinarity and that everyone who has the skills, knowledge and willpower to engage in a creative process can and will find their respective place in the IT world.

Our second lecturer was Marin Seleš, Master in Information Sciences, founder and CEO of the *Čas posla design & copywrite* IT company, and principal of the *Pučko otvoreno učilište Osijek*. He summarized his answer to our research question in the following manner: there is no IT world without social sciences and humanities, and every social sciences and/or humanities expert can work in an IT company. Monodisciplinarity, as Seleš puts it, does not and never will offer solutions to challenges the 21st century society faces on a daily basis. The 21st century market encourages interdisciplinarity, lifelong learning and constant progress. Seleš also said that the animosity between STEM on the one side, and social sciences and humanities on the other needs to vanish, as well as the ideological adversities among the private and public sector. Seleš concluded his lecture with a general piece of advice: if you have a story and you know how to tell it, success is guaranteed.

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The third lecturer of the cycle was Tomislav Jakopec, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Professor Jakopec's answer to our research question was that social sciences and humanities experts undoubtedly have their place and role in the 21st century IT world. He highlighted that Croatian universities are constantly trying to fulfill the needs of the labor market which is overwhelmed with IT companies. The crucial thing for future progress is to enhance the cooperation between different university constituents in achieving the goal of educating experts who can find their place in the IT world. However, professor Jakopec accentuated that it is of utmost importance that university students incessantly broaden their interests, knowledge and competencies outside the academic environment. Students should refine

their academic with technical knowledge and *vice versa*. Finally, professor stated that it is equally important to develop social sciences, humanities and STEM simultaneously in order for the IT world to progress.

The fourth and last lecture in the first cycle of *scientific inter_view* included two lecturers: Davor Banović, Master of Theology, Chief Product Officer in an IT company named *Shoutem*, and Marko Marincel, Master of Psychology, Human Resources Expert in an IT company named *Factory.hr*. Both of them agreed upon the following: social sciences and humanities experts are a necessity in a successful IT company. In his part of the lecture Banović underlined that the 21st century largely resembles previous historical periods in which people were encouraged, if not obliged, to acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge of various domains of human activity. IT world, as Banović sees it, has the urge for recruiting staff members who are able to *think outside the box*, and that is where the social sciences and humanities experts fit perfectly. In the second part of the lecture Marincel pointed out that more than 30% of employees in his IT company come from a social sciences and/or humanities background. Inclusiveness and equality of opportunity are, claims Marincel, two main characteristics of the IT sector. Nevertheless, those who want to get involved in it have to work on developing their personalities, be prepared for lifelong learning, do their research on current and upcoming trends, and become more versatile when it comes to both their knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, all of the five lecturers had given the same answer to our research question: there definitely is a

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place for social sciences and humanities experts in the IT world. They are needed in every single part of the creative process, especially in the quality assurance, human resources, as well as sales and marketing departments. However, their academic titles do not guarantee success in IT companies. Their theoretical knowledge has to be reinforced by technical skills, and they have to be highly motivated for lifelong learning and must be willing to work in a team.

Judging by the fact that the first *scientific inter_view* had more than two hundred people as live audience, that it was largely announced in the local media, and that the reach of our posts on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Centre's official website) was as high as seven thousand people, CIR's first project was a great success. This thesis is also supported by the fact that around seven hundred people had already watched recordings of the four lectures of the first cycle of *scientific inter_view* on the Centre's YouTube channel. Members of CIR's administrative Committee hope that the future cycles of *scientific inter_view* will be as successful as the first one, if not more, and that the first cycle will manage to offer a new, optimistic perspective for future social sciences and humanities experts looking for their place in the IT world.

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After successfully organizing the first, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (CIR) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek organized the second cycle of popular scientific online lectures *scientific inter_view* during spring of 2021 with the goal of answering a new research question: "What is the Role of Social Sciences and Humanities Experts in Civil Society Associations?". As was the case in the first, the second cycle also had four lectures but with two lecturers on each of them, with the total of eight lecturers. Most of them were social sciences and/or humanities experts with a large working experience in civil society associations. Members of the CIR's administrative Committee invented and implemented one novelty in the second cycle. Namely, starting from the second lecture of the cycle, they included a new section of *scientific inter_view* lectures named *scientific inter_course*. At the end of each lecture, two of the lecturers in a lecture ask each other questions regarding their work, education and/or skills. The

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section was highly praised by both lecturers and audience members.

The first lecture of the cycle included the following two lecturers: Siniša Zrinščak, PhD, Full Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, member of the Scientific Committee of the EU Agency for Human Rights (FRA), and Mislav Matišić, Master in History and Geography from the "Karašicka Republika" Association. In his lecture, professor Zrinščak focused more on his theoretical knowledge considering the civil society *per se*, and on the empirical data regarding civil society particularly in the context of the EU. Civil society associations, as Zrinščak claims, are one of the pillars of modern democracy, since they act in the space between the family, the state and the economy. Those associations are not political, but they can and should largely influence state policies. They promote civil participation, stimulate citizenship and promote society welfare. Zrinščak warned that civil society in the EU suffers from a bad public perception, it is often threatened and attacked, as well as poorly financed. Zrinščak concluded that the solution to this situation lies in youth education on the role and benefits of volunteering and working in civil society associations. Mislav Matišić's lecture was largely based on his knowledge and work experience in his civil society association "Karašicka Republika". The key to success of a civil society association is in the funding projects. He pointed out that social sciences and humanities experts in his association usually stem from the field of economy, especially marketing, psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Matišić concluded that those experts are desperately needed since they have a

better understanding of the society as a whole, which is of utmost importance for creating public events and attracting a large audience.

The first of the two lecturers of the second lecture was Mirna Šostarko, Master in Philosophy and Pedagogy, working in two associations: "DKolektiv – Social Development Organization" and "Croatian Volunteer Development Center". The second one was Mirela Pašić, Master in Pedagogy, working in an association named "SOS Rijeka – Center for Nonviolence and Human Rights". Šostarko highlighted that there are no strictly divided roles in her associations, so every employee needs to contribute to every part of the working process, regardless of their formal education. However, in her experience social sciences and humanities experts can immensely contribute to youth work and social services. In her part of the lecture, Pašić stated that in her association there are experts in psychology, law, economy and pedagogy. She claimed that formal, academic education should be interlaced with volunteering work and community practice. The three things which are in her opinion indispensable for working in an association: computer literacy, foreign language(s); knowing the funding project structure and logics. Both Šostarko and Pašić agreed upon the following statements: legal-administrative skills and knowledge are essential for the success of an association; lifelong learning is inevitable; civil society associations lack PR and digital marketing experts; public perception of associations in general is negative; working in an association is underestimated; financial insecurity and instability are one of the main flaws civil society suffers from.

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The third lecture also included two lecturers. The first one was Irena Mikulić, Master in Primary Education and Youth Work Pedagogy Specialist from the association "PRONI Center for Social Education", and the second one was Ivana Šibalić, Master in Croatian Language and Literature from the Youth Work Association "Breza". Mikulić pointed out that despite the fact that her association employs mostly social sciences and humanities experts, they still lack experts from those fields who would do scientific and/or professional research regarding the needs of local community for specific social services. What's more, her association is willing to employ experts in law, economy, sociology, psychology, as well as translators and social workers. Mikulić stated that the old concept of finding a lifelong employment should be forgotten, since it is no longer applicable in the 21st century context. Šibalić said that her proofreading and editing abilities were a great contribution to the work of her association, since it was not able to employ many experts. She

claims that there is always room for employment in civil society associations for those who are willing to grow and develop their skills and broaden their knowledge on various topics, regardless of their formal education. In conclusion, Šibalić highlighted that it is very important for both undergraduate and graduate social sciences and/or humanities students to acquire practical experience via volunteering. The fourth and last lecture was held by Josipa Mamužić, Master in Psychology from the association "Klikeraj" and Sonja Kersten, a mediator from the Mediation Center "MWorld". Mamužić's association mostly focuses on organizing didactic workshops and educational seminars for both parents and their gifted children, as well as on inventing and developing didactic games for potentially gifted children, whereas Kersten's association mediates in various domestic, legal and other disputes. Both Mamužić and Kersten agreed that there is room for employment of social sciences and humanities experts in their associations. However, their associations often tend to outsource those experts due to the lack of funding projects for full-time employment. Future employees in civil society associations should be, as they both concluded, ready for constant self-development, lifelong learning and teamwork. In Mamužić's and Kersten's opinion, the main issue civil society associations currently face is low public interest in their activities, which could and should be improved by developing PR and digital marketing skills or, even better, employing an expert in that field.
To sum up, eight lecturers in the second cycle of *scientific inter_view* answered our research question in the following

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manner: there are many roles social sciences and humanities experts play in civil society associations. Social sciences and humanities experts, especially psychologists, lawyers, economists, sociologists, pedagogues and linguists, are usually needed in administration, project management, marketing and PR. Besides that, their academic areas of expertise should be broadened by both formal and informal lifelong education over the course of their employment, since their engagement usually includes a large number of different projects. Lecturers also agreed upon a general piece of advice for social sciences and/or humanities students who aspire to become future employees in civil society associations: it is essential for them to start volunteering and acquire knowledge, skills and experience as soon as they possibly can.

The second cycle of *scientific inter_view* had a large live audience of around two hundred people. Once again it was announced and promoted by the local media. Our posts on social networks reached an audience of more than twelve thousand people, and around one hundred and fifty people had watched the recordings of the lectures on our YouTube channel thus far. All of the aforementioned data are indicators of a positive trend in the public interest for the content CIR's *scientific inter_view* offers. CIR's administrative Committee constantly works on developing and implementing new ideas into *scientific inter_view* in order to further improve the concept. One of the ideas is the section named *scientific inter_course*, which was highly rated by the live audience. Lecturers of the second cycle of *scientific inter_view* unambiguously provided the audience with knowledge, experience, and valuable insight into the civil society. Hopefully, this cycle of *scientific inter_view* will encourage social sciences and humanities students to get more involved into civil society associations, and possibly find their future employment in them.