

Head of the Republic's expert commission
for population protection from
communicable diseases

THE ISSUE OF VACCINATION
NECESSITY IS NOT RAISED IN
CIVILIZED COUNTRIES

THE STORIES AGAINST
VACCINES
ARE A CULMINATION
OF IGNORANCE
AND LACK OF CULTURE

A physician

WOULD IMMUNIZATION
BE CARRIED OUT IN
SERBIA IF IT HADN'T
BEEN ENFORCED?
WE ARE NOT SWEDES

An epidemiologist

SERBIA-THE YEAR OF 2017



Head of one Belgrade
community health center

PHYSICIANS TALK ABOUT
VACCINES IN NONAGGRESSIVE
AND TOO NICE A WAY THAT
PEOPLE SEEM NOT TO
UNDERSTAND

A pediatrician

PARENTS ARE SPOILED NOWADAYS,
THEY DOUBT VACCINES EVEN AFTER
MILD REACTIONS, IN GOOD OLD DAYS
NOBODY POSED ANY QUESTIONS
ABOUT VACCINES

A member of the Parliament's
Committee for health and family

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST
VACCINES IS AN ATTACK ON THE STATE

How NOT to respond to vaccine skepticism – the immunization issue in Serbia from an anthropological perspective

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Objective

The research focuses on the way health experts and authorities frame rising immunization issues in Serbia, considers the effect of this on vaccination policy, as well as on the public's relations towards vaccination practice and vaccines.

Method

Critical analysis of material comprising professional publications, debates among medically trained experts, public discussions, statements in the media and changes in legal regulations of immunization (that parents and guardians cannot refuse vaccination and that they are to be subjected to high financial penalties in case of noncompliance).

Theory

Health experts and authorities are viewed as embedded in culture (Trostle 2005)¹, defined as an ideational system of shared meanings, ideas, beliefs, values and rules that make up a framework for interpreting and understanding experience and action. Hence, their framing of the immunization issue is analyzed as built on an underlying set of assumptions, and as embodying specific kinds of knowledge, social and political values and commitments (Leach et al. 2007)².

Findings

Hitherto official measures are insufficient and counterproductive in maintaining a desirable level of vaccination rates, because they are missing that vaccine skepticism reaches deeply into socio-cultural and political complexities of contemporary Serbian society.

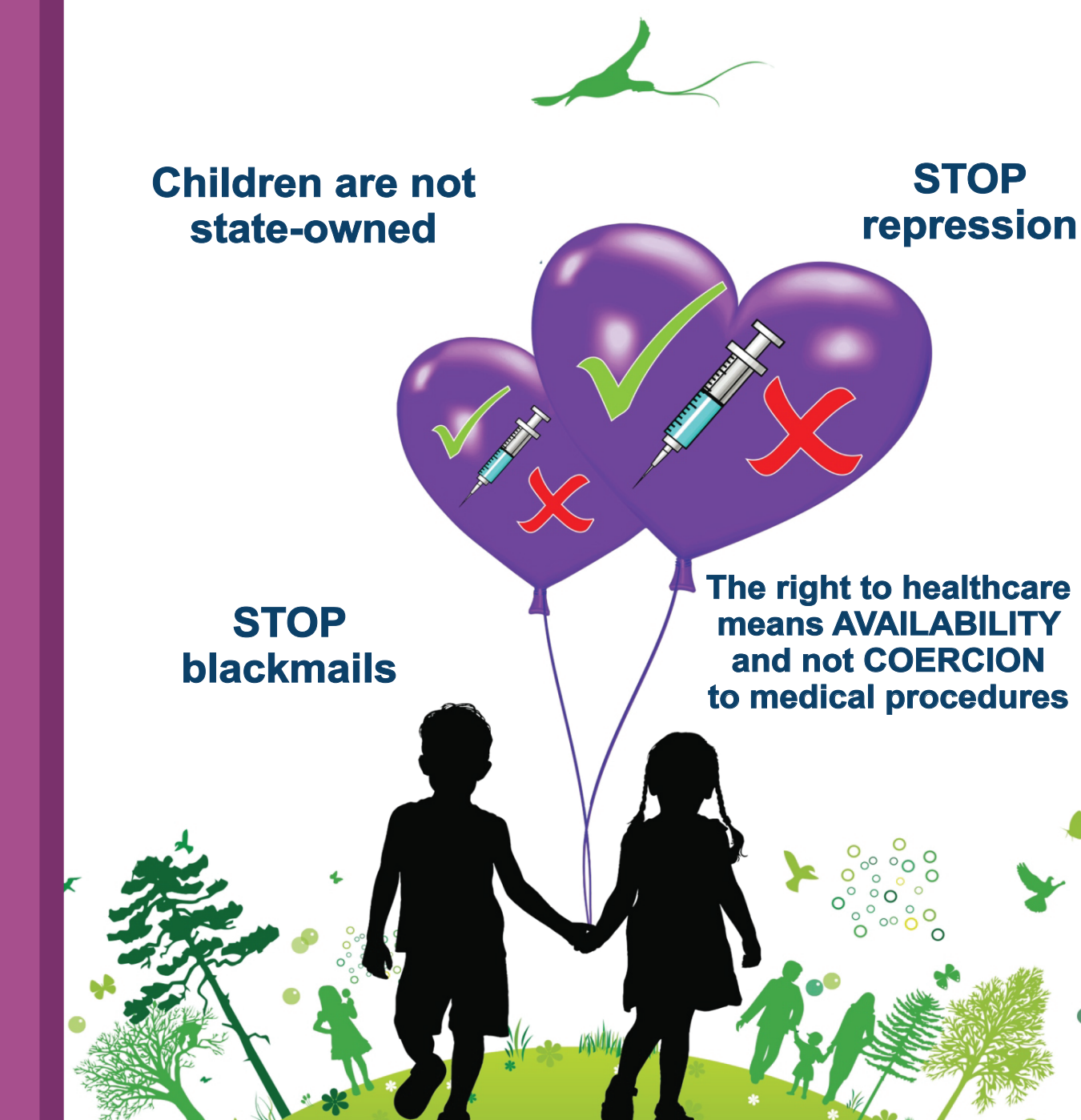
Considerable efforts have been aimed at discrediting the proponents of anti-vax groups, overlooking that people don't make decisions about immunization solely under their influence, but also in accordance with their views and experiences of broader social, political and economic dimensions. The public is approached to as a passive homogeneous crowd, blinded by anti-vaccine agitations. The analysis shows that this could be attributed to the health professionals' essentializing underlying assumptions about the general population as ignorant, irrational, emotional, superstitious, gullible, susceptible to rumors and conspiracy theories, uncultured, uneducated and not civilized enough (sic). This approach has only provoked the public and widened the gap between them and health authorities.

Another problematic aspect in dealing with the immunization issue is enforcing an instruction-driven and top-down doctor-patient relationship, inherited from the country's socialist historical period. This approach is obsolete, conservative and doesn't fit into the new socio-historical context which was established when the country entered the process of post-socialist transformation. In fighting vaccine skepticism, there is a general lack of perspective concerning the transformed socio-cultural, political and economic context that introduced radical changes in people's lives, behavior and relations toward health professionals and the authorities as main instances that advocate for regular immunization.

¹James A. Trostle. *Epidemiology and Culture*. Cambridge University Press. 2005.

²Melissa Leach and James Fairhead. *Vaccine Anxieties – Global Science, Child Health and Society*. Earthscan. London. 2007.

My child, my responsibility



BALKAN standing up for freedom of choice! STOP FORCED vaccination!



Balkan stands up for freedom of choice! Freedom of choice is a basic and fundamental human right!

The Governments of Balkan states are trying to introduce mandatory and forced vaccination!

