

BOOK REVIEW

Zoran Gudović (2008): Countryside and peasantry

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Countryside and Peasantry, the manuscript of Zoran Gudović, represents a rural sociology monograph according to the subject and manner of material elaboration. The manuscript consists of 150 pages, six pictures (photographs), literature review of 88 bibliographical units, scientific articles and newspaper records.

SUBJECT AND ANALYSIS OF THE MANUSCRIPT

Except the prologue, this manuscript includes two logically related thematic wholes:

I Countryside and peasantry in historical retrospective, and

II Global society and the countryside

In the first section – “Countryside and peasantry in historical retrospective” – the author considers the issues related to the precursors of rural sociology and the process of its establishing. The author also points at the significance of agricultural activities during the cultural development of mankind and also at the relevant directions of stereotypical understanding of the peasant. On one side, the author analyzes countryside as a world of spiritual and material underdevelopment, the state of neglect and primitiveness, but on the other side, he points at the romantic idealization of both countryside and peasant, according to the sublime attributes of their strength, justice, moral, braveness, efforts, ecological privileges, health, transparency of the unclouded mind, total stability. The author’s statement that both points of view are exclusive and incorrect is acceptable, because they do not appreciate the evolving interdependence between countryside and global society.

Namely, the value system is explained by the specific environmental space characterized by the continuing and enduring work in the natural environment. In this first section, the author considers the continuity of the peasant’s social marginalization and his life projected by the general lack of money, clothes, free time, regular nutrition, working conditions and the general hygiene situation and habits. The author provides a synthetic review and a good insight into the process of depopulation and deagrarianization of the countryside, not only in our territories, but also internationally. In this context, the possibilities for the return of people to the countryside are being considered. Along with his investigations, the author ascertains that young people are not oppressed by the prejudices related to the countryside; they look at the existing problems from the broader social-cultural point of view projected by the need to emancipate the peasant. According to the investigation, the author points at the fact that young people consider the countryside objectively and in the context of structural changes and disorders of the society, but without expressing the animosity towards the countryside. The author considers the ways and forms of institutional efforts towards total affirmation and development of the countryside.

In the second section – “Global society and the countryside” – the author analyzes an attitude of the global society towards the existing evolving problems of countryside such as ecology and countryside, visions and misconceptions of the socialist transformation of the countryside, social significance of cattle breeding in the peasants’ conscience, the measures of social community in the sphere of support and development of agriculture and countryside.

Along with the critical analysis according to previously determined questions and issues, the author

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specifically emphasizes the issue of cattle breeding as a sociological stereotype of the peasant's existence and recognition. We can see how the cattle possession mediates in the social-economic model of peasant's behaviour with his self-preservation instinct. Nevertheless, the author emphasizes the new social significance of cattle breeding in the sense of realizing the profit. As for the measures for support and development of agriculture, he points at the aspects of its modernization (introduction of mechanization, biotechnologies, and others) as a condition for the labour productivity growth, but also at its significance for the contemporary development with the "human face".

At the end, after the all-inclusive and successful analysis, beginning with the origin of the countryside as a community of people occupied with economic activities (still with the existential significance for humanity), the author terminates this work with the question (subtitle) "Is there any perspective for the countryside and the peasantry?" The author does not get into a deeper analysis of this question. In any case, the future of the countryside and the peasantry represents a complex theoretical issue that needs a special multi-disciplinary investigation. Nevertheless, on this occasion, he gives us just a few indications related to the perspective – the survival is not so much in the "economy sphere", but more within the "authentic moral philosophy and its basic principles".

FINAL POSITIONS

1. The manuscript gives us an all-inclusive survey of the historical position of the peasantry and its cultural determinants, behaviour models, and a way of thinking. The author paid attention especially to the global society towards the countryside and the social-cultural transformation of the countryside and the peasant, where only historical forms and circumstances of social domination upon the countryside are changing.
2. The author provides a critical approach to the problems of the countryside and the peasantry, but his positions are also supported by facts and adequate examples and observations of the ethnographic type, based on his researches.
3. The author put a great effort into collecting and systematization of voluminous materials, but also into presenting it in the departmentalized manuscript.

The manuscript has a clear and understandable style with a correct, specialized language, but also a very rational volume. It is very important to emphasize the logical binding and comparison of the relevant actors, as well as the analytical value and accuracy of the final positions based on both his own results and other authors' investigations.

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