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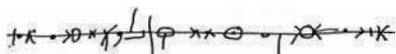
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A Missing Link: The Agrarian Question in Southeast Europe



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Recently, The Journal of Peasant Studies has released a special online issue called “40 Classics in Peasant Studies” in order to celebrate its 40th anniversary. Among the 40 classic studies on world peasantry, just one deals with peasantry in South-Eastern Europe and this pertains only to Russia. Browsing the journal further does not help too much; studies on Southeast European peasantry are scarce. This collection of articles seeks to fill this void. The argument of this collection relies on the social history of South-Eastern Europe itself, widely neglected in peasant studies. The attempts of the communist regimes to modernize the countries in this area, mainly through collectivization, expropriation and forced industrialization, have not lead to disappearance of the peasantry from any of these countries. Compared to West-European countries (which comprise around 5 per cent)¹ peasantry is much alive in countries from South-Eastern Europe, accounting for about 55 per cent of the total employed population in Albania (Ministry of Agriculture 2011), to 29 per cent in Romania² and 21 per cent in Bulgaria.³ Not only the historic importance of the peasantry and its contemporary economic and social relevance make the agrarian question framework still relevant for this part of the world, but also its political stance. The post-socialist de-collectivization and the land privatization, the de-

industrialization of those countries and the return of the unemployed or pensioners back to the countryside may give us new ways of looking at the agrarian question. Therefore, the papers gathered in this issue will first explore the historical aspects of the agrarian question in Southeast-European countries. One of the questions we will address is “how peasants from this part of the world experienced the penetration of capitalist relations at the end of the 19th century up to collectivization?” Secondly, the papers will address the postsocialist agrarian question (Hann et al 2003), that is, the way in which the political economy of the postsocialist states has re-shaped rural economies and politics. The novelty of our approach is that we pay attention to social processes which have unfolded over more than a century, covering the modern history of these countries. It starts with the social reform of the new nation-states in the mid-19th century and culminates with the postsocialist land reforms. Nevertheless, in regard to this latter point we distinguish between the reforms that took place before and after the countries had gained their national independence. The land reforms, as well as various electoral and law reforms of the Tanzimat period, triggered changes at the basic levels of future Balkan national-states. Yet, only after these states won their independence, the peasantry as such became the target of state reforms. It is important

1) www.euro-found.europa.eu/eiro/2005/09/.../cs_agriculture_ro_trans.doc (accessed 16.07.2014).

2) www.insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/com.../somaj_2012r.pdf (accessed 16.07.2014)

3) www.mzh.government.bg/.../R_A170-Prelimin... (accessed 16.07.2014)

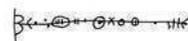


to outline this distinction as the peasantry had started to become the political and civic foundation of these new states, ever since the countries gained the national independence. The approach we favour is one that includes the historical perspective of *la longue durée*, as well as the one of sociocultural anthropology and political economy.

Due to its interdisciplinary frame this volume aims to methodologically challenge the traditional historical approach of social issues in Southeast-Europe. Journals such as *History and Anthropology*, *Annales*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Ethnohistory*, *Slavic Review*, base their publishing policy on the requirements for articles bringing in the same theoretical frame concepts from both history and social anthropology, in an attempt to look for broader and deeper analysis of complex historical episodes. Historians initiated this type of methodology after the Second World War, being inspired by the *Annales School* (Krech 1991: 349). In its turn, anthropology changed in the 1960s from studying the “people without history” (Eric R. Wolf), to the people from the new states that appeared after the crash of the colonial system. The “new” people proved to be not at all so “archaic” or “primitive” as the anthropologists previously thought. Their history was, in fact, a mix of local and / or oral tradition, life biographies and “national mythology”. Therefore, social anthropology has become historicized and “has reassessed the anthropological relevance of the distinction between past and present, present and future. It has increasingly regarded these distinctions as both an epistemic and existential watershed...The wider world, currently overrun with the passions of regionalism, ethnicism, and nationalism, and in the throes of both modernization and development, has made history the privileged ground of individual and collective identity, entitlements, of *la condition humaine*.” (Faubion 1993, 44). At present, the dialogue of history and anthropology becomes more regional because the attention paid to the details of the local history / histories makes the approach to the

case study easier. In this vein, a good example is the evolution of the historiography of Southeast Europe (Brunnbauer 2004). To the mix of anthropology and history we add the political economy perspective which offers a wider view on larger forces, such as national and international markets, determining local evolutions.

By placing the agrarian question in Southeast Europe in this interdisciplinary matrix, we bear in mind one more thing. The classical approaches of the agrarian question take for granted the existence and effectiveness of the national / centralized states. It is supposed that the peasantry is more or less homogenous and able to positively react to the agrarian policy that the central governments design. Still, a closer look at the local histories of the peasantry in South-Eastern Europe, in the vein of Eric R. Wolf and John W. Cole’s perspective (see below), brings to light very different contexts, traditions and policies that have shaped the life of Balkan peasants over the last two centuries. Furthermore, the import and acclimatization of the national states in Southeast Europe meant, among other things, tracing very rigid and threatening state boundaries across the areas that once had a solidarity coming from a common local history, the same ecological niches and an intense local migration. These areas, that are now “cross-border” called in the EU regional policies (for instance the Carpathian or Balkan Mountains, the Danube or Timok river valleys) hosted in the past intense ethnic, religious, economic contacts and exchanges. The national states did not succeed in erasing this legacy from people’s memory as it has developed over time. In this respect, we aim in this volume to give an equal place to the national states and to the cross-border areas.



The Agrarian Question and its Theoretical Roots

1899 was an important year for the history of social and political ideas: two important

works which questioned the fate of the thickest social class of that time – peasantry – were published. The context in which these two important works came out was the booming of capitalist economy in Europe and the penetration of these relations in the countryside. The two authors, Karl Kautsky (1988[1899]) and Vladimir Ilich Lenin (2000 [1899]), were concerned with the effects of capitalist economic relations on European peasantry, the social differentiation which would result and the final effects of this process: the transformation of the peasantry into a rural proletariat or a bourgeoisie. This matter was defined by Kautsky as the “Die Agrarfrage” (the agrarian question). Both of them had few concerns for a scholarly, theoretical answer; they were rather interested in solving a crucial matter of very practical relevance for the European societies of their time. Moreover, they were interested in possible ways for their parties to gain power in countries with large peasant populations (Byres 1991; see also Banaji 1990). As Engels (1993[1894]) stated in 1894, the political program of the socialist parties all over Europe had to address the issue of the peasantry, which was an essential factor of production and of political power. Engels gives the example of the socialists from Denmark, a country with one single city, Copenhagen, which had to rely almost exclusively on propaganda in rural areas. This social class was important for the socialists at the end of the 19th century not only because it was the largest social class, but also because the important economic and, thus, social transformations taking place within. Moreover, there were no other political forces which took so large number of population seriously into consideration. As Kautsky (1988[1899], 2) himself notices in the preface of his book, the German Social-Democrat Party (SDP) theoreticians were interested in researching development in industry rather than in agriculture. Nor had his two mentors, Marx and Engels, left solid theories on the understanding of the European peasantry in the 19th century.⁴ Thus,

he felt compelled to write what Lenin (2000 [1899]) coined as the most noteworthy work of political economy of those times.

Kautsky explores the social and political situation of the German peasantry and intends to help the German SDP to formulate a policy for agriculture and a strategy to deal with the peasantry. He was interested in the role of pre-capitalist and non-capitalist forms of agriculture within a booming capitalist economy. As Alavi and Shanin show in the introduction to the English edition of this book, Kautsky’s important contribution to understanding peasant economy is that he conceptualized peasant production as part of capitalist economy and society. Peasant production is based, according to Kautsky, on family farm and mostly on family labour. Thus, most of the peasant production is not destined to the market, but to the self-consumption. However, focusing on family farms, Kautsky finds several peculiarities which are specific for peasant production. The over-exploitation of its own labour and the tendency towards under-consumption are the ways in which the surplus value is extracted by larger external oppressing forces (Alavi and Shanin 1988, xvi). For Marxists like Kautsky, the major feature of capitalism was the extraction of surplus from oppressed people by voracious capitalists who seek to accumulate more capital.

Lenin was a different kind of intellectual. He was a “professional revolutionary”, as Bernstein (2009) calls him, a member of the Bolshevik Party interested in the prospects of revolution in Russia. Lenin was primarily interested in the agrarian question from a political perspective – he intended to establish a strategy for his party in order to attract the peasantry on its side (Bernstein 2009). Lenin’s study (2000[1899]) called *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* appeared independently from Kautsky’s *Die Agrarfrage* and questioned the impact of capitalism on Russian agriculture. He was primarily interested in the outcomes of penetration of the capitalist relations in rural areas. Lenin was convinced that the

4) For the ambivalent attitude of Marx vis-a-vis peasantry, from desipal to the hope that it would become the ally of proletariat, see Duggett (1975) and Coulson (2014), among others.

three categories of peasants - rich, middle and poor - would be swept from history and eventually transformed by capitalist relations into a bourgeoisie (mainly petty bourgeoisie) and rural proletariat. As for the middle peasants, they will either join one category or the other (mostly the rural proletariat, though) (Bernstein 2009). He followed Engels (1993[1894] who also thought that the peasant is inevitably doomed and he will be turned into a future proletarian.

The most critical issue for Kautsky, Lenin and other Marxists economists was the social differentiation of the peasantry. In a capitalist society, as the one described by Lenin in his work, one cannot talk anymore of a single class of peasants. In a commodity-based economy, even that of Russia at the end of the 19th century, the peasant is completely subordinated to the market; one cannot conceive the peasant class as undifferentiated. In the conclusion of the second chapter, Lenin emphasizes the inherent contradictions of a commodity economy: "competition, the struggle for economic independence, the grabbing of land (purchasable and rentable), concentration of production in the hands of a minority, forcing of the majority into the ranks of the proletariat, their exploitation by a minority through the medium of merchant's capital and the hiring of farm labourers". He then defines the differentiation among the peasantry as the sum of all these economic contradictions. The outcome of differentiation among peasantry under the pressure of capitalism is the polarization of rural society in two classes: the rural proletariat, those who will lose the land and will be turned into a landless class which offers their labour, and a class of capitalist farmers.

Lenin considered that the emergence of property inequality was the starting point of the whole process, but the process is not entirely confined to property differentiation. He, Weber and later scholars (e.g. Hart 1986) emphasized the forms of labour organization as an important part of the differentiation process. The labourer is not exploited on a purely economic level: she /

he is not confronted with an employer as she / he would be in a contractual relationship, but with a small-scale territorial lord (Weber 1979[1894]). Looking back through history, Weber (1979[1894]) has pointed out that the penetration of capitalist rule forced entrepreneurs to work with commercial principles. The outcome was the transformation of a landed aristocracy into a class of agricultural entrepreneurs.

Since late 19th century, agrarian differentiation was at the core of theoretical debates among peasant studies scholars. It was later defined in a more nuanced way as the social process involving the emergence or sharpening of differences within the rural population (White 1989: 19-20). Differentiation among the peasantry should not be simply reduced to an increasing income inequality among peasants. As White (1989) emphasizes, it is not about whether some peasants become richer than others, but about the changing relations between them in the context of the development of commodity relations in the rural economy. This is a cumulative process of change in the ways in which a person or a group of persons from a rural society gain control over productive resources and often have differentiated access to land. Often, the investigators of this process focus on the mechanism of extraction of surplus from the rural economy (*ibidem*: 20). Authors such as Gledhill (1985, 51), for instance, argue that the differentiation issue is about escalating tendencies towards class polarization, not whether some peasants become rich. He draws attention to the fact that the concept of peasantry is not a static one, emphasizing, at the same time, the importance of politics for the transformation process of agrarian systems.

White (1989) also adds an important analytical distinction. He distinguishes between the process of differentiation itself and various aspects of that process: the causes, the mechanisms and the indicators (or symptoms) of differentiation. For theoreticians from the late 19th century a major cause of differentiation is the expansion of the com-

modity economy. Even if rural agrarian societies were never egalitarian societies, being, as Scott (1998) points out, divided by gender, class, ethnic or kin groups, the penetration of market relations radically changed the access to resources. Even in socialist countries and despite the emphasis of socialism on the equality of all social strata, there remained differences between rural groups based on closeness to political power.

White stresses the following mechanisms through which the changes in social agrarian relations occur:

“...the resumption of tenanted land by its owners and a variety of other mechanisms of partial and total dispossession of land and other production resources; on the other side are the various alternative forms of disposition of agricultural surpluses by the rural elite.” (White 1989, 26)

Among symptoms of differentiation White notes the following:

“distribution of owned and operated land, frequency and form of tenancy relations and the direction of operated land; flows through tenancy between landownership groups; family-exchange and hired labour use; and investments and incomes of men and women in different groups or classes in different activities.” (White 1989, 27)

The agrarian question is not only about the differentiation of the peasantry but also about the transformation of a whole society on the route to capitalism. This transformation was termed the capitalist agrarian transformation. Depending on the history of the area, of the economic, politic and social structures there are several historical paths for agrarian transformation. Byres (1991) has considered five paths. One is the English path (which started in the 15th century with the enclosure of the demesnes and vacant plots, in which the medieval state played an important role). Following Marx, Byres shows that the emergence of a rural bourgeoisie in England took place through the expropriation of peasants from the large landholdings and their replacement by capitalist tenant farmers. This process led to

the formation of a class structure composed of landlords who leased out his land and earned a rent, a class of capitalist farmers that gained access to the land through rental and a class of rural wage workers originated in the disposed peasantry (see de Janvry 1981, 106). The entire process facilitated the capitalist industrialization (Akram-Lodhi and C. Kay 2010b, 259).

A second path is the Prussian transformation of feudal lords, the junkers, into a capitalist class. The large feudal estates were transformed into capitalist enterprises. The difference between the English and the Prussian way is that, while the agrarian transition through the English path develops from below, the Prussian path is a transition from above (as Lenin put it). In the first case, peasants dispossessed of their land have to sell their labour to urban employers – farm and non-farm enterprises –, whereas the petty commodity producers are pushed to turn into emerging agrarian capitalists (Akram-Lodhi and C. Kay 2010b, 257). In the second case, there is “an internal metamorphosis of feudalist landlord economy”, especially in the northern part of Germany (Akram-Lodhi and C. Kay 2010b, 259). A third way is the American path where the capitalism emerged predominantly from the peasantry. What makes the difference here is the absence of a dominant class. The American path is also characterized by the mixed model of capitalism from above (the case of South) and capitalism from below (the case of North) (Akram-Lodhi and C. Kay 2010b, 260). The fourth path is the French one, in which class struggle plays an important role and the landlords are eliminated through violence and revolution. In France, the centralized state extracted the surplus by taxing the land and competing with the landlords. The fifth path is the Asian path in which the feudal landlords turned into a capitalist class. The 1946 agricultural reform played an important role in Japan, as well as the state which massively extracted the surplus from the peasantry via taxation. This model looks pretty much



5) In an excellent overview of the agrarian question debates and theories, authors Akram-Lodhi and C. Kay (2010a and 2010b) find seven paths of capitalist agrarian transition. The Asian path described by Byres is analytically split into the Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese path

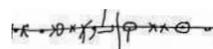
like the Prussian one – an agrarian transformation from above – excepting the key role of the Japanese state for the agrarian transition to capitalism.⁵

It is obvious that all these theories, based on Marx and Lenin’s writings, consider the state paramount in the transformation of agrarian relations. Regardless whether the state passes laws, as in the English case (see also Hay [1975] for more details), whether it is expansionist, as in the American case, whether it is a competitor for the feudal landlord extracting the surplus by taxation, as in the Japanese case, the state played an important role in transforming the agrarian relations. Many scholars view the end of the process of agrarian differentiation, no matter the historical path, as being the same: a minority of small producers getting rich and, eventually, becoming bourgeois and the majority of peasants becoming poorer and poorer, eventually becoming proletarians (Lenin 1977; de Janvry 1981).

The Marxist approach is still vivid among social scientists. However, there is an important shortcut which has been, in our opinion, overlooked when engaging this approach. In the Marxist perspective, the peasantry has no agency at all. They are not proper actors of history, but rather a manoeuvred, indistinct and amorphous mass of people who have nothing to say or do other than obey the oppressors and the implacable market forces. Other authors (like Scott [1985]) have shown that the response of the peasantry to oppression has been either open revolt – quite rare along the history though – or everyday forms of resistance (disobedience, crop theft, etc.). But what if the peasantry simply found ways to adapt and use these forces in their own interests? A first argument against the Marxist view is that, although the classics of Marxism (based on Marx himself) had doomed the peasantry to vanish, peasants stubbornly persisted throughout the 20th century. Southeast Europe is, from this point of view, as this collection of papers shows, a good example. Countries in this part of the world still have a consistent and vivid peasantry. A second

argument is based on the theory of “the rational peasant”. Capitalist relations were not just a curse, but represented opportunities as well. As Popkin (1980, 432) has shown, the extension of markets can be an opportunity for poorer peasants against large landlords and patrons who may try to prevent the peasants’ involvement in market relations. Thus, large landlords try to maintain their control of economy and, consequently, of the power of patron-clients relations. Commercialization, argues Popkin (1980, 462), can be good in certain historical conditions as “the shift to narrow contractual ties with landlords increases both peasant security and its opportunity to market benefits”. Moreover, not only does the state play a predominant role in the agrarian transition, as shown above, but poor villagers may take advantage of certain state policies to make their way up on the social ladder. In Romania, some poor peasant used the state-imposed socialist ideology in the countryside to escape poverty. Although authors such as Mungiu-Pippidi (2010) criticize the poor peasant takeover of the local political power against the old elite, this move shows that the poor spotted an opportunity and took advantage of it. In Vietnam, the source of accumulation was not necessarily only the land, but the availability of off-farm jobs (Watts 1998). Access to off-farm jobs allowed poor villagers to escape poverty and patron-client relationship and offered them the chance to change the social relations and their social status, which they immediately seized (see also Dorondel 2007).

These few examples prove that the peasantry is not an amorphous mass of people who suffer injustice without any reaction, but people who seek ways to escape their economic condition and who immediately react once they see an opportunity to do so.



The Agrarian Question Today

The readers of an anthropological journal would certainly ask why this excursion into a subject which seems to have been over for

a while now. Why should a matter analysed mainly by a group of political economists concern sociocultural anthropologists? Moreover, is this an actually acute issue or it is just a matter of social history? The answer is neither straightforward, nor simple. More than a hundred years ago, the leftist intellectuals announced the death of the peasant (Engels, Lenin). Eric Hobsbawm, the prominent Marxist historian, declared: “the most dramatic and far-reaching social change of the second half of this century, and the one which cuts us off forever from the world of the past, is the death of the peasantry” (Hobsbawm 1994, 289). It is true that – he continued – there are three regions of the world which are still dominated by a large peasantry: sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and China, admitting still that this population comprises half of the world.⁶

Questioning the relevance of the agrarian question in the 21st century, one of the most prominent scholars of agrarian issues declared this chapter closed (Bernstein 2011). He based his statement on a few historical facts. First, he says, the period from 1910 to 1970 is the “golden age” of agrarian reforms throughout the world. Even if this has not ruled out differentiation among peasantry, it has changed agrarian relations. Moreover, Bernstein (2011, 452) suggests that the land reforms and the post-Second World War restructuring of capitalism resulted in the disappearance of “predatory landed property as a significant and political force by the end of the 1970s”. Secondly, the collectivization in many parts of the world, such as China, Vietnam and the Soviet Union also changed agrarian relations: the large farms were expropriated and, even if not divided and distributed to small peasants, collectivization developed in the “logic” of the classical agrarian question. In this case, the peasant dispossession of land was not pursued by the capitalists, but by the state itself. This may be considered as the equivalent of the formation of large-scale farming which contributed to the industrialization of those countries by the state-extracted surplus (cf. Verdery

2003). Thirdly, argues Bernstein, since the 1970s the stark process of globalization has changed the agrarian relations through the integration and regularization of agriculture, capital and labour into a new set of global relations. Thus, the classical agrarian question – the formation of classes in agriculture and how the agrarian transition contributes to the accumulation required by industrialization in a certain society and a certain historical moment (Bernstein 2011, 451) – does no longer make sense, considers Bernstein. In fact, as Bernstein put it, it is not that the agrarian question is not relevant anymore, but the agrarian question in close connection with the “peasant question” makes little sense nowadays. He bases this rift on the fact that today’s agriculture is not reducible to a set of relations between landed property, agrarian capital and labour as it used to be in the 19th century in an époque “of the formation of modern capitalism on a world scale” (Bernstein 2011, 454). The integration of the agricultural relations into the industrial ones, the integration – at a global level – of capitals, commodity chains and technological changes challenges the “classical” agrarian relations and transforms them. It is true that there are also other modern authors emphasizing the need for a conceptual framework in which the institutional arrangements governing access and control over resources and people in rural areas should be linked to the larger economic and political forces. Kautsky himself was criticized by today’s scholars that he conceived capitalism as isolated from its international evolution and the growth of modern industry (Banaji 1990, 291).

So, if the peasantry is largely dead, as Hobsbawm argues, and globalization has radically changed the agrarian relations, should we keep using the “agrarian question” as an analytical framework? Our response: definitely yes. But let us not jump to any conclusions yet. First, as Hobsbawm (1994) acknowledges, the peasantry is not dead yet. It is true that the urbanites had overtaken, for the first time in global history, the rural population in 2007, but a

6) To these regions one should add Latin America, Southeast Europe and Central Asia.

significant part of the population still lives in the countryside and is involved in agriculture (Borras Jr. 2009). Moreover, as statistics show, the percentage of the poor is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (idem, 7). Ironically, as Borras Jr. points out, those who produce food lack the minimum of livelihood in many parts of the world. Secondly, as Daniel Thorner (1986, xi) in its introduction to the English translation of Chayanov's The theory of Peasant Economy has emphasized:

"the problems that are plaguing economies in countries like Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, Nigeria, India and Indonesia bear striking similarities to those that were the order of the day in Russia from the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 down to the collectivization of agriculture at the end of the 1920s."

Indeed, the discussion over the future of the peasantry in former colonial countries, the questions on the nature and the future of the peasantry, their role in food production and how they will respond to the programs of modernization and globalization are very much of the same nature, de Janvry (1981, 95) argues, with the debate in Russia or in Germany at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. The process of agrarian differentiation unfolded in the second part of the 19th century was still very present in the 1980s and the outcome of the land reform in many parts of Latin America was questioned by social scientists (de Janvry 1981; de Janvry, Platteau, Gordillo, Sadoulet 2001; Thiesenhusen 1989; 1995).⁷ The land tenure system, the unequal distribution of income and high poverty are just a few of the issues debated by social scientists and are all directly linked to the process of social differentiation – and, thus, to the agrarian question. The neoliberal policies, very active throughout Latin America, have asked for the agrarian reform, but in a way which privileges the economic and political elite, whereas the poor remain outside the grid (Wolford 2005; 2007). The economic and social turbulences in Asia were also the subject of investigation and have contribut-

ed to renewing peasant studies. The renewed tradition of peasant studies emphasizes, by contrast with their classical authors, not only the local actors and the local conditions of agrarian differentiation, but also the importance of external, global factors. Finally, an argument against the disappearance of the "predatory landed property as a significant economic and political force" as Bernstein (cited above) puts it, is the process of de-collectivization unfolded in post-socialist countries. As many scholars have pointed out, the breakup of collective farms and the privatization of the land and forests have shown that predatory landed property is still a core issue for these countries with a high political and economic significance (Hann 2003; 2006; Mungiu-Pippidi 2010; Verdery 2003). The present volume brings new evidence for this stance.

But how are all these themes issued from the political economy perspective analysed by social anthropologists? We find useful to theoretically frame this volume with the works of Eric Wolf (Cole and Wolf 1974; Wolf 1982). Krech (1991, 355-358) outlined the Eric R. Wolf's attempt to place social anthropology in the broader perspectives of political economy and social ecology. In regards to political economy, Marx's works were the main source of inspiration for Wolf. And yet, he takes up only the basic premises of Marx's theories and some of his concepts. For instance, Wolf agrees that political power structures the economy both in regards to the modes of production and access to resources (capital, labour, technology). Another premise Wolf takes from Marx's works is that labour imprints the structure of the entire social life (Cole 1985, 111). However, he does not provide a general theory about the capitalist progress and its extinction through socialism success, like Marx and his followers did, but analyses the "capitalist mode of production" which emerged in North-Western Europe and spread throughout the world. Wolf aims to guide the reader through the world history. It is not one single history, but numer-

7) There is a huge amount of literature on this subject. We only quote a few more prolific authors, some of them already classics, who have given a general account on the land reform and its outcomes in Latin America.

ous stories about the success of capitalism, its rejection or reshaping, and, last, but not least, its failure (Wolf 1982).

In fact, the appeal to Marx's works has a "transactional" function as Wolf aims to outline the place peasant societies have all over the world. They are not stubborn and conservative isolated populations, but represent a lifestyle with its own logic. The peasants fall into broader social stratifications, and, thus, have a history, but this history is their own, hard to assimilate, still open to transformation. In this sense, Wolf has opened the field of peasantry research with the methodological tool of social anthropology, his contribution to what was later called rural / peasant / agrarian studies / études rurales, which is hard to deny.

Furthermore, the idea of history we aim to introduce in the theoretical frame of this volume is closer to Wolf's perspective on history. An answer to this matter could be found in the book Wolf authored with his student, John W. Cole, about the "hidden frontiers" in the rural areas of the Alps (Cole and Wolf 1974)⁸. The work is the outcome of the anthropological field research the authors made in two Tirol settlements on the Italian – Swiss border. Despite the similarity in the ecology of the two settlements, their structure of power and authority and their ethnic structure strongly differ. Different kinds of histories, such as personal, local, diplomatic, economic – all of them out of the national canons – are investigated in order to delineate the reasons for the differentiation.

These sorts of histories undermine the basic theoretical canons, either universal or national, through the multiple histories of political economy. However, as we have outlined above, it is not about a linear evolution or subduing history to economy. Rather, by following Wolf, we see in the "capitalist mode of production" an ideal type in the Weberian sense⁹, as we highlight its overlapping with local political economies that are very different and resistant. Therefore, Wolf delineates and analyses two other modes

of production: kin-ordered and tributary (Wolf 1982). While the first covers the political economy of the peasants, the second relates to the pre-capitalist state whose rulers had very limited economic interests: to collect taxes for a few "public" expenses (wars, for instance). The real economies, especially those with an important number of "rustics" (Creed and Ching 1997), could be the best approach in a frame that hybridizes the three ideals types.

Wolf's conceptualization of modes of production is particularly suitable to theoretically frame the agrarian question in Southeast Europe, because the capitalism emerging in this area in the 19th century, which was imported from Western Europe, overlapped with peasant and "tributary" traditional economies. Can we, thus, consider the resilience of this model up to nowadays? The existence of a strong rural familial economy, the powerful category of "peasant-worker" inherited from socialism, whose members oscillate between peasant and farmer, the weak or captured states, are topics that seem to combine different features of the three types of economy.



The Agrarian Question in Southeast Europe

To attempt to delineate the commonalities of the agrarian question in South-Eastern Europe in historical perspective is a risky undertaking. As social anthropology takes for granted its origin in Marxist criticism on the advent of capitalism, related research topics could be circumvented. For instance, the postsocialist agrarian question is easy to trace given the common legacy of socialism (Hann et al. 2003). Anthropologists and social historians mention different dates and stances in their attempt to conceptualize the agrarian question and invite to nuanced stances. On the one hand, except for the issue of chronology, it seems that the first land reforms were strongly based on the principle of social justice. In addition, these

8) Amongst the numerous echoes this book has triggered see (Davis 1980) and (Smith 1997).

9) See also Chiro (1976; 1989)

reforms were implemented as soon as the new states began to appear on the map as a result of the struggles for national liberation by the imperial “yokes”. Therefore, the principle of social justice has changed its face and became a way for ethnic marginalization, like in the interwar period in Yugoslavia and Greece, or in Romania in the case of Northern Dobroudja after the inclusion of the province in 1878 into the Romanian state. Thus, we could say that, on the other hand, beyond the principle of social justice, one could suppose that the role of the first reforms and of the others that followed was meant to transform the peasants into “citizens” (Weber 1983[1976]) whose loyalty to the new states would be unquestionable (Schöpflin 1993). The role of the state as legitimating the new structure of land tenure was by far more important, as, at the beginning, the state owned the great part of the land. This happened in Serbia and Greece, the first new states that, at the beginning of 19th century, broke the mono-coloured map of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

In Greece, for instance, before the independence war, the greatest part of the land was owned by around 65,000 Muslim notables, who were dispossessed of 721,000 ha after the emergence of the new state (Pavlovitch 1999: 59). Still, despite the intention of King Otto’s regime to create a smallholding class, the most part of the land belonged to the state (one to two thirds of the entire arable land). The Church that became autocephalous owned about one quarter of the land, while the big owners had only 5 percent. The rest belonged to the peasants (Progoulakis and Burnova 2001). The Romanian state proceeded in a similar way after the transfer of Northern Dobroudja from the Ottoman Empire to the Romanian principalities in 1878. One of the first issues the state had to deal with in order to organize Dobroudja was landed property. In 1882 the Romanian parliament passed a law which aimed to extend the Napoleonic Civil Code, already in practice in the Principalities, and put the keepers of mirâ¹⁰ into full property against one third of their lands that

passed into state property. Thus, by 1885, a little over 40,000 ha of arable land was put into full property on the tapiu basis for the native settlers of the province, whereas between 1885 and 1897 the government managed to distribute the remaining surfaces, between 200,000 and 500,000 ha (Todorov 2007; Ionescu 1928). The main beneficiaries of this policy were the Romanian ethnics, for whom the colonization of the province changed its ethnic structure. After 1900, the percentage of Romanian ethnics reached almost a half of the region population (in 1878, according to various sources, they covered almost one quarter, even less, of the province population [Karpát 1986, 281]).

In autonomous Serbia, Obrenovich’s 1830 land law gave to the peasants as much land as they could work, aiming to weaken the power of local notables (Pavlovitch 1999, 54). Consequently, an important number of Serb peasants migrated from the provinces surrounding the principality. Obrenovich settled them in the region of south Belgrade between Timok and Morava, giving each family around three ha of land. This policy continued after his withdrawal from power in 1839, during the Karageorgevich rule and, by the end of 1860, between 15 and 20 percent of the Serbian principality was formed of migrants (Lampe and Jackson 1982, 116-117). The same happened much later in the Bulgarian principality that granted the autonomy in 1881 (Crampton 1981; 1990; Lyberatos 2011, 152ff). Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the exception of Romania, big properties were virtually inexistent. In Bulgaria, landowners with more than 100 ha represented 0.1 per cent of the total number of landowners and had 3.8 per cent of the agricultural land, while in Serbia this category covered only 0.3 per cent of all landowners and had 0.1 per cent of the rural land. The big properties remained only in Romania, as the 1864 land reform gave landowners more than half of the land they had previously owned (Lampe and Jackson 1982, 185).

Still, the new land owners were far from

10) Mirâ meant the greatest part of the land that people cultivated in the Ottoman Empire. According to the traditional code of laws, the Sultan had the full property over the mirâ, but transferred the right of using these lands to local notables, who, in turn, leased it to the peasants. The further mentioned tapiu was the document issued by the Ottoman administration which acknowledged the peasants’ right as leaseholders of mirâ.

the capitalist exploitation of their newly-acquired lands. On the one hand, the reason was, as Holm Sundhaussen outlined it, the lack of any propensity to the capitalist ethos. The land owners missed the motivation and competence to rationally exploit their lands, grounding instead on patterns as “self-subsistence” (Chayanov 1986) and “limited goods” (George Foster) (Sundhaussen 1989, 52ff). Thus, while the capitalist economy started to spread in Southeast Europe in the mid-19th century, the logic of peasant economy resisted and hindered the establishment of capitalism. On the other hand, the low growth and productivity of agricultural economy in Southeast Europe should not be attributed to the peasant’s “(i)rational work of the land”. The factors of spatial economy (H. Thünen) show that the isolation of the Balkan farmsteads from the market considerably lowered the value of their products (Kopsidis 2012, 11-12)¹¹. In addition, the rural economy in each Southeast European country was open to the commercial exchanges to various degrees. For instance, due to the traditional merchant skills, but also to the particular rural – urban differentiation, in the interwar period, the Greek peasants got access to the markets for their products more easily than the Bulgarian ones (Mouzelis 1976, 93ff). Other circumstances intervened too. In Romania, for instance, at the beginning of 1900, although the large landed property (above 100 ha) was 48 percent of the arable land, the peasants’ equipment to work the land (ploughs, carts, horses, oxen, machines, etc.) was much more numerous than that belonging to landowners (Mitrany 1930, 268-9). Thus, the peasants worked not only their own land, but were hired to also work the landlords’ properties.

Actually, although in the entire Southeast Europe the capitalist mode of production had been imported along with broader plans of state modernization, for the eve of the 20th century we should emphasize its coalescence with the peasant, ‘kin-oriented’ (following Eric R. Wolf) mode of produc-

tion. The state or, better said, the elites that took the power in the new states were, at first glance, responsible for this confusing mixture of modernization programs: on the one hand, opening the gates for the western capitalist market, on the other hand, implementing reforms that rescued the traditional, peasant-driven economy. Still, the wicked governance of the native ruling elite should not be blamed for this mixture. At least partially, the geopolitical circumstances explain some patterns that lasted until the interwar period. The territorial and demographic instability, for instance, was a general feature of the area. In Bulgaria, for instance this is the main reason of the absence of *chifliks* in Eastern areas (excepting Dobrodzha), though the conditions for their functioning were even more favourable than in regions like Kustendil and Macedonia (FYROM) where these were numerous (Crampton 1981, 170-173). And, indeed, during the two Russian – Ottoman wars (1806-1812 and 1828-1829) the movement of the Bulgarian population fleeing the northern part of the country played an important role¹².

The idea of social justice was one of the main features of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe. Steadily, this idea came to be opposed by what interwar-period scholars called the “agricultural question”. That happened by the end of the 19th century, after having established in each Southeast European country a political institution that provided stability within national borders (with Yugoslavia in a special position). The experts, who had all been educated in western universities, attempted to make the politicians aware of the fact that simple land redistribution to an important number of peasants does not automatically turn them into farmers. The agricultural production was low in comparison to western producers, and international market competition systematically disfavoured the agriculture from Southeast European countries. Crises as that of the currant¹³ in Greece (Progoulakis and Burnova 2001; Aroni-Tsichli in this volume) had their roots in the inter-

11) This is a problem some countries from Southeast Europe still face. See for instance Stahl (2012) for postsocialist Albania.

12) The estimations go around 16,000 families (Velichi 1964, 298), 500,000 persons (John Lampe quoted in Pavlowitch 1999, 66) colonized in Wallachia and Russian provinces of Bessarabia and Cherson.

13) Currant vineyard or Corinthian currant is a Greek variety of grape. After drying, its fruit (*stafilai*) gives a pre-eminently known Greek product which is mainly consumed as a dried fruit or used for the preparation of food and pastry (for example, the famous English pudding).

14) These new political forces appeared by the end of the 19th century in Balkan countries that had an extended right to vote for peasantry as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria. However, the right to vote did not mean a full empowerment of the peasantry. Several factors as the illiteracy, isolation of rural areas, the clientele networks, drastically narrowed the effect of the universal suffrage.

national market and shook the national economies, leading to enduring economic and political changes. Nevertheless, the economy of Southeast European countries decisively stepped on the way of capitalism, the integration of these economies in the global market resulting in irreversible processes. Thus, in the Romanian Principalities the market orientation to export cereals, unrestricted after 1829, drastically changed the landscape of the countries. The primeval forests that covered more than a half of Wallachia in the 1820s were almost entirely erased to make room for cultivable fields, a fact that also changed the local economy from animal husbandry to agriculture (Mihăilescu 1924). In the same vein, in Bulgaria, the international market demanded for the development of cereals, cotton and tobacco production, which made the country start growing them (Lyberatos 2011, 161ff; Jackson and Lampe 1982). All these factors made the economies of these countries to be more and more dependent on international markets which were dominated by Western countries. The great hope of local experts was put in a modern organization of agriculture, in land reforms and the organisation of agricultural schools and institutes for higher education in agronomy. The quest for a rational agriculture is visible in Bulgaria at the end of the 19th century when the first school for agriculture was founded (Lyberatos 2011, 168ff). It was a pressure to professionalize the rural economy and turn peasants and the large landowners - as in the case of Romania (Mitrany 1930, 80) - in modern entrepreneurs.

A third component of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe stems from the field of politics. On the one hand, the Liberal elites that put the countries from this area on the way of modernization in the 19th century were reluctant to give peasants a certain political role. Letting the peasants quiet in their "bucolic" life - as did the pro-Liberal Serbian governments - or crushing them with taxes and even cynical disregard - as was the case of the Prime Minis-

ter Stambolov in Bulgaria - or using them as labour force, but anyway, being open to improve their way of life as in the case of Romanian Liberals (Mishkova 2006; Stokes 1989), meant denial of any political power for the peasants. On the other hand, the fact that peasants were not politically empowered does not mean that the interest for them was lacking. But the political support came from outside the political establishment, from various radical voices and forces that tried to find their place on the political stage¹⁴. In fact, this radicalism overlapped with the rebellion potential that exploded in violent uprisings, as in the cases of Bulgaria and Romania. The 1850 Bulgarian , as well as Romania's 1907 "last European jacquerie" (Lyberatos 2011, 153; Chirot 1976, 150-153; Roberts 1951, 16) are telling expressions of this subdued trend.

It has been argued that the main ideological source of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe was Marxism filtered through the extremist and anarchical Russian intelligentsia (Ionescu 1969, 99-106; Mitrany 1951, 108ff). Marxism also, as this looked at the end of the nineteenth century, came in the Austro-Hungarian Empire area via its reworking by Austro-Marxists like Edward David, being abundantly quoted by the Romanian peasantry ideologist Virgil Madgearu in the interwar period (Rizescu 2005, 16). The anti-western and anti-modernization ideas were mixed with anti-capitalist ideas brought over from western leftism (Müller 2000, 66). However, these Marxist couches of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe should be carefully analysed. In Constantin Stere's works (Romanian pre-war peasantry ideologist) Marxism is so extensively changed that it arouse heated polemics with Constantin Dobrogeanu Gherea, an orthodox Marxist (Ionescu 1969, 100-105). In the same vein, the Bulgarian leftists filtered their Marxism through their contacts with Russian intelligentsia and through "field" fights in post-1880 politics (Pundeff 1971). In fact, before the First World War, the appearance and political success of parties like Nikola

Pasich's Radical Party, or Alexandr Stamboliski's Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, is widely due to their charismatic leaders. After their leaders disappeared, the parties faded away, though some of their forefront politicians, as Milan Stojadinovic, who became Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, successfully continued their career¹⁵.

In the interwar period, the political content of the agrarian question conflated as the peasants gained the right to vote. The mass politics and mobilization brought the peasantry-oriented parties to power, either immediately, like in Bulgaria and Serbia, or later, as in Romania (in 1928, but with almost 80% of votes). Still, it could be said that the agrarian question politically turned into a kind of "pragmatic populism" (Ionescu 1969, 106ff), neither capitalism, nor socialism, whereas the peasant parties envisaged a sort of "green" political ideology (Mitrany 1951, 115ff; 131ff). In fact, by taking over the government, the peasant parties became aware and also had to cope with serious problems, such as the rural – urban and industry – agriculture divides (ibidem, 136), or the low productivity of the peasant exploitations. However in Romania, the last country to have a more balanced land ownership¹⁶ before the First World War, the distinction between the social dimension of the agrarian question and the economic aspects became clearer. The subsistence agriculture should have been transformed into farms based on capitalist cultivation of the land (Gormsen 1945; Roberts 1951, 63).

Nevertheless, the mainstream of agrarian policies in the interwar period ignored this reasoning. Instead, ad-hoc policies were drafted, like the cooperative system through which governments hoped to successfully integrate the peasant economy into the wider industrialized and urbanized national society. Paradoxically, in order to forge these new agrarian ideologies, theories of "subsistence" (based on Alexandre Chayanov's work) were used, as economist Virgil Madgearu did in Romania (Madgearu

1936; Ionescu 1970, 110ff; Müller 2000, 65-68). Capitalist tools like market integration and capitalization through small credits, were fully misused, a situation that recalls the abovementioned confusing mixture. There was, in fact, a mixture of capitalism and traditional economy¹⁷.

Actually, in the interwar period, in all Southeast European countries the agrarian question triggered the appearance of an ideology of "the social state" without relying on the institutions and policies the social state grounded in the modern states. For instance, the scholars outline the shift of the cooperative system policy that, instead of improving agricultural production and orienting it to the market, provided the disadvantaged rural population with a form of social assistance (Mitrany 1951, 110; Roberts 1951, 60-61). It has to be said that the issue of rural poverty was real, as the land the peasants had received after the successive land reforms did not provide them with a full livelihood. In Romania, for instance, in the 1930s the research on the income of peasant households had shown that only 58.5% of the household income came from agricultural exploitation (35.3 per cent crops and 23.2 per cent cattle breeding), the rest being gained from small businesses (Golopenția 2002: 315-316).

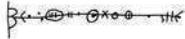
Thus, one may say that none of the five agrarian transformation ways Byres has outlined (1991) is suitable to analytically explain the capitalist transformation of countries in Southeast Europe. The state was too weak to lead the transformations as in the cases of Japan and France. The English path based on enclosures is considered a special case. The American case is also rather special due to the historical conditions under which it developed (the conquest of the West, the establishment of new settlements, etc.). A certain similarity with the case of Prussia may be taken into consideration, if we refer to the transformation of noblemen into a more or less capitalist class. But peasants were not transformed into either wage labourer or small capitalist farmers. When

15) We thank Jovana Dikovic for bringing this important point to our attention. Though the prewar Agrarian parties withered away by the end of the 1920s, their main personalities switched parties, though still seeking to remain committed to their original ideas, i.e. agrarianism.

16) Due to a large land reform which levelled the ownership structure as in the other Southeast European countries (Mitrany 1930).

17) Sociologist Henri H. Stahl analyzes the ways in which foreign timber companies gained access to the forests of the commons in Vrancea region, Southeast Romania at the end of 19th century (Stahl 1980). The French Code Law the Romanian state introduced within the frame of the broader modernization program was used by the foreign timber companies to obtain property rights in the commons (see also Măntescu this volume). There were clashes between the foreign companies and the locals who used the forest according to the common law. The internal differentiation of the local society allowed foreign logging companies to exploit the forests for external markets and industry.

the communist regimes came to power, the peasantry from Southeast Europe had more or less the same features as at the end of the 19th century.



The Socialist and Post-Socialist Agrarian Question

The socialist period recovered all these aspects of the agrarian question. But except Greece, which was outside the socialist camp, in the other Southeast European countries the totalitarian essence of the new power violently oversimplified it. The interwar political mobilization to vote was replaced by the class-struggle hate that meant destroying the modest rural interwar differentiation and attempted to level the peasantry. Even in countries like Yugoslavia where the Marxist ideology had fewer grievances, the rural sector was abandoned as compared to a century before (Halpern 1963). The sole clear policy of the socialist governments, at least until the 1960s, was forced industrialization which extracted the demographic surplus from rural areas and headed to the new urban centres. However, as many scholars have outlined, including Jovana Diković in this volume, the new labour force was formed of neither peasants, nor fully industrial workers¹⁸. Worker-peasantry was, in Western Europe, the outcome of the industrialization of Europe in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. The industrialization marked the inclusion of significant parts of the rural population into the industrial sector. This is not the same process as the one which took place in late 18th century in which part of the peasantry was forced to leave its land and find employment in urban manufactories, a process largely analyzed by Marx (1983 [1925]). The worker-peasant whom we talk about here is a peasant who relies on both industrial wage and subsistence agriculture for his livelihood¹⁹.

In the countries of Southeast Europe, the big-scale industrialization process was

started by socialist regimes²⁰. Thus, this social group which appears in Western Europe at the end of the 19th century and early 20th began to rise up in Southeast Europe after World War II within the context of the rapid and forced industrialization (Beck 1976; Cole 1976). The dynamics of the worker-peasant as a social group is different from that of a peasant relying on land farming only or of a purely industrial wage-worker. Usually, in such families one partner would work in industry and the other one in agriculture. The spouse who works in industry is a part-time agricultural worker. Szelenyi and Kostello (1996) present the worker-peasant as a semiskilled industrial worker forced by the communist regime to float between industry and farming. They were those who ensured a market activity during socialism; very often these activities bordered on the illegal. The worker-peasant described by Szelenyi and Kostello was quite low on the social hierarchy. However, other authors present a different image of the worker-peasant, which also included skilled technicians and white-collar workers interested in exploiting the opportunities of rural residences, including the food surplus from gardening (Symes 1993). In Romania, the worker-peasant was rarely interested in market mechanisms since his household relied on farming in the collective farm or, later, on the supplementary plots received for private work and industrial wage (Dorondel 2007; Meurs 2002).

The worker-peasant continued to thrive in postsocialist countries although the heavy industry collapsed (Symes 1993). Decollectivization and the restitution of land to former owners have contributed further to the maintenance of such a hybrid group. In post-socialist countries, having one family member earning an industrial wage and another one working the land is a matter of subsistence in harsh economic times. Part of the wage is invested in different agricultural works, but the worker-peasant's investments are minimal. The labour force is ensured by the members of the household

18) One point should be cleared before going further: worker-peasants do not represent the totality of the peasantry in any Southeast European country. Although we do not have statistics to point out the percentage of worker-peasants within the peasantry we contend that they only represent a slim category.

19) The studies dealing with the worker-peasant in different parts of the globe are too numerous to be included here. This review would exceed the aim of this Introduction. For a comprehensive review, see Cavazzani and Fuller (1982); Cento and Corner (1993); Holmes (1989).

20) We do not want to imply that industrialization was started by the socialist regimes. The socialist regime, though, proceeded to a forced and massive industrialization after the Second World War.

and through work-exchange. Thus, rural ties remain essential for one who wants to be involved in a network of work-exchange (Kanef 2002). The worker-peasant cannot work a too large plot of land. Buying or selling land is not a viable option. Therefore, it makes more sense to a worker-peasant to invest less money for a smaller plot rather than do bigger investments for larger plots, as from the very beginning the agricultural production is meant for household consumption only²¹. He is interested in working a large enough plot to cover the household needs. It is simply a calculus based on the capital the family has to plan for the next harvest and the available labour force.

The fact that rarely, if ever, hires available rural labour force, that usually have a small piece of land whose products are meant primarily for self-consumption, makes the post-socialist worker-peasants to stand as a particular figure in the problem of the agrarian question. They stand between better-off, large landowners and poor, landless people. They do not bring significant capital into agriculture, do not rent the land, in or out and do not use external labour force. Their relative independence from the market (since they do not produce for the market), their indifference to the landless or poor peasants (they do not hire them or rent in their land), their indifference to producing more (thus, not investing in technology and in social divisions of labour) sets them apart from the classical point of view of the agrarian question²².

One final observation before we present the papers which contribute to this volume. Today, the agrarian question also bears a political relevance for countries which are either part of the EU, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, or are negotiating their accession, such as Albania, Serbia or Moldova. The new agrarian policy of the EU, which through its subsidies directed on rather large land owners (Fox 2011), creates a new type of differentiation. This new agrarian differentiation needs further investigation. Until we have such a social and economic

X-ray, we can only speculate on what the new differentiation will look like and how the peasantry will be affected. One thing we can be sure of: the peasantry seems to be an enduring social class.



The contributions to this volume

Before introducing the papers, we would like to discuss the structure of the volume²³. The first set of papers introduces a more general view of the agrarian transformations in Southeast Europe. This part encompasses the works of Giordano, Aronitschli, Cartwright, Zhllima and Rama, and Angelova, having a more historical and political economy-based approach. Although all the papers have a general historical approach which supports particular findings from particular countries, the papers from the second part focuses predominantly on ethnographic fieldwork. The papers of Măntescu, Kuzmanova, Micu, Diković and Cash refer to particular case studies. In this way, the historical and political economy approach is intertwined with the anthropological lens. Frank Uekötter's Afterword is an attempt to open up the view as he puts the localized Southeast European peasantry into a global perspective.

Christian Giordano draws attention to the process of building the nation state and the link with the agrarian reform in Yugoslavia in the interwar period. As he aptly points, the ethnicization of land is absolutely essential for a deeper understanding of the agrarian question in Yugoslavia particularly, and in Southeast Europe more generally. In fact, as Giordano shows, agrarian reforms in Yugoslavia heavily emphasized the ethnic component. This paper shows that the land reform was not implemented to rule out the social and economic disparities and to modernize the country, but rather to transform a territory with a multiethnic component into one single ethnic country. This process started at the beginning of the 20th century, crossed two centuries and has

21) Verdery (2003) and Giordano and Kostova (2013) document the emergence of an entrepreneurial class who rents land from those who either cannot work it or have no interest in doing it. However, worker-peasants have no incentive to rent out their land, which is essential in providing food for the family. We thank Ger Dzijings for drawing our attention to this aspect.

22) See Bernstein (2011) for more about the classical agrarian question and the way the concept can be applied to today's world.

23) We thank to one of the anonymous reviewers of the volume for drawing our attention to this issue.

marked the entire region. This analysis is also important to understand the current situation – the tensions between Turks and Bulgarians in Bulgaria, between Romanians and Roma in Romania, or, even the recent Ukraine crisis proves that ethnicity is still a pivotal matter in Southeast Europe.

The ethnicization of the agrarian question could be seen as a consequence of hurling the traditional SEE societies into the turmoil of social and political modernization. Other such new processes modernization brought about: the social mobilization and access of the peasant economy to the capitalist market. Kaiti Aroni-Tsichli outlines these two latter matters in her contribution. Following the territorial configuration of the Greek state, she also delineates the intricate growth of the agrarian question through the successive land reforms. Thus, if in the first half of the century, after having gained the independence, the goal of the state was to keep the peasants loyal to the royal power - a fact that culminated with the 1871 land reform, - ,after having added Thessaly (1881) and Macedonia (1913), a sharp conflict arose between the chiflik owners and the landless peasants. The state had to cope with the people's demand for a new land reform, and, thus, the big properties were redistributed between 1917 and 1923. This last reform was grounded on the principle of social justice. The analysis of the annexation of Corfu Island in 1864 and that of the currant crisis that occurred in Southern Greece at the end of 19th century illustrate the access of the peasant economy to the capitalist market. In this last case, the state had to intervene to protect the currant cultivators against the unequal exchange of their products on the international markets.

The last three papers of the first part of the volume explore the agrarian question from a political economy perspective in Romania, Hungary and Albania. The macro-level analysis is less sensible to local economic and social changes, but has the advantage of showing the “big picture”. Andrew Cartwright explores the intersec-

tions between land tenure and the state's social security functions in rural Hungary and Romania. The topic is analyzed in the context of the urban-rural migration (but also migration in Western European countries) and the aging of the rural population in postsocialist countries. The land restitution (in Romania) and the voucher system implemented in Hungary made agricultural land a source of social security for rural inhabitants. As Cartwright shows in this chapter, the postsocialist state plays a central role in the post-socialist agrarian question due to its function in establishing agricultural policies. Moreover, the new EU agricultural policies and the global quest for new agricultural lands – and its corollary land-grabbing – sheds new light and show new insights into the agrarian question.

Zhllima and Rama's chapter focuses on the land reform in Albania. This article points out that the distribution of rural assets has decisively influenced the agriculture and people's livelihood in the countryside. Land tenure is, as in the previous paper, a central issue as well. The political economy approach is supported by the historical one: land tenure has suffered tremendous changes from the Ottoman times to the post-socialist years due to the attempts of various political regimes to improve the land tenure of the country. Despite the deep changes of social configurations in the Albanian countryside during these political regimes, the problems that plagued the country remained. This chapter shows that the agrarian question – as discussed at the end of the 19th century by socialist intellectuals – is still relevant today in Southeast Europe.

The land redistribution alone proved to be insufficient to improve the peasants' life standards and to modernize the rural areas. The agrarian policies found paths of further development in the professionalization of both agrarian economy and social intervention into rural life. Milena Angelova illustrates in her article these two axes by approaching Bulgaria's national program of village modernization known as the “model



village”. Although the program took place between 1937 and 1944, its basic ideas date back to the beginning of the 1920s. One group of villages sampled on a national scale was chosen to apply measures of improvement regarding hygiene, public health, the appearance of households and to establish farming schools. The author emphasizes the sources of inspirations for this program, the United States and Germany, as well as the connections with the experts of nearer countries such as Italy, Czechoslovakia and Romania, which had already started similar programs.

The second part of the volume focuses on cases studies. We attempt to follow the way the agrarian policies the central governments implemented in various periods and countries affected the basic units of the rural societies: communes and villages. This kind of approach is based on anthropological fieldwork, but also brings to the foreground the government agrarian policies, and aims to outline the common people’s reaction to these policies, either using them, or rejecting them and even rebelling against the government.

Liviu Măntescu’s chapter focuses on the environmental aspects of the agrarian question. Approaching this issue from the perspective *a la longue durée*, he explores the importance of the forest for agrarian differentiation in a region called Țara Vrancei (The Land of Vrancea), from Moldova (Romania). Whereas for a long time the agrarian question had at its core land-based differentiation, Măntescu shows that, in some particular places, the forest played a central role in agrarian differentiation. The penetration of big foreign logging companies at the end of the 19th century, which bought forests from local peasantry for intensive exploitation, had important economic consequences for the relatively undifferentiated peasantry from Țara Vrancei. In addition to the penetration of the foreign logging companies, which changed the local economy and society, the legislation concerning the access to forest exploitation advanced by

the Romanian state at the beginning of the 20th century created further economic and social differentiation. Moreover, exploring the history of the access to forests from the 20th century up to the post-socialist period, Măntescu shows the persistence of the agrarian question in this region regardless of the political regimes. Agrarian differentiation based on access to forests had important morphological consequences for the natural environment, as Măntescu proves in this paper.

Except for Greece, the communist and totalitarian political regimes came into power in the other SEE countries after the Second World War. Still, despite the fastidious propaganda that claimed the deep separation from the “older” regime, the agrarian question remained. The next chapters in this volume deal with these matters, and also follow the manner in which the legacy of the socialist agrarian question was managed after 1990. In the vein of Milena Angelova’s article, Aneliya Kuzmanova focuses in her paper on another social experiment that took place in the socialist period: the policies of rejuvenation in the half-deserted Bulgarian villages by the beginning of 1980s. Kuzmanova outlines the ways of coping with the overwhelming rural structure of Bulgarian society in the 1950s. Although the socialist policies of industrialization, urbanization and rural outmigration seemed to be successful, they reached their limits in the 1980s. These evolutions are analysed also in the field, in a village located in Southeast Bulgaria, where the authorities set back a “youth republic” in 1982. The official goal was to increase the village population by bringing in migrants who were provided with facilities (houses) and well-paid jobs in the local collective farm by the state. But there were also hidden aims, such as the change of the Bulgarian-Turkish ethnic balance, as well as unintended consequences that the author delineates. The fall of the socialist regime put an end to this experiment. The collective farm disappeared in a few years and, similar to the rest of the coun-

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try, the people had to return to their “rurality” or even into the “rural ghetto”. This epilogue proves the failure of the socialist modernization program of rural society, but also challenges and makes illegitimate the post-1990 neo-liberal policies.

The precarious state of the post-1990 rural areas in SEE resides in the the unsolved matters of agrarian question throughout the socialist decades. This is the argument of Cornel Micu’s paper. Like Kuzmanova, he also depicts the post-1990 rural life in grey colours, but traces back the origins in the long period of rural underdevelopment. The idea of land property, Micu emphasizes, was particularly distorted by the belated rural modernization as this thoroughly differs - even in our days - from the western concept of ownership. Whereas in developed countries land property has a strict juridical meaning, in rural underdeveloped areas land property represents both a “means of subsistence” and a “social connector”. Micu’s research focuses on a village located in the Brăila plain, Southeast Romania, but the field data are framed by the local history, as well as by the modernization history of the region from the mid-19th century until the fall of the socialist regime. The peculiar idea of property as means of subsistence explains that, even in socialist times, the agrarian policies of the government failed to transform the peasants into farmers.

The SEE peasantry changed over the socialist decades, but they did not become farmers, argues Cornel Micu. Jovana Diković makes the same argument in her article, stating in the title itself that Serbian villagers are neither peasants, nor farmers. Due to the discontinuities of the agrarian policies in the entire 20th century, as well as after 2000, the relation state – rural producers has been distorted and filled with distrust from both sides. Here the emphasis is not on underdevelopment and subsistence, as rural people are individuals with strategies and economic calculation, but on the government’s inability to draft reasonable

policies to coordinate and enhance the people’s individual plans. Diković relies also on the anthropological fieldwork she has done in one multicultural village from Vojvodina. The field data are framed by the local history and subsequent agrarian policies of the central governments in the socialist and post-socialist times, but the analysis focuses on the role of the intermediate power holders who have distorted the partnership between the state and local farmers. Thus, even after 2000, despite the effort of the central government to draft sound agrarian policies, the farmers paradoxically move far away from the state and are reluctant towards its policies.

Jennifer Cash’s article suggests that moral economy is part of the agrarian question in the post-socialist Republic of Moldova. Using historical data, she points out the peasants’ poverty under both Romanian and Russian rule (from the end of the 19th century up to the 1940s), the fragmentation of agricultural land and the low productivity of the agriculture. Peasants were rather engaged in self-exploitation, would limit their consumption and were satisfied with substandard housing. Postsocialism and its equal land distribution policy, after de-collectivization, have not helped efficient farming. Drawing on her fieldwork, Cash’s article emphasizes the fact that, despite the continuous poverty in rural areas, people still manage to survive. Moreover, she shows that the agrarian differentiation is hampered by a moral economy which imposes acts of generosity from those who have to those who do not.

As concluding remarks, we put the following question: are there any significant differences between the agrarian issue as it was framed by contemporary analysts (most of them working in extra-European settings) and its Southeast European version? The papers that compose this volume prove two points. The first point is that, despite the changes of the political regimes since the end of 19th century until today, the agrarian question is politically relevant and

theoretically valid. The second point is that the current features of the agrarian question have changed, at least as they manifest themselves in Southeast Europe; nowadays, they are quite different from those presented by the “classics” of the agrarian question, but also by contemporary political economists. Some of the chapters in this volume adopt a historical approach and have, thus, highlighted the resilience of the agrarian question from the 19th century onwards. One cannot understand the postsocialist land reform without looking at the history of land tenure. As in the case of Albania, despite the massive structural changes that took place in land tenure from monarchic times, at the end of the Ottoman rule, up to the neoliberal land reforms from the 1990s, the agrarian question was relevant in order to understand social history. Crossing ages and political regimes, the agrarian question popped up fiercely in the 1990s throughout Southeast Europe.

The second point of the concluding remarks does not contradict the first one. Yes, the agrarian question maintained its validity at the end of the 20th century. It does not mean, though, that there are no differences between the agrarian question as it was perceived and analysed by 19th century political economists and revolutionaries, and the current-day situation. The differences are made by the historical evolution of Southeast Europe, the importance of ethnicity for the new national states emerging in the 19th century in Southeast Europe; in addition, the movements of population from the 20th century had clear and serious repercussions on the formulation of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe. The ethnicization of the land reform was clearly not an issue, either for the “first wave” of political economists interested in this issue, or for the contemporary analysts of the agrarian question. The transformation of the land into a national territory (which reinforced the ethnic ties, but also created bitter ethnic divisions [Kaneff 1998]), marked the agrarian question along the 20th century.

The movements of population, from Turkey to Greece, from Bulgaria to Romania and vice-versa gave the land issue a whole new meaning. Furthermore, the history of the state formation in modern times has deeply imprinted the content of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe.

The national state represents an important factor when analyzing the agrarian question in Southeast Europe. The state, as most of the papers in this volume clearly point out, represents a crucial factor for agrarian differentiation. The successive land reforms and the local elite, themselves representing the state at a local level, decisively marked the agrarian question at the beginning of the 21st century in Southeast Europe by mixing national ideals with agricultural policies. In this regard, the state as a “rational actor” is paradoxical, but it makes complete sense. On the one hand, the state was the main actor in introducing the capitalist mode of production. This was a part of the “modernization from above” model embraced by Southeast European countries from the mid-19th century. The state was the main actor in the process of modernization regardless of the fact that the “state” meant – at the time – only a handful of open-minded elite. It was rational, at the very beginning, to transform the segmented and multilayered peasant population in a homogenous body of citizens to be loyal to the new national states. The land reforms that the state put into practice aimed to obtain this mass of “citizen-peasants”. On the other hand, once the state bureaucracy became to be a sound voice and provide expertise for state policies, the attitude toward the agrarian question changed.

The Bulgarian governmental program of the “Model Village”, a program led by various experts in rural life, suggests the “rational” state attitude toward the agrarian question had undergone a change process. Bodies of experts, agronomists, sociologists, social assistants, hygienists, working in multidisciplinary teams had to improve the rural areas through state programs²⁴. Two



24) For more details on this, see Mușat 2011.

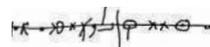
observations have to be made here. First, this kind of “rational” commitment represents much more than the mere increase in the productivity of the agricultural work. It is true that interwar land reforms levelled land distribution, which led, in a first phase, to the decrease of agricultural productivity. Nonetheless, the land reforms had to merge, at least in the eyes of the experts and bureaucrats, with wider social and cultural programs of changing rural life. Secondly, through these complex programs of change, the governments witnessed a kind of trust that the peasant populations were able to self-improve and self-emancipate. That meant the state had ceased to perceive the peasantry as a network of autonomous and self-sufficient communities, as Chayanov depicted them. Different modes of conceiving the peasant “rationality” were intricate in this change of the state’s attitude toward the agrarian question.

In the communist period, the state seemed to have lost the core place in responding to the agrarian question because the Marxist dogma expected the peasantry to disappear. The hazardous planning of economy and social landscape the state experts put in practice in the communist period totally failed. Still, the rural areas have changed after these experiments, and the scholars, social scientists and historians as well, have drafted new concepts that accurately explain these states of facts. The concept of the “worker-peasant”, for instance, has partially replaced the classical image of the peasant, though new frames of approaching the social behaviour of the worker-peasants are yet to be defined.

In present Southeast Europe there are contrastive patterns of conceptualizing the agrarian question. While the rural population is able to differentiate and act as individual actors, in some cases, in others, the rural communities resist as self-sufficient units. However, both perspectives have common features. Firstly, the withdrawal of the state from shaping the agrarian question. Either the state is captured by the cli-

enteles’ networks that intermedate the relation with the reluctant local entrepreneurs, or it simply escapes, leaving the place in the hands of the European Union agrarian policies and foreign entrepreneurs; it is rather obvious that the postsocialist state no longer holds the same position it had in the interwar period. The European Union is now playing a main role in drafting the agrarian policies. Still, the direction and frames of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe are rapidly shifting. New burning issues, which are not discussed here, such as land grabbing (see, for instance, Visser and Spoor 2011), the globalization of food production, the new green technology, such as the construction of inland wind farms (see for instance Măntescu 2012), all have an impact on a future theoretical discussion of the agrarian question in Southeast Europe.

As a final conclusion, the agrarian transformations in Southeast Europe could be considered a particular trajectory of a more general theory of the agrarian transformation. None of the five ways of transition from an agrarian society to a capitalist one as theorized by the classics of the agrarian question would perfectly fit the way Southeast European countries have transformed themselves. The long-lasting peasant mode of production mixed with the capitalist one, the role of ethnicity in agrarian differentiation, the movements of population, and the specific way of state formation, are all features that make the agrarian question in Southeast Europe a particular one.



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