**OPINION**

**about**

**Petya Valentinova Dimitrova`s**

**PhD thesis**

**on the topic**

**"Migration from City to Village: Ethnological Study by Examples from Bulgaria, Slovakia and Belgium"**

**Dissertation for the Award of Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor"**

**by Professional Field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences**

**Scholar advisers:**

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***Short presentation of the PhD student***

Petya Dimitrova received a Bachelor's degree in Book Publishing and Master's degree in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She is a PhD student in the period 2019–2022. She is also an intern at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at Skopje University, RN Macedonia (September 2018 – so far). She also works on the scientific journal "EthnoAnthropoZoom" and its web-site site. Petya Dimitrova is an editor in the publishers BGKNIGA and the Book Factory (March 2014 – so far). In 2018 she participated in the Erasmus+ Programme at the University of Warsaw, Poland. She is the author of a book “To Love the Wild. Mongolia.” A particularly impressive part of the candidate's performance is her experience in mountaineering and wild camping. I would recommend the candidate to replace her autobiography in the generally accepted European pass format during subsequent procedures.

***General information about the dissertation work***

Petya Dimitrova`s dissertation on the topic "Migration from City to Village: Ethnological Research on Examples from Bulgaria, Slovakia and Belgium" was discussed and proposed for the defence of a meeting of the Ethnology Department, Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". It consists of introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendix, a total of 271 pages. The bibliography indicates 138 titles with cited literature in Bulgarian and English. Online resources were also reviewed in the preparation of the dissertation. The applications also include visual materials such as photos.

The 23-page autoreraf meets the dissertation and the requirements. It accurately and clearly presents the structure and content of the dissertation work. The list of publications on the topic of the dissertation includes 3 (1 on English), and thus cover the minimum national requirements under regulations of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

It should also be emphasized that the attached dissertation text and publications have been done independently and there is no data on plagiarism.

***Characteristics and evaluation of PhD thesis***

Petya Dimitrova`s PhD thesis is dedicated to the actual topic in recent years of migration from urban to rural environment. The study focuses on researching and analyzing attitudes (values) and practices that characterize lifestyle migrants in urban and rural environment, as well as changes in identities, daily life and problems they encounter, new consumer and production practices.

In the **Introduction** (pp. 4–18), the Ph.D. student presents the problem of her dissertation by formulating the object, subject, goals and tasks of the research. The dissertation is based on a round of field studies conducted in different countries (Bulgaria, Slovakia and Belgium) and settlements placed in a comparative plan. It would be good to attend a bibliographic review of literature on the topic in Bulgarian science. It is useful for other researchers the fieldwork materials to be archived for their future use and data verification.

**Chapter I.** (pp. 19–73) focuses on methodological and theoretical concepts such as *identity, authenticity, consumption, urbanization, migration* and more. Since the topic of the dissertation is primarily migration, the main focus must be placed on it. In this case, it is a lifestyle movement, associated with improving the quality of life, but, above all, a standard internal movement of the population, albeit with different motivation to do so. Therefore, it is also necessary to have a review of sufficiently rich scientific literature. From this relocation of individuals and groups, changes in economic activities, in everyday culture and in identifications occur.

**The Chapter II** (pp. 73–152) studies the settlers and the rural environment in transition. The author focuses on seven key prerequisites for migration from urban to rural environments: infrastructure, work, consumption, environment, childcare, awareness of the need for life style and seeking authenticity. An important conclusion that the doctoral student makes is that the immigrants seek to combine elements of the urban and from the rural environment, avoiding the negative, which is characteristic of cultural transformations as a result of movements. The observation is presented to create an "individualistic migratory quasi-community of individuals setting their personality in the first place", which defines individualistic and rarely collectivist goals. The author also notes the complex relations between newcomers and locals and the construction of individual spaces of functioning of the two communities due to the clash of a different value system and interests.

**Chapter III** (pp. 153–204) is dedicated to migration from city to village for the purpose of changing the way of life. Three cases have been presented – at the Eco-project "Vegetarium" in Zhelen villagw, the Permacultural Farm "Sekier" in the Zajezka Ecovillage, Slovakia, and of the project "The Winners of Odysseus" in Overijse, Belgium. The construction of settlements, the creation of a new type of ideology, practices and values with ecological focus are discussed. Along with the change of lifestyle and consumer and manufacturing practices, the development of new identities of the migrants is happening. A table, which compared two of the investigated villages – Zhelen and Zajezka, was also applied as a clear evidence.

The main assumptions of the thesis were developed in the **Conclusion** (pp. 205–216). The author focuses on the attracting and repulsive factors of the rural environment to which urban residents are directed. Choosing a place to live, the role of landscape and the refusal of consumer culture has a leading role. Based on her field research, the PhD student is focused on downshift, which has a change in everyday life due to more free time and awareness of the respondents. The author clearly compares the three studied settlements based on the following characteristics: autonomy, interest in common good, identifying with the village, individualism, priorities, professional employment, community construction, lashing, multilocality, attitude towards rural environment, connection with the city and comparing on the profiles.

***Scientific contributions and significance of the development***

As a contribution to the presented dissertation text, I would emphasize on described and analyzed models for lifestyle migration from an urban in rural environments from several different European countries. The stacking of a comparative basis is a really important achievement for the doctoral student and her scientific advisers. As innovative for Bulgarian science, the connection between consumption, primarily consumerism, and resettlement in analyzing internal migration from cities to villages can be noted. The contributions of the term "migration for changing lifestyle" (lifestyle migration) is noted as a contribution, but it needs rethinking because every migration aims to change lifestyle. Lifestyle migration is primarily aimed at improving the quality of life, which also holds a leading place in the studied cases.

***Questions:***

What is the role of foreign influences on migration from the city to the village in Bulgaria and to what extent the movement model is set with the previous emigration/immigration waves in and outside the country?

***Conclusion:***

The dissertation of Petya Dimitrova contains a huge amount of new and personally collected fieldwork materials on the topic of migration from the city to the village from Bulgaria, Slovakia and Austria. The text is indicative during her training, the PhD student has learned to handle scientific literature and different types of sources, has acquired, developed and refined her research knowledge and skills, has gained international research experience with conducting fieldworks abroad and with interlocators in different geographical regions. Petya Valentinova Dimitrova`s PhD thesis on the topic: "Migration from City to Village: Ethnological Research on Examples from Bulgaria, Slovakia and Belgium" is an independent study with indisputable qualities that give me reason to vote in favor of awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

Sofia, June 22, 2022 / Assoc. Dr. Mila Maeva /