Post-rural Revolution

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Haluzík, Radan. *Turbo-venkov: plné krajiny a prázdné domy (nejen) na Balkáně* [Turbo-countryside: Full Countries and Empty Houses (Not Only) in the Balkans]. Prague: Academia 2026, 371 pp., illustrations.

Radan Haluzík produced another masterpiece. After his *Proč jdou chlapi do války* (Why do guys go to war), Haluzík sought an explanation for the omnipresent phenomenon in the southern Balkans: a building boom paid for by hard currency earned in the rich countries of Europe, especially Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. Tito's communist Yugoslavia, aiming for accelerated modernisation, allowed labour migration to the West. Men (and, to a lesser extent, women) became *Gastarbeiter*, gained citizenship in the host countries, but oscillated between poor native countries and the rich West. What happened was a tremendous cultural change. Men returned home with money, which they invested in house construction in their original villages. Instead of fathers' shacks, western-style villas but without permanent inhabitants. Haluzík spoke for years with the carriers of this cultural upheaval and described in detail the quest for modernity, which could be characterised as a kind of rural revolution. He discovered that this trend is not limited to the southern Balkans but to many parts of the rural world. He visited the southern Caucasus, Romania, Mexico, Ukraine, Guatemala, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Ghana, Moldova, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and everywhere he registered a global Turbo-countryside. The whole rural world longs for a modern house with all the gadgets found in places of labour migration. The author of this stunning monograph and graphic wonder (I could not count the colour photographs which adorn practically every second page) managed to produce a persuasive volume.

The book is composed of ten chapters preceded by a prologue. The author writes about the part of the Balkans that has been associated with nationalism

and war. And there he realises that besides these negatives there are processes that „perhaps are more profound, more important, situated in the background, from which everything else is to a great extent derived" (p.11). The style of the first chapter is personal because the author converses with a real person from Kosovo, who struggled from misery to wealth, and compares his chances and dreams with the automatic ambition of someone who is part of a collective family. Two imaginary houses with two different cultural values. Eventually, it appears that one obligatory modernity of socialism breaks up into multiple modernities. These then spread around the world. Anthropological research of Radan Haluzík is a fascinating journey through people's homes and families, allowing the author to enjoy their hospitality and to understand their values and ambitions. At the same time, this research is part and parcel of „anthropocene contexts".

The second chapter analyses the neo-colonial character of communist Yugoslavia, which developed only where the state wanted. The poor rural regions of Yugoslav southwest that did not have the state were exploited until labour migration to the European West brought about development, expressed mainly by house construction, often the same houses built by brothers. That was accelerated by the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and paradoxically, also ethnic wars which accompanied it. Migration to the West was an answer to the inequalities created by unequal development. The Kosovo Albanians struggled into Schengen Europe with feverish speed. Remittance housing has been the reward. And also most migrants became citizens of the host countries. The crisis of the countryside is being resolved by the emancipation of the global periphery. It is not simply globalisation but, more concretely, taking wealth from the rich parts and investing it in the formerly poor parts of the world. The Wallersteinian centre-periphery absolute destiny has, of late, become a dynamic of catching up, at least in the form of consumption.

„Mad years" between guest labour in the West and the wealth of the returnees are the subject of the third chapter. It was the generation of self-made men who left their miserable villages and returned in Benz cars to build villas in the Swiss style high in the mountains of Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and later also Albania. Labour is cheap in the Balkans. But most important is to save as much as possible and bring hard currency „home". That, of course, means suppressing oneself in permanent saving and having no leisure.

Next, the fourth chapter further develops the unique option: to build a splendid turbo-house that represents the whole clan. Building a representative house is the central point of life… and a „climax of global economic and cultural streams" visible in different parts of the world. There is also a paradox between the mimetism of westernisation and nationalism, local identity and tradition. The result is the

turbo-architecture marked by retraditionalism and syncretism. The extreme are castle-like structures or huge hotels. Glocalism can be expressed by a jokingly posed question of mixing snakes with hedgehogs.

Chapter five. Brothers build identical houses next to each other or in a single block composed of three, four, or five identical sections. Chapter six. Turbo-landscape or remittance landscapes. Turbo-folk, turbo-capitalism, turbo-urbanism and eventually turbo-culture. Chapter seven is about the Balkans on steroids, ecstasy and paradise dream made into reality. Chapter eight discusses selfmademanship of the post-rural revolution. There is a pride which characterises it. Turbo-marriages crown it.

In chapter nine, one reads about the political power behind the building boom, which often means ignoring rules and laws and creating an anti-system. Finally, in chapter ten, the author wonders what will become of this post-rural revolution and what the alternative is to the emptiness of houses built not only in the western Balkans but around the world. This countryside, now symbolising amassed wealth but leading to the dilemma of what next.

The book is adorned with dozens of splendid photographic illustrations, three hundred twenty-two notes reflected in hundreds of references to the relevant literature, Czech and English summaries, and a detailed index. The only disadvantage is that this wonderful book has no English, German, or French version yet. That may be another "next…"

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