

STATEMENT**from****Prof. D.Sc. Maya Bedros Keliyan, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the BAS,****Professional field 3. 1. Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Sciences****about****Acquisition of the scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in the professional field 3. 1.****Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Sciences with an Applicant****Associate Professor, Dr. Evgenia Georgieva Krasteva – Blagoeva****1. Significance of the studied problem in scientific and scientific-applied terms**

In the presented dissertation “Nutrition of the Young: Trajectories of Taste” authored by Dr. Evgenia Krasteva – Blagoeva it is studied a fundamental, topical and unexplored problem within the framework of Bulgarian science: that of young nutrition. Already in the title itself, the problem areas she explores are fixed: nutrition, but not at all, but as a culture and consumption of a certain social category – young people. The research interest goes beyond the description of the phenomena and is directed to the analysis and synthesis of their trends, changes, dynamics. The social processes described by her are important for making sense of the socio-cultural changes in today’s Bulgarian society. In this sense, the problem under study is actual, significant and promising. The author highlights, covers and analyzes numerous trends and practices that determine the nutritional model and form the peculiarities of the food taste of young people. They, who are ultimately the object of her research, are the leading group of consumers, whose significance is determined not only by their age characteristics, but also by the fact that they will set the eating patterns in the future. The students she studied belong to the middle strata, which form not only the eating patterns, but also the consumption patterns in postmodern societies, their peculiarities and trends.

The reasoned and skillful structuring of the dissertation, the comprehensive study of food choices, food constellations/profiles and the food landscapes of the respondents outline both the characteristics of the typical taste of the studied students and the social uses of food and related practices (cooking, eating, sharing, posting online, etc.) through their relationship with places –

real and virtual. Both individual dietary choices and collective eating behaviors typical of the group and its social profile are equally represented and studied. What's more, they are part of the significant metrics that set this profile. The author goes beyond the individual characteristics of taste, choice and consumer behavior, she seeks the socio-group characteristics of the food culture and its dynamics in our post-socialist society.

2. Justification of the goals and objectives in the dissertation

The goals and objectives of the dissertation are implicitly set and logically followed in the course of the analysis, as the work is comprehensive, consistent, and the author's theses are clearly and skillfully argued. The nutrition of the young is an intersection of the problematic areas of the anthropology of nutrition, of the studies of the consumer culture of different social categories and groups, as well as of stratification analysis. Following the goals and objectives, Dr. Krasteva-Blagoeva studies not only diverse trends in the eating patterns of young people, which allows her to create a rich empirical database, but also constructs a typology that theoretically makes sense of the observed processes.

3. Correspondence between the chosen methodology and methodology of research and the set goals and objectives of the dissertation

In his dissertation, Dr. Krasteva-Blagoeva uses a variety of research methods that logically follow the goals and objectives she has set for herself. Her work gives me grounds to define her methodology as interdisciplinary and covering the research fields of anthropology, sociology of consumption, sociology of postmodernism, etc. She is extremely well acquainted with the leading authors in these fields, applying their concepts to the specifics of the post-socialist Bulgarian society in order to define the changes in its culture of eating and consumption. The author applies "an innovative mixed methodology combining all possible analytical perspectives, existing and non-existent (so far) approaches to the problem in the literature". Primary data were collected through unstructured food diaries (processed through quantitative – descriptive statistical – and qualitative content analysis), through a short survey and semi-structured interviews, interpreted qualitatively. The applied methodology and methods allow the nutritional practices and the

respondents' taste conditioned by them to be analyzed in full, as "food is presented in its basic ambivalence of a material substance wrapped in a multitude of intangible, i.e. cultural and social shells". Dr. Krasteva-Blagoeva analyzes the collected empirical information correctly, knowing very well and skillfully using sociological methods for quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data. Her research is not representative and does not pretend to be such, but the conclusions she reaches allow us to outline the nutritional patterns of young people, the presence of traditional and global trends in them, generational relationships, innovations of new generations, the influence of older people, socio-cultural changes, etc.

4. Scientific and scientifically applied contributions of the dissertation (description and evaluation), including the presence of an original contribution to science

The following contributions were made in the dissertation:

1. A detailed and in-depth study of an unexplored and fundamental problem for Bulgarian science, related to the outlining of a model of the food taste of young people in its three dimensions – food choices, individual food profiles and food landscapes.

2. Innovative application of a mixed methodology for multifaceted research of the problem: food diaries processed through descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis on the one hand, survey and semi-structured interviews, analyzed qualitatively, on the other.

3. Introduction of new concepts such as food constellations/individual nutritional profiles; Application of a new method: qualitative content analysis of food diaries.

4. Introduction into scientific circulation of a large number of new foreign titles in the anthropology of nutrition and studies of consumer culture.

My assessment is that the contributions described in the Abstract fully correspond to those made in the dissertation.

5. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they are published

The publication activity of the Dr. Krasteva-Blagoeva is impressive. She has published a monograph entitled “Nutrition of the Young: Trajectories of Taste ‘ in 2024 at NBU Publishing House. She has also published 8 articles, one of which is co-authored in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review or in edited collective volumes, as well as two studies in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review or in edited collective volumes.

6. Citations from other authors, reviews in the scientific press, etc.

The publications of the author, as well as her ideas and analyses are well known and cited by representatives of the academic community: in refereed and indexed sources in world-famous databases, 3 of her publications are cited; in monographs and scientific volumes with scientific peer review – 5 publications and respectively in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review – one publication.

7. Opinions, recommendations and notes

The notes I have to the dissertation are in the nature of recommendations that could possibly be useful for the future work of the author. In a number of places in the text, such as on pages 16, 17 and elsewhere, the peculiarities of the food tastes and preferences of the Y or Z generations, as well as the percentage of vegetarians among them, are indicated. It is necessary to specify the sources on the basis of which such generalizations are built, as well as to which societies they refer – to the Bulgarian or to other countries, for which socio-professional groups of these generations they are valid? A future comparative analysis between the nutritional patterns of young people in Bulgaria and in other societies would be a good continuation and building on what has been achieved in the text of the dissertation.

8. Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative assessment of the dissertation

All that has been said so far leads me to the conclusion about the significance of this dissertation and therefore I will vote positively for the award of the scientific degree of “Doctor of Science” in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences of Associate Professor Dr. Evgenia Georgieva Krasteva-Blagoeva, and I recommend the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury to make such a decision.

Sofia

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Prof. D.Sc. Maya Keliyan