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**Cross to Star to Fist: Prospects for Emancipatory Turn in Contemporary Rural Croatia**

In Croatia, as in most post-Yugoslav countries, rural areas are often portrayed as harbors of conservative and backward tendencies. The countryside is often perceived as highly patriarchal and homophobic, leaning toward rightwing politics and utterly loyal to the values promoted by the Catholic Church. Recent election results, indeed, show that rural areas in Croatia tend to support conservative and right-leaning political options above average. At the same time, rural areas have been largely disregarded by the progressive part of the civil sector: Croatian NGOs rarely plan activities to raise awareness on issues related to emancipatory politics and policies beyond cities and bigger towns.

In this paper, we examine two political options which directly target citizens of rural areas in Croatia. One is promoted by the current EP member Marijana Petir, a Catholic hardliner who was in 2011 elected ‘homophobe of the decade’ by LGBTIQ community. As one of the rare politicians thoroughly acquainted with rural issues, her informed messages in support of ‘peasant rights’ come wrapped in undoubtedly rightwing discourse. Another example is Croatian Peasant Party, whose president and MP Krešo Beljak has recently started promoting new political direction for this formerly centrist-conservative party, which could be labeled left-leaning. He supports antifascist stances, he is against conscientious objections to abortion in public hospitals, and believes catechism should not be taught in schools.

We also present a third strand of political ideas concerned with rural areas, one inspired by transnational agrarian movements such as Vía Campesina and articulated by various actors dispersed across the Croatian civil sector. We conclude by examining current political potential for establishing ‘horizontal peasant solidarity’ in Croatia and the wider region in light of recent ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.