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Contemporary Research Interests of Rural Sociology in Poland

Studies on rural sociology have a rich tradition in Poland. Sociological institutions search for new paradigms of rural development being at the same time strongly connected with the tradition and the heritage of intellectual predictors in this field. There are many research centres working in this field in contemporary Poland. From among them a few deserve special attention.

The Institute for Rural and Agricultural Development at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, was established in 1971. The Institute has an interdisciplinary character. The research conducted by the Institute is of an economic, ethnographic, sociological and demographic orientation. The focus is to achieve an integral reflection on changing economic and social situations in the country. There are 42 persons employed there.

Since 1991 the structure of the Institute consists of: Department of Agricultural Economics and Agrarian Policy, Department of Cultural Problems in Rural Areas, Division for Research on Territorial Development, Settlement and Infrastructure in the Rural Areas, Division for Population Studies, Division for Documentation, Information Handling and Popularization of Research Findings, Division for Sociology of Education and Research on Rural Youth.

The Institute publishes a series 'Problemy Rozwoju Wsi i Rolnictwa' ('Problems of Rural and Agricultural Development') and the quarterly review 'Wieś i Rolnictwo' ('Countryside and Agriculture'). Both of them have been edited since 1973. Up to 1994 85 editions of the quarterly have appeared. The Institute has also published 76 books.

The Institute's research programme relates to cultural and socio-economic factors conditioning rural and agricultural development, universal and specific traits of that development on a regional, domestic and international scale, its main mechanisms and dilemmas as premises for the formulation of alternative strategies of development. There is also research conducted into problems of social security in the process of system transformation,

and in the role of different institutions and self-government of the agricultural population in Poland which, now, is in the process of integration with the European Community. Already work has finished on creating an infrastructural atlas of Poland's rural areas.

The Institute broadly cooperates with scientific units abroad, participating in international researches.

All conducted research has a common goal, that is, to find and explain the proper strategy for rural development and to define its position in the process of economic and political system transformation in Poland.

The second scientific centre strongly connected with rural sociology development and cooperating with Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development is the Department of Sociology at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. The section of sociology being since 1976 a part of the Institute of Social Sciences at NCU, was renamed in 1984 the Department of Sociology (Katedra Socjologii) and in this way became an independent unit of the Faculty of Humanities.

A two-years Post-Graduate Programme in rural sociology began in 1982. Prof. Andrzej Kaleta was its first director. Since then, rural sociology became one of the important social science sections in Toruń. The two years post-graduate course in rural sociology prepares community leaders, teachers and administration officers etc. During the studies participants have the possibility to take courses also on such subjects as agricultural innovations, sociotechnics of the propagation of agricultural innovations and environmental protection.

The graduate studies programme of sociology was opened in 1989. It takes five years of study to complete a M.A. programme. Students are required to study English for three years. Currently, the main focus among the faculty includes: sociology of youth and education, rural sociology in Eastern and Central Europe, social consequences of unemployment.

The rural sociology course includes sociology of countryside and agriculture, methods of sociological research in rustical milieux, rural settlements, agrarian and rural policy, countryside and agriculture in the USA and rural communities of Western Europe.

Many publications have appeared since the department was established, in Polish as well as in German and English. The review published in English *Eastern European Countryside* has already had its promotion issue. Until now five volumes have been published of the 1991 established book series 'Rural Sociology in Europe'.

There is a very close cooperation between the department and scientific institutions abroad, what in practise gives wide possibilities to exchange and enrich experience of students and staff from those countries.

From among other centres playing an important role in development of rural sociology in Poland we should mention:

1) the Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, where the main focus of research is transformation of family farming, village communities in the perspective of local development;

2) Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Rolnego (SGGW) in Warsaw (Agricultural University), where research conducted concentrates on problems of social and moral functions of science (on the base of Władysław Grabski's system of rural sociology), agrarism — 'metapeasantry', countryside dialects, energy as a social phenomenon, informative codes in media and perception of transmitted contents in rural areas, social, cultural and political determinants of the agricultural market. The Institute continues the edition of *Roczniki Socjologii Wsi* (*Annals of Rural Sociology*) — as the first in Europe rural sociology magazine, introduced by Władysław Grabski in 1936 in SGGW;

3) Department of Rural and Urban Sociology at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin with two main focuses of research and scientific work there. First is historical determination of social phenomenon (Józef Styk's work on evolution of peasants' value system) and second — social characteristic of the Polish village and directions of its transformation. Other analyzed problems are those connected with the heritage understood in terms of tradition, folk culture, 'time' and 'space' interpretations, socio-historical analyses of economic system and strata system in Polish village in XVI and XVII century, creating social consciousness of peasants, evolution of peasants' ethos, suicide in the countryside, axiological problems of urban population with village origin;

4) Department of Rural and Urban Sociology at Łódź University. Its research programme relates to changes in the social structure in countryside, problems of local communities, social planning and public relations.

The Polish tradition of interest in rural sociology continues and this seems to promise that more and more institution will become involved in research in this field. Main interests of the researchers in this field is the changing social organization in the countryside, mechanisms of social identification, changing status of individuals, families, households, work and religion in village life, reasons and mechanisms of this phenomenon.

The main ambition is describing, understanding and explaining dynamic processes of changing social structures in the countryside, involving such social phenomenon as culture, market and democracy.