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XXII European Congress of Rural Sociology – Wageningen 2007

The XXII European Congress of Rural Sociology took place in Wageningen in Holland (20–24 August 2007). The debate concerned new issues and challenges now facing Europe's rural areas. It is worth recalling the exact title of the congress: "*New Questions and Challenges for Rural Europe: Mobilities, Vulnerabilities and Sustainabilities*" in order to underline that the discussion essentially concerned three issues. Firstly, various processes which are as it were responsible for the changes observed and experienced by the population living in rural areas. Secondly, their negative consequences, the growing phenomena of the devastation of the natural and social environment, or the marginalisation and exclusion of the above-mentioned population. And thirdly, various factors which initiate or are at least capable of initiating processes which translate into phenomena of permanent and sustained development of society and of rural areas in particular.

As usual, the four-day congress centred around two types of activities. Three days were devoted to debates in four plenary sessions and 22 working groups. Further to the tradition of European and world rural sociology congresses, one day was devoted to field trips during which the participants could observe the implementation of various rural development programmes in Holland.

The four plenary sessions concentrated on three essential types of problems incorporated in the title of the congress. However, before referring to the essential theses incorporated in the papers presented by the speakers during the plenary sessions, I would like to say a few words about the way they were organised. The first paper was delivered during the opening session. The speaker, Terry Marsden (Great Britain) concentrated on analysing the exact title of the congress, pointing to the necessity of incorporating two development strategies of rural areas. In his opinion, it is on the one hand a question of a "top-down" approach and on the other, "bottom-up". A professional link

between these strategies allows reconciliation of the regulatory approach on the one hand and the initiative and social energy on the other. The economic, ecological and social aspects of development are also essential.

That introductory paper was in fact an invitation to three debates taking place during three successive plenary sessions, each of which included two papers the purpose of which was to outline the centre line of conflict and the area of confrontation. In the first plenary session devoted to "mobilities" papers were presented by John Urry (Great Britain) and Alessandro Bonnano (USA). John Urry concentrated on the significance of global warming as a significant natural and social factor outlining global change. Whereas Alessandro Bonnano saw capital mobility and consequently changes in organising space and time as being the most significant factors defining the dynamics of change in the modern world. Only one paper presented during the second session was devoted to the issue of "vulnerabilities". Susan Baker (Great Britain) was unable to attend the congress due to ill health. That is why the participants only listened to the paper presented by Arthur Mol (Holland) who discussed the issue of biofuel and the influence of the development of that sector of the economy on changes in rural areas. There were two presentations during the third plenary session devoted to "sustainabilities". Philip McMichael (USA) concentrated mainly on the issue of an appropriate debate on the changes in the world system of production and food distribution in the 20th century. Whereas Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (Holland) concentrated on discussing various phenomena of domination and resistance which exist in the dynamically changing social relations in rural areas and in the field of agriculture.

The fourth and final plenary session was of a rather different nature. It was led by John Bryden (Great Britain) and was organised as a round-table discussion with the participation of several representatives from the European Commission as well as farmers' organisations and NGOs in rural areas. The discussion centred mainly on factors which should guarantee the implementation of durable development mechanisms in rural Europe.

A separate course in the debate was the presentation of papers and discussions within the above mentioned 22 working groups. It is impossible to convey their wealth in such a short report so that is why I shall limit myself to a few remarks. During the deliberations over 250 papers were presented in working groups. Their theme concentrated on various issues. However, it is worth mentioning some of the main issues concerning the multifunctional development of rural areas and agriculture, marginalisation and exclusion, the issue of governance, the role and significance of knowledge, the relationship

between nature and the social construction of rural reality, the subjection of rural communities, local food products, current and future policy towards farming and rural areas in the European Union. During the congress there was also a mini-conference organised by the Agricultural Research Committee of the International Sociological Association, about the dynamics of the world system of food production and distribution and resulting changes in rural areas.

The congress was attended by over 400 people from all the European countries as well as USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and South Korea. Elections took place for a new leadership of the European Society for Rural Sociology. Professor Jo Little from Exeter University in England became its new president.



The author, Walter, was born in 1919 in the village of ... The author was a ... member of the ... department ... (1951-1961) ... (1961-1967) ... and ... and ... of the ... year.

In 1959 ... the ... and ... both ... the ... and ... the ...

... who worked as an office clerk in ... She was ... when ... the ... with her ... They found ... in 1940 ... in ... in 1941 ... in 1942 ... in 1943 ... in 1944 ... in 1945 ... in 1946 ... in 1947 ... in 1948 ... in 1949 ... in 1950 ... in 1951 ... in 1952 ... in 1953 ... in 1954 ... in 1955 ... in 1956 ... in 1957 ... in 1958 ... in 1959 ... in 1960 ... in 1961 ... in 1962 ... in 1963 ... in 1964 ... in 1965 ... in 1966 ... in 1967 ... in 1968 ... in 1969 ... in 1970 ... in 1971 ... in 1972 ... in 1973 ... in 1974 ... in 1975 ... in 1976 ... in 1977 ... in 1978 ... in 1979 ... in 1980 ... in 1981 ... in 1982 ... in 1983 ... in 1984 ... in 1985 ... in 1986 ... in 1987 ... in 1988 ... in 1989 ... in 1990 ... in 1991 ... in 1992 ... in 1993 ... in 1994 ... in 1995 ... in 1996 ... in 1997 ... in 1998 ... in 1999 ... in 2000 ... in 2001 ... in 2002 ... in 2003 ... in 2004 ... in 2005 ... in 2006 ... in 2007 ... in 2008 ... in 2009 ... in 2010 ... in 2011 ... in 2012 ... in 2013 ... in 2014 ... in 2015 ... in 2016 ... in 2017 ... in 2018 ... in 2019 ... in 2020 ... in 2021 ... in 2022 ... in 2023 ... in 2024 ... in 2025 ...