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## THE POLISH VILLAGE IN LIGHT OF ETHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

### Introduction

It is rather surprising that for a long time sociology and ethnology have not taken any account of the notion of "village". Hopefully, the situation will change when an encyclopedia of sociology, currently in preparation, is published.

It is true that the village has not been well accounted for in general theories. Pushed to the margin of sociological systems, the village, as an object of research, has never been given due credit. This is admitted by eminent scholars, for example Professor Jan Szczepański. Although there are many different research centres, groups of talented researchers, extensive bibliographies and a range of ethnological and sociological journals, such as "Etnografia Polski", "Lud", "Literatura Ludowa", "Wieś i Rolnictwo", "Roczniki Socjologii Wsi", "Regiony", "Sycyna" and "Pamiętnikarstwo Polskie", there are no works that would synthesize the transformations of the Polish village of the 19th and 20th centuries (Szczepański, 1994).

Furthermore, new phenomena occurring in the Polish village cannot be described by existing theories. The change of the ideological system, in Szczepański's opinion, undermined the explanatory power of modernization theory, the validity of the stratification theory of rural communities and social organization theory, based on the functioning of primary groups.

The lack of an adequate language of modern sociology to describe problems and phenomena occurring in Poland is the reason for the collapse of the social function of science which has always been to guide to social life in the Polish tradition. What are the reasons for this?

Let us go back to the beginnings of sociological theories voiced in the Enlightenment. The thinkers of the 18th century, united in the struggle to overcome ignorance and superstitions, influenced the formation of a new attitude towards the world. The village, seen from this perspective which has been partly cherished till the present times, could only be seen as an oasis of

old-fashioned times, which had to be enlightened with the “torch of learning”. It is claimed by Jerzy Szacki that the philosophy of the Enlightenment was superior in many respects to many later sociological systems of the 19th century which developed under different historical conditions. From its beginnings, sociology was interested in the investigation of problems of the society after the industrial revolution. Therefore, the main research and theoretical trends of sociology were focused on the historical changeability of societies and on discovering differences between the old feudal (state) society, and the new capitalist (class) society (Szacki, 1983, p. 149).

The theory of evolution and progress was only marginally interested in the agrarian segment of the old social order and, consequently, minimized the importance of the village and its inhabitants in the new order of the industrial society.

### **Village — the Object of Scholarly Reflection**

The genesis of village as the common form of settlement can be found in archaeology. “Villages” — large settlements, were common in the “wooden plough” culture at the end of the Neolithic Period. Habitation on a given area and joint farming helped form first organizational forms called communities of neighbours or rural communities. The first written sources from the middle of the 10th century provide information on the history of the village (inventories of bishops’ and monastic property).

One also finds information about villages in the written sources from late Middle Ages — information about the layout of villages and organization of internal life. These sources, particularly foundation charters based on the German law from the middle of the 13th to the middle of the 15th centuries, provide information on the stratification of rural population, its differentiation, economic structure and the socio-legal situation of peasants in villages owned by landed aristocracy. Reflections on the village against the background of a wider interest in disappearing cultures, including the peasant culture, can be found in Renaissance historiography, journalism, agrarian literature and belles-lettres.

The village, as a subject of systematic studies, is connected with the period in which modern national awareness was formed, particularly at the turn of the 18th century. The phase of a conscious search for sources to learn about the history of peasants and the village is connected with the collapse of the feudal system, the beginnings of capitalism and the commencement of deeper studies on society.

Reflections on the village as a local community is related in sociology to the crisis of primary groups based on personal relations and cooperation, threatened by processes of industrialization and urbanization as capitalism was developing.

Reference to such features as a union of common life, blood ties, self-sufficiency and a limited size of primary groups, which C. H. Cooley called the “guardians of human nature”, justify the move to earlier classical sources. The sociological thought originated by Plato and Aristotle with a reflection on the features of Greek *polis*, applied it to the description of local communities. In this description three constituent elements appeared: a) territory, b) social interaction, and c) a permanent bond.

“Isolation of consciousness”, characteristic of traditional villages in Poland, was first overcome when the socio-economic situation of peasants changed. Paradoxically, however, for a long time this had an inhibiting effect on the perception of patterns of urban culture and the effectiveness of its influence. “A peasant woman”, Barbara Olszewska-Dyoniziak wrote, “who before the war used to go everyday to town with milk and had a direct contact with urban life, respected her rusticity and did not imitate her customers, either as regards their clothes or interior design or behaviour. Today the same woman tries her best to be like the ladies of the town” (Olszewska-Dyoniziak, 1994, p. 153) and obscures her identity.

Investigations of villages in the first half of the 19th century focused on the search for separateness and cultural archaisms which were treated as a source for the “reconstruction of the most remote history” and at the beginnings of national culture.

The first ethnological programs which aimed to investigate the Polish village were authored by Hugo Kołłątaj and implemented by the Warsaw Learned Society established in 1800. The results of these investigations were presented to posterity as the “true testimony of the conditions in which Poland found itself after annexations and provided arguments against slanders voiced by strangers”. The project was carried on by Łukasz Gołębiowski’s synthesis entitled *Lud polski, jego zwyczaje i zabobony* [The Polish people, its customs and superstitions]. Apart from ethnographic monographs the first descriptions of the conditions of farming and economic relations in the villages caused by the growing interest in social questions were published.

The turn of the 19th century brought a shift of interest in villages from ethnographic studies of “ancient Slavonic elements” to studies of contemporary transformations. Scholars attempted analyses of situations in specific villages and regions with reference to natural conditions, social structure, forms of economic organization, including cooperatives, and the influence of emigration on the life of rural communities. Investigations of rural communities had to take account of many problems created by the relations between villages and towns, industrial societies and rural, farming structures.

Rural sociology of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, unlike in industrialized countries of Western Europe, mainly pertained to problems of the peasant question in the context of national and class identity. National

elements were seen in the functioning of rural communities against the background of factors that conditioned the life of their inhabitants.

Postulates of scientific analysis based on the “true objective description” broadened the research of villages in which, even in the 19th century, socially important problems of peasant life were neglected and research focused on searching for cultural “relicts of the past”. Proposals to investigate cultural institutions, conflicts and transformations of rural communities were put forward.

The famous polemics from the beginning of the 20th century evoked by Ludwik Krzywicki's book *Kwestia rolna* [The agrarian question] moved the interest in the village and peasants to the agrarian programme. The village was perceived as a remnant of the feudal system against the background of industrial “modern tendencies”. The relation between villages and towns, which shaped the research approach in sociology for the entire 20th century, appeared in discussions of the above mentioned book published in 1906.

“The old village is disintegrating, slowly but inevitably. But before it has disintegrated its ideals will decay, belief in its ideals and the lore of forefathers will be lost and it will be filled with the spirit of urban culture”. This prognosis of village evolution contained in *Kwestia rolna* [The agrarian question], and most of the other views of the book's author, was challenged by Władysław Grabski who opposed Ludwik Krzywicki's arguments on transformations of the village and agriculture towards collectivism by showing that peasant farms proved to be economically stronger than granges (Grabski, 1903).

Władysław Grabski strongly opposed the prognosis of the “end of peasants” and in competition saw their “power of economic individualism”. He wrote that “peasants do not feel like stepping out of the world stage”. Grabski opposed the views born out of prejudices against and contempt for the village. He noticed this in formulations which described the peasants as a lower category of people with such expressions as “creatures dominated by the soil”, “hard skulls”, “submissive to tradition”, “uneducated and superstitious”.

The objections raised to the one-sidedness of the formulations of *Kwestia rolna* [The agrarian question] returned in the 1990s. Authors contested the dominant patterns of research on villages, primarily because of doctrinal restrictions and the paradigm of modernization derived from the option to industrialize and urbanize the country.

Identification of village as the subject of research created a new type of sociological and ethnological reflection. First ethnographic and sociographic investigations aimed to describe the village, farms, living conditions, local culture – the remnants and relics of the feudal system. The postulates to thoroughly investigate the most numerous stratum of the nation were strengthened by the institutionalization of the sociology of village and ethnology, which became possible in Poland in the interwar period.

During the Second Polish Republic investigations of rural societies became the canon of sociology of the village and were treated as a separate discipline. The investigations focused on the spatial organization of social ties and the specific pattern of life and work of the rural population – mainly in agriculture within the framework of postfeudal social structures.

In Ludwik Krzywicki's, Władysław Grabski's and Franciszek Bujak's studies one could find results of the observation of social processes in the village of the interwar period. In the new theoretical and methodological orientations advocated by their creators – Stefan Czarnowski, Florian Znaniecki, Józef Chałasiński, and Stanisław Bystron, the village became the object of systematic empirical expansion and theoretical reflection. Its classic representative, Jan S. Bystron, a professor of ethnography, ethnology and sociology, used field data collected in villages, and ordered it according to specific social groups and categories. He popularized the notion of folk culture as direct oral transmission. His achievements are known for the extent and comprehensiveness of interests, influenced by the French sociological and ethnological school – from analyses of ideology, customs, magic, folk literature to analyses of authority in a given rural culture and ethnic groups.

In the interwar period a number of monographic studies of villages were written primarily by ethnographers. Bujak's directive, on the necessity to present a complete picture of the economic and social life of the village (treated as the smallest settlement and administrative unit), was followed in many monographs. Their authors had their roots in the sight-seeing and ethnographic movement of scholarly centres. Monographs modelling Franciszek Bujak's paradigm pertain to a wide range of problems typical of villages, often treated superficially, with only a scarce review of social issues. Sociological monographs, for example a monograph by Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki *Żmiąca w pół wieku później* [*Żmiąca half a century later*], published in 1963, using typically sociological tools – observation, interview, questionnaire – focused on the relations between rural life and changes in the macrostructures of global society.

Scholarly reflection on the village revealed two main ways of interpretation: formal and substantial. The former approach tended to look for features of the village as a fragment of a greater whole or a segment of reality. In such cases the village was most frequently treated as an area of investigations, an example of a microcosm which offered the option to trace more general regularities and many phenomena of social reality caused by universal processes. The latter approach assumed the existence of the village as a concrete reality in itself and, at the same time, a separate and unique object of research. The latter approach, closer to anthropological paradigms, treated the village as a "living whole". In the case of monographic investigations, in which the village was treated as isolated complex of phenomena, there often was no interpretations drawing from broader comparative materials.

When sociologists and ethnologists were describing villages, they saw this as a possibility to observe different manifestations of social reality — economic, demographic, social, and cultural. The village was more rarely the object of research in itself, as a community. Such questions as what was a rural community, what ties made it up and what changes it underwent were asked very infrequently.

The model of the traditional village formed a constant point of reference in investigations of socio-cultural transformation, induced by processes of urbanization and industrialization. Integral investigations of villages, involving historians, ethnographers, sociologists, geographers, agricultural economists, statisticians, lawyers and others, were postulated as a model to investigate the complete process of transformations. This found expression in the investigations of processes of village urbanization — changes in the occupational structure, migrations, adoption or urban ways of life, the so-called “modernization” of the economy according to the assumptions of socialist doctrine and the popularization of new needs and aspirations.

The assumptions about the need to restructure the socio-ideological system of agriculture and remove basic differences between towns and villages formed research models that were used to investigate villages in Poland till the turn of 1980s. As most of the studies were empirical, and the theoretical and methodological achievements in People’s Poland were weaker, research problems of rural areas accumulated and led to a crisis of disciplines that dealt with the village.

Manifestations of the crisis of sociology of village were seen both in the United States and in Europe. Attempts to overcome the crisis addressed basic questions — the definition of village, determination of its place in society, state and global structures. As possibilities of investigating rural communities in accordance with concepts of modernization, industrialization and urbanization were limited, new models and research paradigms were being looked for.

A new research paradigm of the village treated it as a complex social phenomenon, a socio-cultural whole, at the same time a phenomenon with a long history, older than that of the town, and with an unspecified future. Investigations employing this paradigm are a task that social sciences investigating European cultures has to face. Epistemologically, this requires determining the relation to assumptions of the agrarian ideology and universal values of peasant ideology. Methodologically, this requires balancing standardized procedures and statistical methods of analysis through methods of participatory observation, “understanding” sociology with more emphasis on social wholes (Wieruszewska, 1991).

The concept of investigations of villages which promoted the so-called integrated development resulted from the reaction to the crisis of rural areas caused by various threats. The break of ties in the mid-reach structures as

important links between macro- and microstructure, symptoms of anomaly, demographic destruction (depopulation of villages), disappearance of farms, unemployment, loss of cultural identity and social subjectivity of villages created new problems which required new concepts. This could not be done through scientific disciplines which lost their sensitivity to social wholes. The village can be an abundant source of arguments to deconstruct myths and stereotypes which have troubled the minds of scholars and politicians.

The lack of understanding of rural problems had its roots in the dominant forms of scientific study, political doctrine, and general developments that created tensions between the technocratic and humanistic visions of society, and between civilization and culture. An analytical-logical model which dominated European science neglected those spheres of reality which, being metaphysical, did not fit the canon of the positivist ideal of knowledge. The questions about the essence, values, about what are natural social wholes, including the village, were to the side of the main canon of science. Scholars, accustomed to theories derived from the circle of their own culture, faced an awkward situation when they tried to learn about a new cultural context. The village was most often an example of perception from an external perspective, through the glasses of another aesthetic, and this introduced the related problem of cultural relativism. Reference through archetypes and symbols to primary mental structures in modern humanistic studies were more favourable to a deepening knowledge of the village as a socio-cultural whole (Wieruszewska, 1991).

These trends of modern culture harmonized with the experiences of peasant culture. The longing for the search for the lost sense, moral certainty, social bonds based on community which became typical of western societies, "tired" with industrialism, has prompted a rethinking of the issue of the villages as local communities. Such attempts were undertaken in many countries. Village revival movements in Western Europe, "rusticity" as a category organizing thinking about the future of Europe, and the results of the latest investigations of villages in the process of changes in the socio-economic order of countries in Central and Eastern Europe were new attempts to look at the whole of cultural processes of the village at the end of the 20th century.

In each country investigations of villages are the result of specific problems of another social reality. At the same time, as was pointed out by Bogusław Gałęski, the sociology of the village is universal inasmuch as its interest in the system of rural life — farming and farming family and rural community — have their empirical foundations all over the world (Gałęski, 1970, p. 37).

### **Village in the Transformation Process — New Questions**

In an article entitled *The horizons of investigations of village culture* ("Roczniki Socjologii Wsi" vol. 20, 1983) I advanced a thesis that the

dramatically disappearing trend to research cultural transformations in villages between 1975-1980 was the result of weakened theoretical significance of dominant research concepts. Because of the one-sided viewpoint on village development, there were more investigations of standardizing mechanisms, mechanisms which made villages alike all over Poland and fewer investigations of factors that differentiated villages on the local and regional scale.

I wrote then that because of the realia of modern times the problem of the cultural identity of villages should be considered most important for their further development. On the one hand, we were facing the dilemma of cultural diversity and, on the other, the universality of science and technology. On the one hand, we wanted to unify and on the other we wanted to create diversity. I have the impression that new tendencies in science, in which the development of technology and modernization, understood as the derivative of urbanization and industrialization that does not take into account the rights of local communities with respect to biology and ecology, can create conditions for a dialogue between modernization of agriculture and peasants, between technological progress and human needs. There is an urgent need to develop a strategy for the development of Polish villages on the basis of a better understanding of the potential of rural communities and their needs. This, however, requires that the research be geared to specific problems, that theoretical problems (for example, is there a conflict between the feeling of identity and strong local and/or regional belonging and cultural assimilation on a wider scale) be solved.

I think that we should remember the advice given by Professor Jan Szczepański which should help to create this model of village development, namely "It is important for reformers and revolutionaries that through understanding of what is permanent and invariable in the social substance which they want to remodel, they provide grounds for the rationality of their action, proper respect for possible effects and that they inspire hopes that are up to their measures" (Szczepański, 1972, p. 35).

The recent diagnoses indicating the weakening of the developmental potential of villages forced a change of the viewpoint on village matters in Polish society and among the rural population which must have an understanding for problems of its own development. This is also a problem of cultural identity understood as the feeling of identification with the values and symbols of culture.

The basic structure of the village, in its constituent elements, retains permanence and continuity. A family, an individual farm, neighbours, relatives, informal and local groups, organizations and institutions form a network of relations that have sustained the essence of the community till the present time.

The discussions accompanying the formulation of programs for the development of villages and agriculture considered mainly two criteria:

production and the economy and the socio-political dimension. The stress put on economic effects (instrumental), reduced the treatment of village to the function of a food producer and the stress put on problems of ownership in agriculture practically obscured the sense of villages and agriculture understood as a whole of mutually related aims and functions in the aspects of economy and national culture. Hence, in the situation in which the conditions of the country's existence required basic and necessary reforms, it became very important and urgent to define the strategy of a favourable development of villages and agriculture. I think that peasants, if they manage to survive, should become assets to the future development of villages.

Meanwhile, peasants, the oldest and native inhabitants of villages, are becoming the bone of contention, the main object and social problem of transformation. In many press polemics a view that peasants are the deadwood of transformation, a product of the socialist system, a barrier to democracy in villages, an antithesis of civic society, is becoming dominant. A humanist, an ethnologist must take a stand in this polemics. We must give credit to the results of investigations conducted from the perspective of ethnological horizons. For example, Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska defended the peasant ethos, which, in her opinion, is not an obstacle to the modernization of Poland. It results from the investigations conducted by the Institute of Village and Agriculture Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences that the "attitude of entrepreneurship is being shaped in villages and on farms. Its presence is connected with the family tradition to work on one's own farm". The author pointed out that "neither the traditional peasant culture nor the ethos of work specific to farmers and the feeling of one's own worth were the obstacle to capitalism and market economy in deeply rural Scandinavian countries" (Fedyszak-Radziejowska, 1995, p. 15).

This opinion is supported by my article entitled *Współcześni chłopi w perspektywie etnologicznej* [Contemporary peasants from the ethnological perspective] (Wieruszewska, 1994, p. 158ff) in which I answered the questions asked during a panel discussion organized by the Polish Sociological Society. These questions addressed such issues as:

- consequences of 45 years of communist rule after the Second World War for the position of peasants in the social structure;
- consequences of a complete transition to market economy for contemporary Polish peasants;
- position of peasants in the future structure of Polish society which, in my opinion, being significant, will not determine their number but their importance to culture.

Turning points reveal the truth that description, explanation and understanding of the phenomena of new reality require an increased intellectual effort. Furthermore, pre-set strategies of investigations must be surpassed. Scholars,

who attempt this task, must be bold and must take the risk comparable to that of pioneers. Professor Jan Szczepański, the author of an essay entitled *O indywidualności chłopów polskich* [About the individuality of Polish peasants], showed that the social sciences do not know much about the rural reality. He stated that the language of modern sociology is not adequate to the problems and phenomena occurring in Poland. A question arises: how can the reality of village, today very changeable, obscure, burdened with stereotypes, and subjected to the pressure of new trends – the market economy and democratic society – find its place in this “hybridization process”. Looking for contact planes between Western Europe, liberal and secularized, and Poland, Catholic, with a peasant cultural heritage, becomes a problem. For the practice of social and economic life it is important to work out favourable relations between the defence of the interests of villages and agriculture and rules of market economy to become a part of wider, European economic structures (Wieruszewska, 1992).

Treating culture as a sphere endowed with a specific autonomy, as a foundation of the philosophy of life, we can suppose that the logic of the oncoming changes is getting more and more convergent with the foundation of peasant culture. If we perceive the sense of oncoming changes as the need for a more balanced approach to development according to the criterion of economic effectiveness, ecological health and value of survival, it will be easier to see village and agriculture as an example of a system that reproduces itself according to judicious economic rules.

Ethnology, being sensitive to the overall vision of human life, is capable of noticing what sometimes is neglected by other scientific disciplines.

An ethnologist, an investigator of culture, sees the village and agriculture as a form of economic activity that man pursues in the environment he lives in. He notices skills, talent and organizational abilities. Thinking about the future, one must say that none of the styles of life, including those formed in Polish villages, should be lost because today it is difficult to say what knowledge and skills our successors, future generations, will be using.

Today opinion centres, authors of programmes addressed to villages, particularly peasant organizations, the church and priests are trying to create a vision of the future compatible to the spirit of the time and requirements of European integration. To reach this objective, one draws from history, the history of agrarian ideology, peasant tradition and rules of transformation, making references to the ethos of entrepreneurship. This must be accompanied by opinions voiced by the humanist, the ethnologist and the sociologist. This must be accompanied by a view which, under the pressure of current problems, will permit us to notice a reflection of a different dimension.

Our thinking is burdened with some assumptions which lead us to an incomplete understanding of the integration process. We find ourselves

in a situation of somebody who purchases a licence or somebody who is entangled in the “syndrome of a late newcomer” and we forget that integration always pertains to different elements.

The approach to problems of European integration is full of such concepts as reaching up to standards, adjustment, shortening the distance. In all these metaphors there is something that does not permit articulation of our strengths and our interests. As a process of integrating different elements and a process of creating a new whole, this has some legal, economic and social consequences and is done at a certain level of generality. We should realize what actors become players on this stage of integration and what roles they play. Village and Polish farmers do not have to be perceived as bogey and threat.

What is extremely important are institutions, mainly because they set the rules, procedures, and norms. They do not use isolated indices. What matters is the whole, an integral complex of different indices. And this is important because agriculture, connected with soil, people, cultural community, is an element of the people — peasants bind the people on their territory and one must see the entire surroundings to fully perceive our interests.

Ethnological knowledge tells us that the village as a type of community, born out of a primitive group, is not an enemy to civic society but its asset. Hence, rural communities with their own identity can coexist with civic ties. The sacrum element occurs not only in peasant culture, it exists and is necessary to democratic societies if they want the authority of transcendental norms and the source of legal validity. Tradition does not deny democracy but strengthens it.

The goal would be to create a civic culture in villages, to strengthen citizenship through new institutions. Ethnological knowledge again tells us that “institutions are not built, institutions grow like a family, neighbours, church, people” (Dahrendorf, 1994, p. 232).

If we think about our “return” to Europe, it would be worthwhile, I think, not to lose sight of the transformations which today make Europe different and whose elites question the directions of development which degraded villages. If we treated the will to find contact planes and establish dialogue with Western Europe seriously, then these new facts would have to be reconsidered. Furthermore, new concepts have to be built around such issues as: the difficulties of compromise between the rural culture as community culture with the culture of bureaucracy (or, social culture, based to a large extent on norms, with the legal culture of civic society). This entails the question of adjustment to the rules of social life, the ability of those speaking a developed code to communicate with those who have a different communicational competence, one that makes reference to aspects, norms and values filled with substance and not to abstract rules. The problem is to look for contact planes between the world of Western Europe, liberal and secularized and Polish village with

peasant cultural heritage, strongly connected with the Catholic religion. One could ask in passing whether Polish village can be for Europe a reservoir of indestructible values, attractively finding its place in the new ecological dimension of awareness, as a realistic junctim of tradition and modernness. The more contact planes with the revival movement in Western Europe we have and the more seriously the village is treated as an alternative way of life, the stronger the hypothesis.

For the rich, wealthy Europe, "neo-village" ideology and the return of people tired of urban life to villages, in search for recreation and contact with close, familiar environment, has a clear motivation. This ideology is a negative response to overgrown urbanization and rural areas become a kind of a buffer zone that performs instrumental functions to the surroundings, i.e. tourist, recreational functions, and functions of ecological protection. As protection of these areas cannot be done without the participation of people that inhabit them and without their conviction that there is a sense in recuperative work, a movement of elites for the restoration of rustic communities was born. It is sponsored by Ekovast (movement for the development of villages and small towns). No special effort is required to prove that in Poland the situation is different, although Western inspirations can be educational. In Poland such an awareness has not been formed yet, moreover, it stirs up controversies and emotions. The range of problems related to the concept of green economy, "revitalization" of rural areas, landscape protection, ecological agriculture, "turn to villages", if it goes beyond accepted norms, awakens distrust if not criticism.

Remaining in Europe but going back a few centuries, we must remember that the permanence of a grange economy was characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland. Concentration of a considerable part of the economic potential in the hands of freeholders had its impact on the different course of the industrial revolution in this part of Europe as compared with Western Europe. Preparation for the industrialization process with respect to accumulation of capital, qualifications, and new technologies was weaker in Eastern Europe than in the West.

Throughout the centuries of the feudal system, the economic equilibrium was maintained by agriculture, crafts and trade. The village was a multi-functional structure, entailed in the new system. The equilibrium was upset by capitalism, an expansive system by its nature, a system which continually made agriculture adapt and adjust.

The turn of this century is an ample time to make observations. It offers the distance needed to account for past events which, seen from a different perspective, do not obscure the picture with too many details. It also helps us to look at new tendencies which herald a new era.

We live at the time of landmarks. Their significance goes beyond the surface

of life streams and social and political phenomena which change even faster. The turn that I am talking about, metaphorically defined as the turning point of the epoch, the crossroads of civilization, pertains to more profound, more thorough and far-reaching changes. We start to build a new post-modernist vision of the world by negating the foundations of 17th and 18th centuries. In doing so we undermine the foundations of our own civilization (Burszta, 1992).

We are starting to build the new vision of the world not on the basis of the mechanistic paradigm, as a general model of seeing and learning about reality. This is opposed by profound ecological awareness which looks for relations between man and the spiritual dimension of culture, nature, cosmos. This finds expression in the tension between the technocratic and humanistic orientations. The dramatic break between the sphere of civilization and culture is becoming the sign of our times. It is true that social elites have this awareness and that they articulate the dilemma of modern times. For example – will the development of science outlive the development of mankind and can the ideology of freedom be compromised with social ties and do democracy and the market favour balanced development? Such questions are not asked by an average inhabitant of a village and for him/her the choice between the technocratic and humanistic vision of the future is not important. An average inhabitant understands and feels what tradition is – that unremovable component of human condition. He/she knows what village is for him/her, what his/her own farm means for him/her, has some aspirations and would like his/her work to be recognized by the society.

In conclusion – the new social and economic order, based on the pillars of market and democracy, offers a chance for the restoration of villages as autonomous communities, using social life to mitigate consequences of unemployment and to promote entrepreneurship, using local resources and local potential. The question whether village as a cultural structure can regain its identity, whether it can be the symbol of a separate, different and abstract lifestyle, remains unanswered. The answer will be provided if we manage to establish a dialogue with values which will determine the future civilizational and cultural status of Europe and the world. One thing is certain: restoration of the identity of the modern village is an important issue and it cannot be done if the roots of the culture are ignored.

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