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LIFESTYLES OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN POLAND

Synthetic analysis of research works on rural communities' life styles in Poland permits a general classification into two types of works: publications explicitly concerned with life styles of rural population and far more numerous works dealing with life styles in an indirect way. Both types will be presented in this work in the course of discussing particular life style issues. Formulating theoretical premises, life style typology and practical conclusions, we base primarily on the first type of works. We also make use of works in which rural community life styles are dealt with implicitly. On the theoretical-methodological plane of research on life styles by Polish sociology, including rural sociology, two main orientations are discernible which in practice are most often complementary.

The first orientation is based on examination of economic conditions in life styles, that is, studies on family consumption, budget analysis, purposes for which discretionary funds are spent and the social minimum budget. The other orientation is concerned with cultural anthropology premises underlining specific cultural values and cultural activity as important indices of life styles.

In researching life styles in rural communities, the second orientation is more applicable, which is especially evident in research on traditional village communities preserving some cultural elements from the past though at the same time subjected to the modernizing impact of industrialization and urbanization

as well as remodelling of the agricultural economy. Studies on life styles found their place in the broader notion of the opening up of traditional villages. The question of opening life opportunities for individuals from rural communities designates the orientation toward new rural life styles in which traditional models have so far prevailed. Studies on these problems belonging to humanist sociology indicate that aside from changes in the economy, material culture and consumption issues of life styles also had a practical bearing on rural communities' modernization.

The period of intensified research on rural communities' life styles finds substance in historical evolution of the Polish village following world war II. It includes the period of economic prosperity between 1970-1975 when growth rates reached as high as 11 percent. Rural sociologists then realized that such cultural models of rural communities as home furnishings consumption, and clothing preferences are also important factors of the general situation of village dwellers along such traditional indices as farm production investments, tools purchases and modern farming methods.

A very valuable work by G. Ungeheuer¹ on cultural standards of rural communities comes from that period. The author shows how prestige needs have affected cultural life styles. The work is based on very carefully selected indices defining the cultural standard and related life style. These indices: nutrition pattern, hygiene, education, attitude to learning and self-improvement, entertainment, social life, were verified by empirical studies carried out by the author.

Comparative intercultural and international studies make extensive use of such life style indices as material environment arrangement, housing and interior design, attendance at cultural institutions, including art and folk events, religious behavioral patterns, use of leisure time, family life, including such

¹ G. Ungeheuer, *Przemiany standardu kulturowego - z badań w środowisku wiejskim*, Warszawa 1964.

comparative indices as male and female marrying age, age of parents when the first child is born, access to and use of nurseries, preschools, cnteens and even such details as proportion of processed food in family feeding².

Scandinavian countries (especially Finland) make use of consumption type indices in studies on rural community life styles. Three types of consumption are distinguished depending on whether it is oriented to modernness, mobility or diversity. These dimensions help establish empirically which are "passive rural communities" (passive consumers void of the three consumption features) and "active rural communities" (active consumers oriented to modernness, mobility and diversity)³.

From the point of view of theory of culture and its relations with the economic and social situation in Poland, the 1975-1980 period of rapid life style changes in rural population is particularly interesting. At that time, increased consumption aspirations were on a collision course with capacity to meet the demand. Under such circumstances, life style diversifies mainly as the result of farmer work value and farm ownership. The author of the most inquisitive studies on rural life styles E. Jagiełło-Łysiowa, accurately states: "It is possible to discern in most general terms-three basic tendencies in private farming: oriented to development, to a life pension, and to small plot ownership by a worker"⁴. The last of the three above listed styles concerns the extremely interesting life styles of farmer-workers^{**}.

² L. P. Marcu, *Coordonees du processus d'urbanisation dans le sudest de L'Europa a l'epoque contemporaine*, Beograd 1976.

³ Za: A. Siciński, *O typologiach stylów życia*, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 1983, No 4, p. 213.

⁴ E. Jagiełło-Łysiowa, *Elementy stylu życia ludności wiejskiej. Próba diagnozy społecznej i prognozy*, /in:/ *Styl życia. Przemiany we współczesnej Polsce* (ed. A. Siciński), Warszawa 1978, p. 121.

^{**} Full-time industrial worker owning a land plot of varying size, commuting daily to his work with high absenteeism at peak harvest season (translator's note).

During the second half of the '70s, a period of economic decline clear controversies surfaced concerning the urban - rural opposition. Researchers' thought⁵ it was possible to isolate the urban life style and the rural life style through research on concrete environments. Authors of this typology claim that the "peasant", "traditional" life style in postwar Poland waned in rural communities mainly as a result of urbanization and industrialization and political factors such as condemnation of land ownership.

Significant differences were observed between farmers employed in the collective system (State Farm Enterprises and Farm Cooperatives) and private farmers. The differences included such areas as work conditions, income and its uses, work time, recreation, the home and its equipment. Collective farmers were inclined to satisfy many needs in their life styles simultaneously. This group of village inhabitants displayed conflicting values. The differences resulted in greater diversity of life styles in collective farmers than among private farmers. According to E. Jagiełło-Łysiowa, apart from differentiation of life styles into "traditional peasant" and "modern peasant" styles other style variants for collective farmers were also evident.

Referring to contemporary concepts of cultural anthropology, A. Zadrożyńska, in her recently published work⁶, presented research results on farmers employed in Koszalin State Farm Enterprise. The author included in her work some very important and innovative research on culture models in the approach to work, recreation and entertainment that are undeniably important in defining life styles of this rural category. The study concludes that greater diversification of collective farmers' life styles results primarily from their greater mobility in aspects of "time, space and living".

⁵ A. Jawłowska, A. Pawełczyńska, *Mechanizmy makrospołeczne a różnicowanie stylów życia*, [in:] *Styl życia, Przemiany we współczesnej...*, p. 197.

⁶ A. Zadrożyńska, *Homo faber i homo ludens. Etnologiczny szkic o pracy w kulturach tradycyjnej i współczesnej*, Warszawa 1983.

Andrzej Kaleta using the term "life value", neato our term "life style", in an anthropological approach, presents a wide range of life orientations of young farmers in individual and collective farms, deliberately choosing young farmers doing army service as a representative sample. The author discusses "attitudes, aspirations and values" of the farmers, distinguishing the following orientations: altruistic, pragmatic, hedonistic and conformistic. He also distinguishes a one-dimension orientation whereby life style is confined to one prevailing value such as health, physical fitness, sport, good food⁷.

Young people from rural areas fall into a category or rural population that - in most authors' view - transmits life styles from the urban environment. I. Głuchowska, investigating life models of rural youth, is inclined to imitate, states: "From among adults, young people mostly choose persons representing non-agricultural professions and urban life style, which is still connected with ability to travel and see the world"⁸. Adoption of life styles from the urban environment was not without obstacles. This fact is emphasized by J. Burszta: "The young generation may bring about changes in traditional culture by representing other, new values and life style, though the hindrance to that transformation may come from farmwork regime in which those is lack of sufficient leisure time"⁹. Apart from difficulties in achieving a life style opted for by rural youngsters, we can mention the hard-to-achieve dynamism and "adventurism" of life in the rural setting, which W. Pawluczuk links to barriers in consumer goods distribution that gradually appeared in 1975¹⁰.

⁷ A. Kaleta, Jakość życia a uczestnictwo w kulturze. Na przykładzie badań nad wybraną zbiorowością młodzieży pochodzenia wiejskiego, Warszawa 1981.

⁸ I. Głuchowska, Uznawane wartości oraz wzorce osobowe młodzieży wiejskiej, Wieś Współczesna, 1979, No 11(237), p. 108.

⁹ J. Burszta, Uczestnictwo wsi w kulturze, Wieś Współczesna, 1978, No 10(260), p. 41.

¹⁰ W. Pawluczuk, Wokół aspiracji młodzieży wiejskiej, Wieś Współczesna, 1983, No 3(313).

Studies on culture and life styles of the rural community conducted in the '70s were criticized from a new perspective after the 1980 upheaval. E. Jagiełło-Lysiowa stated that the '70s created a "bogey myth" of peasant peculiarity and peasant -like style a myth that the only right path of development is through industrialization and urbanization"¹¹. The studies on life styles were further biased by the failure to notice a certain autonomy of those communities. Researches analysed rural community life styles in the categories taken from studies on urban communities, e.g. in the areas concerning leisure time, arts, values. The assumption of the uniqueness of rural life styles is thus a "social-cultural alternative" and that is how these life styles should be considered.

Damrosz¹², observing rural communities' life styles in the '70s, states that a uniformization of life styles followed the obliteration of social microstructures, which was an effect of abandoning regionalism for the sake of monolithically viewing society as one unit. Therefore, it is necessary to reverse this process mainly through grassroot initiatives and promotion of conditions to differentiate rural life styles. From my point of view this concept aims at preservation of the rural social environment because of its alternative values, which stem from life styles differentiation, among other things.

Those briefly outlined directions in research on rural community life styles of the '70s ought to be supplemented with descriptions of tendencies that have appeared since 1980. In this case we turn to our own research, carried out in 1981-1982 on

¹¹ E. Jagiełło-Lysiowa, *Wieś - problemy społecznej równowagi, /in:/ Styl życia, obyczaje, ethos w Polsce lat siedemdziesiątych - z perspektywy roku 1981 - szkice* (ed. A. Siciński), Warszawa 1983, p. 70-72.

¹² J. Damrosz, *Przemiany życia wsi polskiej (rozważania diagnostyczne i prognostyczne), /in:/ Styl życia, obyczaje, ethos...*, p. 55.

Lower Silesian villages¹³. Notwithstanding the specificity of the region's villages the findings from comparative data show a marked tendency in life style changes.

The period of intensive crucial changes in Poland, initiated by the events of August 1980, opened up a particularly interesting perspective for studies on the social situation in rural areas. Dynamic social changes, openness and passion of discussion and argument permitted more operative research programs and thus a grasp of real problems that emerged from political, economic, and cultural life in a natural way. A researcher undertaking a certain problem was in a better position than at other periods when he was forced to seek a problem or even create it himself.

The studies were carried out in the setting of changes in views on rural environment as a result of general political, cultural, and social processes (the founding of the individual Farmers Union "Solidarność"). The object of research by means of interviews and observations (the so called Daily Routine Sheet) differentiated into holidays and workdays, where individual farmers from the following types of villages: suburban, communal centers, of specialized production functions, summer-resort, conservative villages studies included farmers from 32 villages; 288 empirical material units were obtained consisting of questionnaires and Daily Routine Sheets.

Life style notion included formation of behavior models and choice of existing models. It was assumed that life style denotes behavior, which is conditioned by the environment and social status of consumption, participation in culture, interpersonal relations (bonds, neighbors), organization of daily life, arrangement of environment and handling of leisure time. This wide-range definition included many problems, only some of which were taken up in the present study.

¹³ W. Misiak, O stylach życia społeczności wsi, *Więść Współczesna*, 1983, No 10(320).

Briefly outlined, the results may be presented in a list of the most important problems.

1) The studies proved that changes were followed by an increase of variants of rural community life styles in regard to the so far accepted typology of "traditional" and "modern" peasant life styles. We should also note the decreased role of village urbanization as the main factor of change for life styles. The egress of rural population from their environment remained unchanged throughout the '70s. Now a tendency appears that will undoubtedly have a bearing on modification of the rural life styles. The end of the rapid egress from villages, indicative of its final limits, will - if it persists - unquestionably enhance the revival of many cultural values in that environment. One can also anticipate a reconstruction of social microstructures, which have lost their cultural continuity, and an increase of regional life style variants in some regions. The old ethnographers' observation "another village, another song" again is in vogue in terms of life styles¹⁴.

Though direct evidence is missing, studies carried out in Lower Silesian village communities suggest a reduction of generational differences in life styles. Revitalization of private farms also denotes a growing "patriarchality" in rural families. Intensification of these processes in the village economic system, family upbringing, regionalism of the rural environment may lead to a life style based on direct cultural transmission and interhuman primeval bonds.

2) To discuss the cultural activeness of village dwellers, it is necessary to establish an activity structure during work-days and holidays. For that purpose the Daily transcript technique, which is also useful in family budget studies, was used. Because of a lack of space for full statistical data, we quote only quantitative data on the structure of activities and the time farmers spend on them.

¹⁴ Por. D. Simonides, *Współczesne podanie wierzeniowe, Lud*, t. 57, 1973, p. 95-109; *W kręgu literatury ludowej* (ed. D. Simonides), Opole 1969.

Table 1. Activity time structure depending on farm size

Size of farm in hectares	Day w - workday h - holiday	Day begins at a.m.	Day ends at p.m.	Farmwork total time	Cultural activity total time
0-3	w	6.09	11:03	5.33	0.33
	h	7:08	11:08	3.12	1.12
4-6	w	6:06	10:13	8.00	0.43
	h	6:07	10:00	5.00	2.33
7-9	w	5:25	10:21	7.50	1.10
	h	6:50	10:15	6.55	1.25
10-12	w	5:54	10:12	8.48	1.24
	h	5:55	10:40	5.52	1.48
13-15	w	6:52	10:30	x	1.45
	h	6:39	10:19	7:00	x
15 up	w	5:30	10:32	10.22	1.12
	h	5:57	10:37	6.30	1.22

x - data missing

Analysis of the data showed that activity structure and time devoted to certain work depends on the following factors: size of farm, number of family members living and working together, mechanized equipment and season. Less important are such factors as: type of village, inhabitants' regional background and local traditions. The relation between types of activities and sex deserve special attention.

The most important determinant of activity structure on workdays and holidays, with separate issue of time spent on cultural activities, is the size of the farm. Recently, the researchers are noting that social activity is greater when land size is smaller - up to 10 ha¹⁵.

¹⁵ B. Urgacz, Kultura społeczna wsi. Studium typologiczne zjawiska aktywności społecznej, Warszawa 1978.

3) Aside from such long-time factors determining rural life styles as size of farm, kind of work and household activities of family, income level, rank and kind of institutions operating in village, its location in relation to urban centers, demographic and social structure other determinants also were discovered that are discussed below.

4) As a result of food shortages and rationing, the general status of the rural community increased in. Also ideology began to view the farmer as "provider". Thus new reference issues were found in mutual evaluation of urban and rural life styles.

5) Villages turned to their own local and regional values, which were manifested in self-government aspirations and emergence of new opinion leaders¹⁶.

6) A certain turn toward cultural activity was observed, which may be called the "private-family" trend (A. Kamiński, for a similar phenomena, uses the term "familycentric culture participation tendency") as different from the institutional trend. The system of holidays, family and neighborhood has always been elaborate in has acquired a new value of bondage and a natural nonmaterial sense of community set against the background of temporary social disorganization in society at large. It was for this reason that when interviewers asked about forthcoming cultural events in which the respondent intended to participate, the answer almost invariably included namedays, birthdays, child's baptism day party, family member's or neighbor's anniversaries. Weddings and other social occasions were also cited. Responding farmers regard the occasions as cultural type activities, which were seldom registered by rural community culture sociologists.

Closer insight into contents of the quoted activities and private - family occasions permits an indentanding of cultural elements contained in them. Primarily traditional regional, lo-

¹⁶ More detailed data concerning polarization of village's cultural leaders, I published in the article: O stylach życia społeczności wsi...

cal and even family customs belong here. The meetings are a place for expressing opinions on political, social and economic issues. Opinions are exchanged about what events are worth seeing at the local cultural center, what books to borrow from the library, what show to attend in the city. On that forum authorities emerge on particular areas of social and cultural life.

Results of the poll also permit a synthetic evaluation (cf. Table 2) of obstacles to attending cultural events and activities organized by institutions in villages.

Table. 2. Factors hindering the use of cultural institutions

Types of factors	%
Lack of time (emphasis on farmwork on worksays and holidays)	70
Lack of cultural institutions or their inactivity	12
Family situation (small children)	9
Advanced age	6
Unpreparedness (small competence in appreciation of culture value)	1
No data	2

We can also find according to reasons listed above, what cultural events farmers had to give up. Most frequently mentioned was watching movies in theaters, reading books, attending cultural events outside place of residence, listening to the radio and going to discos, dances, amateur theaters and other events.

7) Analyzing generally the impact of consumption on rural community life styles, we should consider two fundamental factors. First, the differences in income levels in particular households determining greater or smaller expenditures for cultural goods and values. Secondly, the degree of mechanization of farm households because it releases some free time for convenience in planning schedules.

It should be added, that the free time category is not compatible with the category applied by sociologists in regard to city inhabitants.

Our observations indicate that diversification of rural community life styles is most strongly affected by the first of the two factors mentioned. If present market-stimulating factors persist, we can expect the wealth of peasant families to be the chief determinant of life styles. As B. Sałuda¹⁷ found, highly efficient private breeding farms will permit "refined" forms of their owners' and families' life styles. Life style forms of this type may retard negative selection in the farming profession and put a stop to youth's egress from villages by being a pattern-generating group.

8) In the light of our observations, cultural patterns affecting life style modifications imitate and descend from pattern-generating influences of family members, neighbors, friends of prominent people. Therefore, two basic life style reference groups may be distinguished: group norms and patterns and external or central patterns. The factor omitted out of necessity in present analyses was personality-related life style conditions. Because to investigate that aspect it would be necessary to include socio-psychological observations.

The above mentioned preconditions of the social situation have their bearing also on conformism observed of family members in receiving cultural patterns and life styles. The subject of our study were ways and forms of house planning and cultural activities that do not take up much of village dweller's time. Also new needs were found that surfaced in family life, such as the need for security, sense of stability, and ability to counsel on many life situations. Many members of local communities are put in a situation where they have to make choices between conflicting tendencies - they then seek support and advice within the closest family circle.

¹⁷ B. Sałuda, Nowe elementy stylu życia na wsi, *Więś Współczesna*, 1983, No 1(311), p. 59.

Another reference group is the so-called central pattern. This notion is regarded by investigators of life styles as normative - as a target behavior mode according to cultural policy layout, educational ideals and legal norms. Influence exerted by educational ideals and contents, mass media, legal norms and social policy on life styles are considered. As the poll findings show, central pattern elements have a varying degree of intensity and influence. Hobbies and interior decorating most heavily draw on periodicals and books, less so on television. School also exerts a discernible influence. Preferences brought home by young people are scrutinized in family authority circles. In short, these factors create a syndrome constituting a point of reference for preferences already formed or introduce new cultural elements into rural inhabitants' life styles.

9) Under conditions of certain social destabilization and change in the broader social system, rural communities have gained new value as the most stable elements in the social structure. They are especially true for people who, while working in town or industrialized regions, find support in the rural environment: worker-peasants, city dwellers with families living in the country, young people studying away from their residence.

Researchers and theoreticians of social groups during change have often found that modifications in the social system trigger significant changes in value systems. Prognostication of life style modification and perhaps emergence of new varieties should be based on axiological studies. Viewing the sphere of values manifested through life styles is a predictive approach to culture realization following economic and social changes.

In the present economic and social situation, studies on various groups' life styles, including the rural environment, should take into consideration the new values induced by changes. There is now a rare opportunity to establish which elements in life styles may be regarded as permanent and largely independent of economic fluctuations and which are more variable. There arises the question whether the only way of transforming village dwellers' life styles is industrialization and urbanization?

How may life styles be affected by a more balanced relation between city and village environment? These are but same questions now facing investigators of rural life styles.

Pondering new strategies to adequately study life styles of the present rural realm, E. Jagiełło-Lysiowa stated: "At present the country man is aware of what he is working for and what he wants to accomplish, and his personal and social ambition is not exhausted by the sphere of work - even broadly understood. His ambitions reach all spheres of life that are available to other citizens and that is the direction the ethos may evolve in, with the assumption of wise modernization"¹⁸.

I would like to emphasize that life style analyses that do not take into account elements of choice, the will of the subjects themselves, make a great oversimplification. It may be agreed that life style is mainly determined by economic, political, and cultural factors. However, the village community has greater freedom of choice of life styles, especially in everyday behavior. For instance, there is no clear distinction between work time and off-work time, to compare with the notion of free time in the city dwellers' situation. Choice of life style also depends largely on ethos of the social group or circle and its historical genealogy. Taking this standpoint, we can say that peasants have developed and historically conditioned habit of maintaining a certain distance to new life styles adopted from other environments and cultural circles, such as cosmopolitan models in pop culture. However, evading or delaying life styles is a choice made, too.

Research on Lower Silesian villages demonstrates that if the rural older generation intercepts some elements of new life styles, say urban, then the purpose of this compromise is to preserve the status quo and not to make a total change of life orientations. Other objectives are on rural young people's minds when they adopt life styles untypical of their background. We can therefore find a certain intergenerational collision concerning life

¹⁸ E. Jagiełło-Lysiowa, *Wieś - problemy społecznej równowagi...*, p. 71.

styles in a village, though this may also happen within one generation, as for instance in the case of organization activists versus individuals socially inactive, believers versus nonbelievers. The divisions concerning attitudes and life styles are also detected by contemporary studies conducted by other authors¹⁹.

Analysis of diversity of life styles also has great practical value as it helps in making a typology of a village as a local community, integrated or void of necessary bonds and cooperation capability. Disfunctions in local communities may also result from pathological symptoms in life styles, such as alcoholism, a hostile attitude toward people of different orientations, or delinquency.

The aspect of freedom of choice of life styles has been shosed because it is an indispensable element in all attempts to predict courses of life style changes in the rural environment. Other authors, and especially A. Siciński²⁰, likewise perceive new horizons, directions and research areas to observe further life styles changes. The life styles issue is too important from the point of view of cultural and social policies, education and other practical fields in rural environment to be left outside attentive scrutiny.

¹⁹ Por. A. Siciński, Społeczeństwo istniejące a społeczeństwo pożądane, /in:/ Społeczeństwo wychowujące - rzeczywistość i perspektywy (ed. B. Suchodolski), Wrocław 1983; Hipotetyczne scenariusze przemian ekonomicznych, społecznych i politycznych w Polsce, 1982/1983 (coll. ed.), Warszawa 1982; Alternative Ways of Life in Contemporary Europe (eds. A. Siciński and M. Wemegah), Tokio 1983, United Nations University.

²⁰ A. Siciński, O przemianach stylu życia we współczesnej Polsce, /in:/ Sytuacje współczesne, Warszawa 1982.