

SOCIAL ROLES OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

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The article tries to formulate the past, present and future role of the rural sociology including the main reasons justifying its existence.

In past rural sociology accepted the concepts and models of the general sociology including the paradigm of the modernization, industrialization and mechanization of the rural area. The impact of this process being mostly negative, including giving up the system of values and the traditional culture, massive migration, sense of social isolation, ruining of the environment and the collective memory of the rural area, this situation of a deepening crisis calls inevitably for forming a new paradigm of development, its basic points being self-identification, self-initiative and self-responsibility of the rural area. Formulating of this paradigm is the task and responsibility of rural sociology.

rural sociology; function of rural sociology; industrial-urban paradigm of rural areas progress; crisis of village; paradigm of village revival

Sociologists are often being reproached, that rural sociology lacks justifying of its existence at least in two points.

First, it is said that rural communities are the sample of „health“ in our sick society. That is why any kind of outer interference is harmful to their self-adjustment. Needless to say, the conviction that rural communities enjoy an excellent condition is an intolerable oversimplification and nothing but deception. And it is up to sociologists (among others) to create and to take measures preventing rural areas from further decline.

Secondly, it is assumed that rural communities are, at least in the industrialised countries, subject to the process of urbanization to such an extent that they are gradually losing their rustical character. Nothing is more misleading. It is in the industrial countries (Netherlands, USA), where the process of urbanization of rural area is the most advanced, that the pragmatic functions of sociology are getting more and more important.

If substantially sound, the points of view presented above seem to prove that the social role of rural sociology requires further analysis.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE RECORDING AND EXPLAINING REALITY

Traditional purposes of rural sociology are connected with the description of socio-cultural past and contemporary reality of the rustical environment, as well as with the contribution to the scientifically sound premises outlining its development.

Although only little operative, sociology is by no means an entirely theoretical field of science. Rural sociology has taken advantage, both in theory and methodology, of the achievements of the general sociology, which formulates principally the bourgeois social self-consciousness and makes use of the concepts and laws expressing the development principles of the urban society. It is the main reason why it has not been able to create a theory of development principles applicable to the rural society. Having entirely accepted the point of view of its powerful „mother“ (general sociology) that industrial society should be placed at the top of the ladder of progress, and that all other types of society tend to follow this path of development, rural sociology has consented to imposing upon itself the industrial-urban paradigm of progress and the stereotype transfer of the urban socio-cultural option to the rural area. Moreover, it is assumed that although this area is still of agricultural character, obviously it is expected to become an urban area sooner or later provided progress continues and equal chances are offered to it.

Having accepted this paradigm rural sociologists backed up a model of modernization of the rural area prevailing in the 50s and 60s.

MODERNIZATION - A PARADIGM OF RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

Historically, modernization meant overcoming or abolishing everything which was obsolete and which hindered progress. Modernization was understood very broadly and included rationalization of economy, urbanization of rural housing estates, and functionalization of structures. (Pavetz, I. European Congress for Rural Area Revitalization, Krems 1987).

The modernization process referred not only to material (living standards, architecture, landscape) but also nonmaterial elements of socio-cultural sector, i.e.

- giving up the agriculture-oriented system of values for the more universal merits typical for all social groups and classes
- evolution of the traditional social relationships (based on personal prestige and respect to the values of family and local community) and into democratization, i.e. relative equality of rights and duties.

- removing from life and mentality of the rural community members the traditional folk culture which was found too outdated, backward and obsolete to be included into the national universal system of culture, or to be used against unification tendencies in the participation of peasantry in culture at all.
- identifying cultural and consumption needs of rural area with those of the cities and disregarding specific conditions and possibilities of particular regions as well as the differences between them.

Certainly, modernization strategies have brought about so called civilization promotion of rural area. Farmers live now more easily and comfortably than they used to. However, does it mean that they enjoy their lives more than before? Are their instruments of self-fulfilment better now? Do they really know which values are essential for their existence? Surely, many of the modernization strategies were necessary and aimed at improving living standards in the country. However, the mode in which they were introduced deserves criticism. Arbitrariness, cult of purposefulness, technocratic attitudes to problems, and functionalism appeared to be the most harmful for social and cultural life as well as for the nature and landscape of rural area.

As for social and cultural phenomena, rural area lost its identity because of the massive migration to urban centers, increasing pathological events, commercialization of participation in culture, deeper and deeper sense of loneliness and social isolation. The traditional folk style of life was destroyed - together with its values, models of work and spare time activities, meeting and communicating with other people as well as the rules forming the social experience of rural community. What has been given in return for this were the normative structures specific for urban regions.

Not less annoying changes have been taking place in the nature and landscape of rural area. Industrial agriculture, fertilizers, pesticides, ill-considered drainage systems, new plant species, and large-scale cultivation of cash crops caused erosion and degradation of land which, in turn, means lower and worse crops. It can be heard now and then that industrial agriculture cannot be accepted for the future as it will not be able to meet our demands for sufficient quantity of healthy food. In spite of all the advances in science and technology farming may soon go through a crisis, as a matter of fact in some areas it already does.

Instability of the ecosystem and dangers stemming from that are accompanied by the destruction of landscape. Modern architecture takes no account of unique character of rural regions. Moreover, traditional architecture is neglected and priceless old buildings are ruined. Development of tourism and numerous recreation centers built in the country add to the degradation of landscape very

much. Another no less depressing aspect is the vanishing sense of bonds between the young generation and their homeland, to say nothing of destroying of the natural „material“ to create symbols and the collective memory. The human community without its collective memory is deprived of the social interaction of integrative process.

To prevent the above mentioned threats a new paradigm of the development of rural area has to be created. This new paradigm should take into consideration cultural values of the region and the unique character of natural environment. That could make possible the rebirth of the once inborn relationship between nature and man. And this is a challenge and task for rural sociologists to embark on. This social role of rural sociology requires a change of their orientation from theory to practice.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY SEARCHES FOR A NEW PARADIGM OF RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN AGRARIANISM AND URBANISM

In the situation of a deepening crisis when we observe fading of some illusions of urbanization and modernization, rural sociology faces the responsibility to find a new paradigm of development of the rural area. This paradigm should be independent of the so far dominating urban-oriented patterns. It must encourage genuine improvement of life quality of people living in the country, and through it of the living standards of city inhabitants as well.

In search for this paradigm, sociologists should keep in mind that regaining its own cultural identity is an indispensable condition for rural area to develop in a harmonious way. However, what is meant here is neither „ethnologism“ (artificial preventing from modernization) nor urbanization. To modernize and to improve living standards of the people in rural regions, to overcome the antinomy tradition vs. progress, to soothe the sharp conflict of interests which has accompanied the process of development for decades we should evoke and confirm the self-development elements and the tendencies of rural community to reject urban criteria of progress and backwardness. We have to stop compelling the patterns of life specific for dense urban centers to the rural area. Self-identification, self-initiative, and self-responsibility are the basic directions of progress in the country. They form, at the same time, an opportunity to stand the centralistic tendencies, outer control, and the domination of urban - oriented opinions declared without the consent of rural communities.

Independent of one's approach to the suggested models of rural area development, it seems indisputable that the future of rural sociology depends greatly on its attitude to the problem of urbanization.

A. KALETA (Univerzita Mikoláše Koperníka, Toruň): Úloha sociologie venkova

Společenská úloha a postavení sociologie venkova vyžadují v současné době podrobnou analýzu. Její tradiční cíle spočívají jak v definování a hodnocení sociálně kulturních kvalit venkovského prostředí v minulosti a v současnosti, tak ve formulování vědecky podložených předpokladů a trendů jeho perspektivního vývoje.

V minulosti sociologie venkova převážně přejímala koncepce a modely obecné sociologie a tudíž aplikovala na oblast venkova vývojové principy městské společnosti, poněvadž současně přijala a akceptovala paradigma modernizace venkova ve smyslu jeho industrializace a urbanizace. Tento model převažoval v 50. a 60. letech.

Proces modernizace venkova s sebou sice přinesl některé prvky pozitivního vývoje ve smyslu vyšší materiální a životní úrovně, vyvolal však zároveň řadu negativních změn, především narušení zemědělsky orientovaného systému hodnot, zánik tradiční kultury a vytvoření kulturních a spotřebních návyků odpovídajících městskému typu bez ohledu na specifické možnosti a podmínky venkovských oblastí, masivní migraci a pocit společenské izolace. Výsledkem je, že venkov ztratil svou identitu.

Obdobně negativní je dopad tohoto vývojového procesu na přírodu a krajinu venkova a v neposlední řadě narušení kolektivní paměti venkovské společnosti.

Tato prohlubující se krize venkova nezbytně vyžaduje formování nového paradigmatu rozvoje, nezávislého na dosud akceptovaných urbanisticky orientovaných vzorech, jehož základem by byla sebeidentifikace, růst vlastní iniciativy a zodpovědnosti venkova. Vytvoření tohoto paradigmatu je nezastupitelnou úlohou sociologie venkova.

sociologie venkova; úloha sociologie venkova; industriálně urbanistické paradigma rozvoje sociologie venkova; krize vesnice; paradigma znovuzrození vesnice

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