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RURAL SPATIAL STRUCTURES IN INHABITANTS' MIND

The aim of this paper is to describe attitudes of inhabitants of the contemporary Polish village to a chosen type of spatial structures or putting it otherwise: to show in what way certain spatial structures are perceived by people.

Study of diverse relationships between a man and his dwelling space represents certainly one of the main research areas in sociology. In this case attention has been focussed on a specially chosen and narrow aspect of these relationships being, however, of a great cognitive significance. The area of research is the rural commune - a basic local administrative unit, or more precisely: a centre - "capital" of the rural commune microregion, a seat of political and administrative authorities as well as numerous institutions and organizations catering for most of inhabitants' needs. In order to explain the necessity of studying attitudes of inhabitants towards the spatial structure of such centres, there must be first briefly outlined genesis and functions assumed for rural communes and their centres.

1. Present-day rural territorial aggregates are determined by many factors of varying significance. The most important of them include: community of interests ensuing from dwelling on a common territory, links with a system of institutions, organizations and technical infrastructure, mutual ties and interactions of inhabitants - that is, relationships at the social system level. A separate and equally important role is played here by ties

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with inhabited area; many theorists of local communities e.g. G. A. Hillery or C. Bell and H. Newby associate this factor with one of the basic elements constituting a community¹. Others underline the existence of not only the local territory itself as a condition defining a community but especially its boundaries, which make this territory a definite area where most of inhabitants' needs are satisfied e.g. L. Nelson, Ch. Ramsey, C. Verner².

2. In conditions of the present-day Polish village its functional and territorial structure is determined, on the one hand, by history and tradition, and on the other one - by administrative division of the country into communes existing since 1973. Communes represent the lowest organizational form of the state's activity on a given territory in the sphere of political, economic, and socio-cultural relations. They may be briefly called organizational forms of rural space, which are to ensure optimal distribution of transport and institutional system, satisfaction of needs of a given aggregate and activity in basic fields of the social life. Boundaries of these units have been delimited administratively taking into account both tradition and a possibility of effective implementation of these basic functions. It should be added here that during the ten years which have lapsed since the administrative reform in 1973, rural communes - as territorial units - have confirmed advisability of their existence in most cases.

3. It should be underlined simultaneously, that a real spatial structure of communes is created by a number of smaller units starting with the smallest ones i.e. settlements, through villages, to bigger hamlets oftentime of small-town character. The central and predominant place in this structure is held by the so-called rural commune centres - for their most part the biggest and best equipped with amenities satisfying the inhabitants' needs. They are also a seat of administrative and poli-

¹ G. A. Hillery, Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement, "Rural Sociology" 1955, No 20; C. Bell, H. Newby, Community Studies, London 1971, p. 14.

² L. Nelson, Ch. Ramsey, C. Verner, Community Structure and Change, New York 1960, p. 11.

tical authorities of the local level and local institutions and organizations. Accordingly, they may be attributed the role of "capital" for rural commune microregions.

4. One of the aims of the administrative reform and also a planning direction in development of the space on the commune scale was to reduce distances between producers, and administrators and consumers of production. This main aim would determine also the remaining aims such as: to facilitate covering of distances, to establish an effective network of trade and services, education and health service. This aim could be accomplished by means of concentration of work places, dwelling places, and broadly understood services for inhabitants in the form of rural commune centres, the so-called housing-service centres. Accomplishment of this aim is not simple and depends on many factors, which will not be enumerated here. Nonetheless, in the process of transformation of spatial structures in communes, the main role is played by commune centres, and it is on them that attention of spatial planners and politicians having at their disposal technical-economic means is focussed.

5. Commune centres perform also the main role in the process of integrating rural commune inhabitants into a community of territorial type taking place alongside the process of housing and services concentration. The term "integration" must be understood here as definition of the aim and not real functions of these centres. The commune constitutes in fact a group of local communities (settlements, villages etc.), which just have potential chances of being transformed into a local territorial community of a new type. If we tried to define a rural commune as a system, then in such an approach rural commune centres would be performing a function of a consolidating-steering element, or otherwise: functional and material base for this role. They are equipped with a set of such institutions and organizations (in the sociological sense), which is to provide the main base of reference for the entire community of inhabitants; thus it "promotes forcefully" integration along the principle of obligatory ties or is favourable for it. This brief description cannot include all potential tasks of the commune centre, neither does it indicate other integration areas.

6. The context presented above is to provide a background for more detailed discussion of the following problem: In what way is the spatial structure of existing commune centres imprinted in inhabitants' minds? In the Polish sociology - although it would not be difficult to list here studies devoted to reception of the space - there are almost completely absent studies on this subject. That is why this paper should be treated, first of all, as an initial outline of the problem not striving for full explanation or generalization.

There will be described here attitudes of inhabitants in chosen rural communes towards the commune centre - treated as indices of articulation and valorization of the spatial structure. This motive (representing a fragment of a wider research area³) has been recognized as the most significant one in relationships between individuals' awareness and their housing or dwelling space. It corresponds to two basic levels at which these relations are objectivized: 1) degree of information about their contents, and 2) evaluations of the spatial structure according to chosen criteria.

Articulation will be understood here as an ability of distinguishing and naming a part of the rural commune's spatial structure. The term valorization will refer to an ability of evaluating (positively or negatively) given parts of such a structure according to subjectively perceived premises of such evaluation. In the former case, i.e. articulation, there was employed a methodological procedure from repertoire of the social ecology (in Poland it was applied in studies conducted e.g.

³ Studies on "Attitudes of rural commune inhabitants towards their local environment" were carried out over the years 1977-1981 in 9 chosen communes in all parts of Poland: Pepowo, Widawa, Opinogóra, Sulmierzyce, Wodzisław, Krokow, Milakowo, and Nowe Miasteczko. They were conducted on a representative sample of 1664 families (3328 persons, husband and wife separately) by means of a questionnaire survey. Materials collected in the course of studies were prepared for quantitative calculation by means of digital computers. The entire project was carried out by a research team from the Department of Town and Village Sociology in the University of Łódź headed by prof. dr habil. Wacław Piotrowski.

by W. Piotrowski⁴), consisting in registration of commonly used names for a part of commune centres as known to respondents. An attempt was made here to determine their greatest number in order to answer, in turn, a question: how extensive is the knowledge about these parts among particular groups of inhabitants, or more briefly: who knows and who does not know sufficiently the rural commune centre? What are the socio-professional determinants of this knowledge?

In the latter case i.e. valorization, the respondents were requested to make their choice and justify: 1) in what part of these centres it would be best, in their opinion, to live (it will be called "functional valorization" further on), and 2) which parts they like most and least (called further on "aesthetic valorization"). It was also tried to determine here: which groups of commune inhabitants and in what way perform valorization?; what are its determinants?

The first assumption accepted in these studies was to recognize an attitude - as a theoretical category - to be a good enough tool in describing the relationship: inhabitants-dwelling space⁵. The other assumption, ensuing from the first one, was a conviction about socio-cultural sources and determinants of attitudes towards one's physical dwelling environment, expressed, among others, by H. Gans, Ch. W. Hartman, and popularized in Poland by J. Turowski⁶. Therefore, in the further part of this paper the attitudes (articulation and valorization) treated as dependent variables will be correlated with main independent variables characterizing a given aggregate.

⁴ See: W. P i o t r o w s k i, Socio-spatial Structure of Łódź (in Polish), Ecological Study, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1966.

⁵ There was employed here the so-called structural-functional concept of attitude containing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components. See: D. K r e c h, R. S. C r u t c h f i e l d, Theory and Problems of Social Psychology, New York 1948, p. 152.

⁶ See: H. G a n s, People and Plans, New York-London 1968; Ch. H. H a r t m a n, Social Values and Housing Orientations, [in:] Human Identity in Urban Environment, Penguin Books, 1972; J. T u r o w s k i, Dwelling Environment in Urban Population's Mind (in Polish), Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1979.

To simplify analysis, we shall indicate the main hypothesis accompanying our studies: the commune centre owing to its central functions in the social and spatial structure of the commune and its "capital" functions performed in practice - should be relatively well known to most commune inhabitants; on the other hand, valorization of its parts should, to a bigger degree, make allowances for functional rather than aesthetic criteria. It is worth mentioning here that one of methodological assumptions in the studies was division of the analyzed aggregation into representatives of inhabitants of the commune centre itself and other zones of the commune.

The results of studies themselves will be presented here in a form of a simplified and partly generalized report without illustrations by means of detailed analyses and proofs. We can but expect that it will not diminish cognitive and informative values of the text.

In the part of description concerning articulation of spatial structure of commune centres, the following conclusion must rank foremost: over three fourths of inhabitants on the scale of the whole aggregation of the analyzed population perceive rural commune centres as uncomplicated or only slightly complicated structures. To be more precise: 62.8 per cent of respondents could not list more than two common names for a part of centres, and the next 19.5 per cent managed to list only 3 such names. The biggest registered number of such names amounted to 21 (centre of Skierbieszow commune), the smallest - 4 (centre of Nowe Miasteczko commune); to simplify analysis there was accepted the number of 9 names as a maximum quantitatively registered scope of articulation. Thus, it appeared that a prevailing majority of all inhabitants represent a relatively insignificant degree of knowledge with regard to a part of centres (only 5.3 per cent listed more than 5 names). Making a reservation here that knowledge about the structure of centres evaluated on the basis of familiarity with traditional names is not a "strong" index, it could nonetheless be found empirically that the level of articulation was relatively low.

Hypothetically accepted determinants of articulation: 1) spatial mobility, 2) distance separating the dwelling place and

the centre - with regard to those dwelling on the remaining area of the commune, and finally 3) characteristics of social differentiation of inhabitants - in practice revealed an insignificant strength of differentiating.

The number of perceived parts was correlated with two mobility indices: frequency of visits to the commune centre and estimated sum of departures from one's own dwelling place (for which the commune centre is only a stage in the trip). These variables did not reveal any statistically significant correlations. The correlation with the dwelling place was not too strong (Pearson's coefficient $C = 0.3527$, Cramer's coefficient $V = 0.2176$ for $p = 0.05$; next coefficient - at the same significance level). Most parts were listed by those living in the vicinity of the commune centre although differences in relation to others were not significant.

On the other hand, variables characterizing socio-professional differentiation of inhabitants proved to be visibly weak determinants of the articulation level. There was absent any correlation with educational background (which could be treated as a form of formal competences) and respondents' age (thus, there was not confirmed a supposition that duration of dwelling may be decisive for the degree of information possessed). Only profession proved to be a variable differentiating articulation of structures more than the remaining ones (Pearson's $C = 0.2122$, Cramer's $V = 0.1086$). Clerical workers and farmers would list relatively more parts than agricultural and industrial workers; the value of this correlation is weakened, however, by absence of any relationship with spatial mobility, which is undoubtedly connected with the type of performed profession as well.

The other aspect of analysis of attitudes towards the rural centre's structure was valorization. As it is already known, it concerned two evaluation criteria: value of elements of the structure and housing and aesthetic appraisals of these elements.

To start with, we shall outline here the problem of criteria by means of which both types of valorization were performed.

Positive aspects in the functional valorization category were most often said to include in the following order: convenient location of given parts in the spatial structure (most in-

dications, and namely 27.8 per cent), next good state of housing resources (6.1 per cent), cleanness and order (4.5 per cent). Negative aspects indicated in the course of functional valorization were almost a "mirror reflection" of positive ones although percentage distribution was different here: inconvenience of location - 18.8 per cent, bad state of housing resources - 10.1 per cent, ugly appearance or untidiness - 7.8 per cent. It should be added, however, that 40 per cent of respondents did not express their opinion on this problem while the remaining indications concerned very varied and often different aspects.

Simplifying the division of evaluation criteria into concrete and inconcrete ones (i.e. referring to general or detailed characteristics of elements of the structure), it should be stated that in the case of the former ones there were almost twice as many of them on the side of positive than negative evaluations (35.9 per cent against 18.8 per cent), while among the perceived shortcomings there were also indicated concrete causes of evaluation almost twice as often as general ones (17.9 per cent against 10.5 per cent). It affords a conclusion that the spatial location is a main criterion in the functional valorization, while characteristics of housing development itself - are a prevailing reason for formulation of evaluation of the housing value. It may signify an important indicator for designers of housing development: appropriate spatial composition is able to balance eventual shortcomings in standard of housing resources.

The next kind of valorization of the centre's structure revealed a much smaller share of persons having no opinion on this problem (12.9 per cent - absence of valorization). Criteria indications were, however, much more dispersed here.

Among reasons for formulation of positive evaluations, the first place was held successively by: values of the natural environment (39 per cent), general lovely appearance (without description of details - 14.7 per cent), next - characteristics of housing resources (14.2 per cent), and monumental or historical character of some fragments of these resources (10.1 per cent). Other, less detailed criteria were indicated less numerously. On the other hand, negative aesthetic valorization re-

vealed the following hierarchy of indications: general unfavourable aesthetic reception (17.7 per cent), neglect, disorder (15 per cent), bad state of roads and streets (7.6 per cent); remaining indications concerned many diverse detailed criteria of evaluation.

There can thus be formulated a conclusion here that evaluation of aesthetic values of the commune centre's parts is effected mainly by means of general criteria focussed on composition value of housing development and its natural environment. It is worth noting here incidentally that evaluation criteria do not differ from those which are taken into account almost everywhere where an "ideal" of good dwelling is involved⁷.

Simultaneously, the correlation analysis of described attitudes produced different results than articulation of the spatial structure. First of all, there were revealed considerable differences between indices of particular valorization types in given communes. The statistical correlation of attitudes was here significant enough to claim that evaluations are largely determined according to a prevailing character to housing development and spatial development of concrete commune centres. Omitting here presentation of detailed differences, it should be underlined that by far more evaluations, also more concrete evaluations were formulated in relation to centres with compact, relatively dense housing development - sometimes of a semi-urban character. On the other hand, less distinct and at the same time more negative attitudes concerned dismembered or clearly functionally divided structure, without a clear central accent in housing development.

Correlation between dwelling distance on the commune scale and object of evaluations revealed the following direction: the farther the respondents live the less crystallized their attitudes are (for functional valorization Pearson's C - 0.2690, Cramer's V - 0.1631, for aesthetic valorization Pearson's C - 0.1715, Cramer's V - 0.1005). It allows to state that the most important role is played in this case by personal familiarity with objects of evaluations.

⁷ See: A. R a p p o r t, Human Aspects of Urban Form, Pergamon Press, 1977.

The personal familiarity need not remain here in correlation with "formally" understood competence. This is confirmed by absence of a statistical relationship between both valorization types and a variable characterizing the educational background of respondents. Equally weak is the degree of differentiation of this valorization by a variable concerning age. On the other hand, correlations for a variable describing professions are a little more significant (functional valorization: Pearson's $C = 0.2083$, Cramer's $V = 0.1230$, aesthetic valorization - almost identical indices). It appeared that farmers, as most numerous village dwellers, are relatively least active in evaluations of spatial structures while in the case of the remaining professional groups: clerical, agricultural, and industrial workers - these attitudes are most extreme. Spatial mobility of these groups did not show any relationship.

The reservation that the described attitudes are treated as an initial study of the problem should justify limited and superficial final conclusions:

1. There was not confirmed a hypothesis about socio-cultural determinants of attitudes towards spatial structures. With some dose of approximation we can only speak here about a dominant significance of knowledge about the object of attitudes (ecological resultant of dwelling place distances on the rural commune scale).

2. The biggest predispositions for articulation and valorization of spatial structures of commune centres were revealed among rural intelligentsia, and relatively smallest - among farmers. Among these groups the eventual development plans of rural communes may seek potential "supporters" or conversely - lack of any interest. These are not, however, significant enough differences to enable a search for concrete "addressees" of planning solutions.

3. Neither was there confirmed a hypothesis about predominance of functional criteria over aesthetic ones in crystallization of attitudes towards commune centres. Research findings indicate a distinct predominance of evaluations in aesthetic categories, which may constitute a next indicator for the spatial planning.

The fact that the initial exploration of the subject failed to provide an explicit answer to the analyzed problems justifies all the more the necessity of their development in relation to various types of rural spatial structure. Undoubtedly, a favourable element here might be a possibility of confronting results of these studies on the international scale.

Andrzej Majer

WIEJSKIE STRUKTURY PRZESTRZENNE W ŚWIADOMOŚCI MIESZKAŃCÓW

Następujące czynniki wyznaczają współczesne wiejskie zbiorowości terytorialne: wspólnota wynikająca z faktu zamieszkiwania danego terytorium, powiązanie z systemem instytucji, organizacji i infrastruktury technicznej lub społecznej, wzajemne więzi łączące mieszkańców. Obok tego istotna rola przypada stosunkowi mieszkańców do przestrzeni. W warunkach wsi polskiej jej funkcjonalną strukturę określa z jednej strony historia i tradycja, z drugiej - administracyjny podział na gminy, najmniejsze z organizacyjnych form działalności państwa na określonym terytorium w dziedzinie stosunków politycznych, gospodarczych i społeczno-kulturalnych. Gminę można nazwać organizacyjną formą przestrzeni wiejskiej, mającą zapewnić optimum rozmieszczania układów komunikacyjnych, instytucjonalnych, zaspokajania potrzeb zbiorowości mieszkańców i aktywności w podstawowych dziedzinach życia społecznego - w formalnie wyznaczonych granicach.

Jednym z założeń planistycznych zagospodarowania przestrzeni gmin jest zmniejszenie dystansów, ułatwienie jej pokonywania, a za środek wiodący do tego celu uznano koncentrację miejsc pracy, zamieszkania i obsługi mieszkańców w formie ogólnogminnych centrów - ośrodków mieszkaniowo-usługowych. Funkcję tę pełnią lub mają pełnić (po odpowiedniej rozbudowie) ośrodki gminne: wsie lub miasteczka będące siedzibami władz administracyjnych, a tym samym faktycznymi "stolicami" gminnych mikroregionów.

Opracowanie to jest próbą empirycznej odpowiedzi na pytanie: w jaki sposób postrzegają mieszkańcy gmin strukturę przestrzenną ośrodków gminnych? Jakie są rodzaje i kierunki ich postaw wobec tej struktury? Jakie czynniki warunkują postawy mieszkańców?

Badania prowadzone w 9, zróżnicowanych pod wieloma względami, gminach pokazały, że ośrodki te postrzegane są jako stosunkowo niezłożone lub w niewielkim stopniu skomplikowane funkcjonalnie struktury, dobrze znane jedynie ich aktualnym mieszkańcom. Po drugie: recepcja struktur (mająca za wskaźnik ich znajomość) okazała się w niewielkim stopniu skorelowana z ekologicznym rozkładem dystansów zamieszkiwania w skali gminy oraz ruchliwością przestrzenną. Pośród cech badanych respondentów decydujący był

pod tym względem zawod. Analiza korelacyjna wykazała, że najlepiej znają gminne ośrodki rolnicy - rdzenni mieszkańcy wsi.

Waloryzacja ośrodków gminnych (ocenie ich jakości) pod względem funkcjonalnym i estetycznym pokazała dominujące znaczenie czynników urbanistycznej kompozycji a w dalszej kolejności - stanu zabudowy. Okazało się więc, że środowisko mieszkalne postrzegane jest głównie przez pryzmat jego materialno-przestrzennych aspektów. Postawy afirmacji lub negacji owych struktur najsilniej różnicuje wykonywany zawód, w mniejszym stopniu wykształcenie czy wiek mieszkańców.

Wyniki badań stać się mogą przyczynkiem do lepszego wyznaczenia kierunków przebudowy ośrodków gminnych przez planistów.

