

Marcin Piotrowski*

FORMS OF RECREATION OF RURAL POPULATION

In the field of cultural life of rural population there are absent in the Polish sociological literature comprehensive studies as well as such that would offer generalization of this problem in a broader time approach. And thus, we can meet many studies dealing with activities of young people in villages and activity of various the so-called vertical structures and organizations. It is on this research area that my doctoral dissertation, analyzing functioning of folkloristic ensembles, is focussed. In the course of my own analyses and also later field studies I found it necessary to undertake work of not only analytic but also synthetizing character - and thus systematizing and ordering nature. This involves a necessity of asking several elementary questions, which should be answered to avoid inaccuracy and incompleteness accounting consequently for insignificant usefulness of a study and many critical remarks connected with it.

One of the first questions concerns the so-called "author's methodological approach". It is necessary to determine here the way of viewing the reality and the way of explicating it. Some use the concept of "the only proper method" to explicate the reality, others depreciate or simply ridicule other approaches differing from their own. Still others do not possess too big awareness of the method, their works are for their most part of eclectic character. Many studies completed by social acti-

* Department of Ethnography, University of Łódź.

vists, enthusiasts, and writers while conveying many cognitive contents do not allow to draw any generalized conclusions that could be interpolated on a wider scale. The works of the author and his colleagues aim at showing the cultural life in the village in its diverse aspects, and according to diverse methodological approaches. We also intend to perform a comparison of the prevailing image of cultural life in villages through comparing analyses of chosen fragments of the cultural (social) reality in the final stage of our studies.

For the title of my subject I have chosen "Forms of recreation of rural population" to be able to encompass a wide range of problems not restricted by the traditional sense of "leisure time" or cultural life. In the first stage of our analysis we want to enumerate these forms of non-productive activity, which are treated as recreation in the village inhabitants' minds or, it is worth noting here, they are such recreation of which the inhabitants are not aware. An example of such activity, which is not verbalized as recreational behaviours, are behaviours connected with the most broadly understood religious life, and with various actions connected with this life. In our opinion, religious life, participation in church practices apart from their spiritual functions afford a possibility of recreation.

Our analysis will be carried out by determination of multiplicity of institutions, first of all, through their enumeration and characterization. We are interested in accurate and possibly complete enumeration and description of all these institutions and organizations, which in real life or perhaps potentially fill up the non-productive time of village population. We assume that one of these functions is recreation, rest. While analyzing this phenomenon it should be remembered that recreation takes place when we relax and regenerate ourselves physically and psychically. Accordingly, this "physical" and "spiritual" differentiation of recreation will help us to analyze fully its functions. Besides these functions, it is our task to determine a multiplicity of others such as sociable, economic, socio-educational etc. Each one of them can be found according to us in the analyzed institutions and organizations. We also assume that in the analysis of phenomena interesting

for us it will be possible to distinguish certain significant elements allowing to perform an analysis of semiotic character. As it is written by J. Pelc: "Alongside objects also amenities and institutions are subject of interpretation and owing to it they become for us signs of innovators' plans and organizers' will [...]. Almost in all these fields human behaviours and way of living appear as an element: on the one hand, they determine selection and structures of objects, which we use, amenities and institutions while, on the other hand, they are delimited by them. Thus, man's behaviours and way of living - reflected among others in customs, social forms, fashions, enjoyments, ceremonies, rituals, consumption of traditional meals - constitute one more field cultivated by semiotic methods, and semiotics of human behaviours represents one more branch of applied semiotics"¹. This lengthy quotation is to show that also semiotics experts perceive a possibility and even a necessity of conducting semiotic studies on human behaviours. On the other hand, if we remember that behaviours are a form according to which functions of some institutions are carried out, we shall be justified in saying that there is a common research area for a functionalist and for a person dealing with semiotics. What is more, we can go on to say that in this common field these methods are mutually complementary and assist one another in explicating difficult problems. Through analysis of all functions of an institution, we can easily get at sometimes hidden significant elements of phenomena we are interested in and, conversely, through disclosing significance of behaviours enrich the functional description. Presentation of a significant function may provide a ground for saying that hitherto we have not known all functions of the analyzed institution, and thus analysis performed by us was incomplete in this case. Bilateral relation according to Pelc, allows to get a better insight into organizers' will, their activities and intentions. Such an enriched analysis may be performed in several basic ways:

1. Analysis of semiotic function - significant. Separate analysis and description of this function, and more precisely of

¹ J. P e l c, Introduction to Semiotics (in Polish), Warsaw 1982.

covert and overt significance is a task interesting in itself as it reveals a new image of institutions and human behaviours. It may show that in human behaviours there are hidden significant elements, that some of them are signs, symbols etc. Accordingly, they have their important role in the social life - their analysis appears to be necessary as without their understanding our knowledge about them would be less complete. Omitting this last mentioned aspect, it represents certainly a new field of analysis and approach to culture. Consequently, it enriches its analysis, knowledge about it and its interpretation.

2. Within the framework of analysis of particular functions, it is necessary to distinguish a significant function as an element of the function accompanied by its fuller analysis. This aspect may lead, however, to somewhat "forcible" seeking out of significant elements and their description although in reality they appear to an insignificant extent and do not play any major role. At this stage of our study it will be possible to elaborate methods of attaining and determining meanings being significant for an analyzed phenomenon. It would thus be the next - further stage of work and analysis.

3. Determination of functions of significance, that is treating an element of semiotic analysis as an examined institution and differentiation of its functions through description of activity modes would be an element joining the above fields of analysis. This multiplicity of functions e.g. symbol, sign would be the next stage paving the way for fuller description of problems we are interested in.

4. Knowing certain significant elements from previous analysis it is necessary to seek them in other analyzed institutions and organizations, or to seek similar elements, which might ultimately allow to create a certain scheme of these institutions and organizations with an inseparable element being "significant element". In this way it would be an attempt at creating a model of institutions enriched by semiotic approach.

The above discussion is an attempt at presenting an outline of the author's interests. We are aware of the working character of the above presentations the aim of which is an attempt at systematization of problems interesting for us. This dis-

cussion leads, however, to a conclusion that it becomes necessary to simplify, first of all, analysis of phenomena due to a change in the size of the research area, multiplicity of aspects and problems, which cannot be effectively studied by a small research team. In this situation the author plans what follows:

1. To study previous works dealing with the above problems. It should be said here that a part of this work has been already completed in the course of preparation of the doctoral dissertation. It is necessary, nonetheless, to analyze the literature concerning problems of leisure time, forms of spending it, theoretical problems connected with its perception and definitions to determine precisely what is and what is not going to be an object of a new study.

2. To compile a list and to perform an analysis of documents concerning organizations and institutions operating in rural areas - these whose programme assumptions and real activity concern all forms of spending leisure time, organization of time after work for other kind of activity.

3. To prepare a list of basic and "complementary" functions of organizations and institutions which may help to delimit the scope of research in research guidelines. At this moment, it becomes necessary to take into account also the fact that not all these functions can be predicted and assumed, and thus it becomes necessary to plan for some research freedom at least at the initial research stage. It will allow to supplement and correct the assumed research concept, and next the concept of guidelines for concrete studies.

4. To prepare and verify a research instrument with a big field of freedom ensuring a chance for constant corrections and supplements.

There is also envisaged collective and individual consultation of subjects in the course of their realization with specialists from applied semiotics, sociology of culture, ethnology etc. The prepared concept is, anyway, mainly a result of the author's individual conclusions, and as such it has certain shortcomings ensuing from insufficient interdisciplinary knowledge, which is so necessary in studies of this kind.

Passing now to a more detailed specification of the object

of our research, it should be stated that we are interested in all forms of recreation, and thus not only the so-called leisure time but also everything that could be termed semi-leisure time. We assume here that any form of non-professional involvement is a voluntary form ensuing from one's wishes and interests, social and cultural conditions, such as the influence of the family, neighbourly group, religion, tradition, authorities etc. Thus, this voluntary involvement in any kind of activity is restricted by habits, even more - by customs, however, in the contemporary changing and modernizing culture its impact is much bigger. The research will encompass both traditional and contemporary institutions and organizations the functions of which are undergoing changes. We shall be, accordingly, interested in these changes themselves as well as in their causes and effects for the very existence and forms of their functioning. It has been decided that our attention will be restricted to rural areas since the research object and, namely, leisure time and recreation represent an object differing in character from small-town life for cultural, demographic, and ecological reasons. This research object calls for, as it will be explained later on, further restraints and more precise determination due to many factors. In this situation, we are going to study the real activity and influence of institutions and organizations and not forms of activity envisaged in their statutes. This reservation is necessary if we take into account the fact that rural areas oftentime witness nonstatutory and nontraditional organization of various recreation forms and ways of spending leisure time by different institutions and organizations, which would never be associated by a neutral observer with this type of activity. For example, the Folk Sports Associations may be an organizer of folk gaieties connected with consumption of alcohol in order to supplement their budgets. We also assume that in the first stage of our studies these problems will be carefully analyzed without compiling any reports of statistical character. The assumption made by us here is that qualitative analysis will provide the fullest insight into these problems and afford prerequisites for further quantitative studies. I would just like to mention here that analysis

of the literature of the subject leads to a conclusion that there were too many studies of statistical character which would not always provide an insight into a real nature of social and cultural transformations in Poland due to their solely quantitative approach. They failed to explicate causes of phenomena, human motivations, and diverse social, demographic etc. determinants of these phenomena and motivations.

The above remarks indicate that the object of our studies may be roughly described as quantitative, functional, and partly semiotic analysis of forms of spending leisure time otherwise known as recreation forms.

We shall be analyzing village institutions and organizations, perceived as organizational forms, which either group people or group them around themselves. Obviously, in our research object these institutions are understood as forms of grouping, human formations which satisfy human needs. Accordingly, these institutions will be understood here dually, on the one hand, as organizational forms, and on the other hand - in their functional sense - as forms satisfying human needs. We shall be interested in different institutions with regard to their degree of formalization, genesis, duration, range of influence. In a time interval we shall distinguish those which were already operating before the Second World War and those which were operating after the war. Prewar and postwar were also differentiated in time as a result of agrarian reforms, government and economic crises. Such and other events were changing the economic, social, political and ideological picture of the village which was followed by changes in organizations and institutions, their range and possibilities of influence, aims and tasks. Thus, it will be necessary to determine in our studies which events exerted an influence on changes in cultural life of the village, its leisure time and modes of recreation. Of course, an object of our analysis will be functions and their significant elements, which implies that we shall not be interested only in people, their behaviours or responses. In this situation, man - a concrete inhabitant of a village will be supplier of answers and information through verbalization of his experience, attitudes, description of situations. We shall

be looking at culture of the village not just through an individual man, but through a village dweller and his personality in order to disclose its unknown values, new significance. However, in the empirical process alone we shall be, in principle, talking with an individual. In principle, as I do not exclude a possibility of conducting an interview with several persons, members e.g. of one village family. As the object of our studies are to be village institutions and organizations we must assume that interviews will be carried out with different village dwellers including the oldest inhabitants and school youth. We assume here that the youngest have not developed a precise Weltanschauung yet, their behaviours are as a rule a copy of adult models, they do not have a critical attitude to what they are doing. Hence, we shall be examining young people who have already completed their primary education. Of course, such a wide diversity of the respondents' age will call for application of differentiated research methods and instruments, which will be described later on.

What is the aim of such studies. The author of the concept and his co-workers have been dealing with studies on culture in its wider and more narrow sense for several years now. They have been interested in the culture of both traditional and contemporary village. In the course of studies a lot of attention has been devoted to problems of the cultural policy in relation to the village. As it was mentioned earlier these interests had produced doctoral and master's dissertations prepared in the Department of Ethnography at the University of Łódź. Among others, these studies allowed to reach a conclusion that a diversified and complex situation of the present-day village requires constant analyses. On the one hand, it should help describe the culture of traditional village more fully, while, on the other hand, it should allow to describe the culture of contemporary village in all its complexity. This description is enriched all the time with new approaches, new interpretations, and new explanations. It provides an opportunity of understanding better the real situation, determine directions of transformations and trends in these transformations. We proceed from an assumption that these transfor-

mations are oftentime of spontaneous and uncontrolled character and their ultimate result is sometimes hard to predict. This but further complicates already difficult and complex problems of cultural life in the contemporary village. Our most general and ultimate aim, apart from enriching knowledge about cultural life in the village, is an attempt at paving the way for future forecasting of directions and ways of changes in the rural culture. In the course of our studies, through analysis of phenomena being interesting for us we would like to establish some guidelines concerning the way these problems should be approached. We would like to answer a question if and to what degree it is possible to plan and steer the village culture, as we assume that such planning and steering are necessary for the future cultural development of village dwellers. We wish to show that the previous cultural policy has been encountering unsolved problems such as those related to amateur artistic productions, initiatives springing from village dwellers, folk and pseudofolk creativeness, folklore and folklorism. Our further task will be to indicate that there exist personnel problems in these institutions; this personnel must receive specialized and organizational training as well as possibilities of operating within and influencing the rural environment. This task will be accomplished through our attempts of presenting institutionalization of many forms of the village cultural life. And thus, for example, we believe that the system of Rural Commune Centres of Culture, despite its assumptions, does not fulfil its role of promoting culture in the village and organizing its cultural life. This is due to the fact that contrary to their original plans Rural Commune Centres of Culture do not operate in all administrative communes (mainly because of economic and organizational reasons), and wherever they operate their efforts are focussed on rural commune centres bypassing other settlement units belonging to a given commune. It is not hard to guess consequences of such a situation. That is why in the assumed aims of our activity alongside scientific theoretical elements there should be also found practical aims, which might - at least we hope so - contribute to positive changes in the picture of cultural life, way of recreation and entertainments

in the village. We are obviously aware of limited possibilities of exerting an influence on day-to-day activities by the scientific environment. That should not, and I hope it will not undermine our serious approach to the practical aspect of the planned studies.

Marcin Piotrowski

FORMY REKREACJI LUDNOŚCI WSI

Artykuł jest próbą konceptualizacji projektu badań autora na temat form rekreacji - rozumianej jako wszystko to, co dzieje się w czasie wolnym od pracy i przynosi człowiekowi odprężenie, odpoczynek, wzbogaca jego osobowość. Jest tych form wiele - życie kulturalne, religijne, sport, życie towarzyskie itp. Autor pragnie w pierwszej kolejności poznać i opisać wszystkie te działania ludzkie, a następnie dokonać ich analizy w płaszczyźnie funkcjonalnej i semiotycznej, uważając, że zachowania są jednym z elementów znaczących i symbolicznych równie ważnych jak tradycyjnie rozumiany symbol, znak.

Badania podjęte były w tradycyjnych i modernizujących się środowiskach wiejskich celem wykazania różnic i podobieństw w sposobach rekreacji, wykrycia ich tradycyjnego i współczesnego obrazu. Ostateczny cel pracy, obok aspektu poznawczo-naukowego, ma przynieść poszerzenie wiedzy praktycznej na użytek animatorów i decydentów sfery życia kulturalnego ludności wiejskiej.