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THE PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE RURAL LOCAL COMMUNITY

In each society the level and direction of social activity of individuals and groups is not without influence on its duration and rate of development. Thus the problems concerning the cooperation or participation of different groups in the life of the society is of essential significance, both cognitive and practical.

The latter side of the problem manifests itself especially clearly in the context of our country's present situation. For it is quite apparent that apathy, passiveness and an attitude of reluctance of a major part of the society do not foster a rapid recovery from social and economical difficulties. From the above, as if naturally, there follows the need for a constant analysis of factual and not assumed and simulated forms of social participation of the population in different types of social structures. Thus the attention of sociologists should concentrate to a great degree on establishing basic patterns of social participation of the population in determined structures, on indicating factors which would activate the process, as well as on exposing the reasons for apathy and passivity.

The achievements of sociology in general, as well as Polish sociology, are not in this respect marginal. In Polish sociological studies much attention was given to the problem of participation and professional as well as social and political activation in the rural milieu. The works of W. Adamski<sup>1</sup>, D. Gałaj<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> W. Adamski, Grupy interesów w społeczności wiejskiej (The Groups of Interest in Rural Community), Warszawa 1967.

<sup>2</sup> D. Gałaj, Aktywność społeczno-gospodarcza chłopów (Social and Economic Activity of the Peasants), Warszawa 1961.

F. W. Mleczko<sup>3</sup>, J. Turowski<sup>4</sup>, Z. T. Wierzbicki<sup>5</sup> provided the impulse for the next in time, not too systematic and multi-directional studies in the field.

The following text continues this substantial direction of studies. Having at my disposal the results of my own extensive studies from the end of the seventies<sup>6</sup>, observations and sample local illustrations in the rural milieu from the end of the seventies and the year 1984<sup>7</sup>, I undertake in the following paper an attempt to answer the following problems-questions:

1) What patterns of participation of the rural population dominate in different formations of social contacts and structures functioning within a local community?

2) Does a high degree of participation in one formation of social contacts correspond with an equally high commitment in

<sup>3</sup> F. W. Mleczko, Z badań nad aktywnością zawodową i społeczną chłopów (From the Studies on Professional and Social Activity of the Peasants), Wrocław 1964.

<sup>4</sup> J. Turowski, Zmiany społeczne wsi a miasto (Social Changes of a Village as Compared to the City), Lublin 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Z. T. Wierzbicki [ed.] Aktywizacja i rozwój społeczności lokalnych (The Activation and Development of Local Communities), Wrocław 1973.

<sup>6</sup> The main source for the reflections expressed in this article is constituted by the results of empirical studies realized in 1977 and 1978 in University of Łódź. These studies were realized generally in nine communes: Widawa voivodship Sieradz, Pępowo voivodship Leszno, Sulmierzyce voivodship Piotrków, Opinogóra voivodship Ciechanów, Krokowa voivodship Gdańsk, Miłakowo voivodship Olsztyn, Nowe Miasteczko voivodship Zielona Góra, Skierbieszów voivodship Zamość and Wodzisław voivodship Kielce. In this study I take into consideration data from Widawa, Pępowo, Sulmierzyce, Opinogóra, Nowe Miasteczko, Skierbieszów and Wodzisław. Altogether in these communes 1253 families were included in the studies. Information concerning family contacts was recorded only in Widawa, Pępowo, Opinogóra and Sulmierzyce. The whole study has been realized as a result of an order of in Warsaw under contract PR-5. For deeper information about principles of selection and other data concerning this study look in: M. Kowalski, A. Majer, W. Piotrowski, P. Starosta, Problemy kształtowania ośrodków mieszkalno-usługowych w świetle społecznych postaw ludności gmin. Synteza badań socjologicznych (Problems of Shaping the Residential and Service Centers in the Light of Social Attitudes of the Commune Population. The Synthesis of the Sociological Studies), PR-5, III/120/78, Łódź 1980. The typescript in IKS in Warsaw.

<sup>7</sup> The studies on elections to the councils I carried out in October 1984.

the remaining formations whereas a low degree of participation in one of the fields is accompanied by an equally low degree in the remaining fields?

3) What is the relation between the global level of participation in the life of the rural local community and the selected features of social differentiation such as: the fact of pertaining to a certain social and professional group, amount of income, level of material wealth, level of education, the fact of belonging to an ecological zone of inhabitation within the district and finally the level of the district's urbanization.

As follows from the above, the key notion utilized in this paper and at the same time the dependent unit of analysis is the participation of the inhabitants in the social life of the rural local community. That community is the district commune<sup>8</sup>, for the borders of the commune, in my opinion, mark out the framework of a relatively complete and functional area of fulfilling the basic social, economical and cultural needs<sup>9</sup>. Many sociologists had put hope in the commune in the sociological sense seeing it as an institutional and social structure<sup>10</sup>. It was believed that the existing within it institutional formation would become the cause of forming new beyond-village local communities of a new type, in other words that this community would begin to fulfill the conditions of a district community.

In this context the studies of the population's social participation in the district community may be of essential significance in the empirical verification of the theoretical concept of a reintegration of the territorial rural community - a concept fully discussed in Poland by J. Turowski.

One would also need to discuss here the way of understanding the term "participation" in the life of the local community. The

<sup>8</sup> Commune is a smallest rural of administrative division of Polish countryside.

<sup>9</sup> T. K a c h n i a r z, Kierunki i zasady przestrzennego zagospodarowania wsi (The Directions and Principles of the Area Planning of the Village), Warszawa 1975.

<sup>10</sup> W. P i o t r o w s k i, Procesy kształtowania się ponadklasowej społeczności gminy (Processes of Forming the Beyond-Class Community of the Commune), [in:] Gmina. Jej funkcje i warunki rozwoju (The Commune. Its Functions and Conditions of Development), Olsztyn 1975.

term "participation", ever so often used in colloquial language cannot be by any means easily precisely defined. In fact I doubt if there exists a possible real definition of this notion which would satisfy the majority of sociologists. It is difficult to suggest that the multiplicity and variety of social phenomena which exist within this term could be expressed by a short formula which would not favour a certain manner of simplification. This ascertainment becomes evident when we review the definition of the term "participation" used by sociologists. The formulations of A. L. Bertrand and Z. T. Wierzbicki<sup>11</sup>, S. Chapin<sup>12</sup>, E. F. Katz<sup>13</sup>, J. Kulpińska<sup>14</sup>, B. Misztal<sup>15</sup>, P. Rybicki<sup>16</sup> indicate the existence of a small range of common meaning for this notion. The quoted authors and other sociologists in general present a coinciding opinion only in one matter, that is that a social participation is a specific involvement or entanglement of an individual or a group in the definite system of mutual interactions and consequently of social structures. However, the character of this involvement is of a various nature. First of all, some authors suggest that such entanglements are of a behavioural nature, and they proceed through behaviour and connected to it social functions. Others broaden this range by including the mental sphere and that of the consciousness. Some believe that participation is a social fact which takes place openly and objectively whereas others assume that participation may also exist in a latent form as a specific predisposition to

<sup>11</sup> A. L. B e r t r a n d, Z. W i e r z b i c k i, *Sociologia wsi w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Stan i tendencje rozwojowe* (Sociology of the Countryside in the United States. The Present State and Trends of Development), Wrocław 1970. p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> F. S. C h a p i n, Social Participation and Social Intelligence, "American Sociological Review" 1939.

<sup>13</sup> E. F. K a t z, Social Participation and Social Structure, "Social Forces" 1966, vol. 45, p. 199.

<sup>14</sup> J. K u l p i ń s k a, Społeczna aktywność pracowników przedsiębiorstwa przemysłowego (The Social Activity of the Employees of the Industrial Enterprise), Wrocław 1969, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> B. M i s z t a l, Zagadnienia społecznego uczestnictwa i współdziałania (Problems of Social Participation and Cooperation), Wrocław 1977.

<sup>16</sup> P. R y b i c k i, Społeczeństwo miejskie (The Urban Society), Warszawa 1972, p. 315.

the existence of the fact. Some expose teleologism as the main feature of social participation whereas the others treat this feature with some degree of reserve. The differences mentioned above are only a good example of the dissimilarities of standings in the way of understanding the term of social participation. As follows from the above it is easier to establish in what research situations this term is used by sociologists than, in fact, to determine how it is comprehended. Paying close attention to this fact, G. A. and A. G. Theodorsons state that the term "social participation" in sociological practice most often is assigned to the "1. participation of an individual in social groups [...] 2. participation in voluntary associations [...] 3. participation in some types of social activities or actions as well as 4. in external situations as compared to that of the individuals place of work"<sup>17</sup>. Thus excluding further discussions of the definition of the term, I assume for the purpose of these studies that I understand the term "participation in the life of the local community" as behavioural forms of participation of individuals and groups in such contacts and social structures whose existence and functioning results from the fact of inhabiting and utilizing a certain territory by the population living there. In the statement formulated above it is assumed that the operative analysis of participation as related to a local or territorial community should take into account the description of the participation of a chosen social subject in contacts and structures specific for this and only this community, as well as its participation in formations closely connected to the basic area but not identical with it. Utilizing the theoretical suggestions of W. Kornhouser<sup>18</sup> which point to the triple level description of the layers of social relationships in each structure, I applied it to my research situation. Since in my studies the commune was my main higher structure, I differentiated within its frame three basic formations of contacts and structures, which in the course of this paper I will also call areas of interaction. The first

<sup>17</sup> G. A. Theodorson, A. G. Theodorson, A Modern Dictionary of Sociology, Crowell Company, New York 1969, p. 292.

<sup>18</sup> W. Kornhouser, The Politics of Mass Society, London 1960, p. 21-101.



is the formation of contacts and social structures of a general or communal nature. The participation of the inhabitants in this formation is realized through such contacts and social structures which recognize the commune in its entirety as the basis and aim of activity and are oriented at it. As an example of these objects of participation one can consider the activities and undertakings of a community actions type which were depicted by W. A. Sutton and J. Kolaja<sup>19</sup> as well as structures which J. Young and S. Mayo call local organizations<sup>20</sup>. The articulation of the needs of the local population and the connected activities of the inhabitants were empirically analyzed. Moreover, the studies considered the participation of the inhabitants in social actions organized for the sake of the commune and forms of participation of the local population in the commune council. The second formation constitutes the layer of intermediate contacts and structures whose essence is usually defined through the functions. They constitute a specific link after which there most often follow contacts of the individual with the main structure. Generally these types of structures include such organizations and institutions which W. Piotrowski<sup>21</sup> calls local. Acting at a given locality they represent the interest not only of the population inhabiting the area but also structures of a higher order and parallel to the commune. The studies analyzed empirically the formal affiliation with these types of organizations, the social-welfare roles played by the inhabitants, and the frequency of attending meetings. Finally, the last formation constitutes the interactions and primary structures. Their essence is the direct, personal contact between the subjects taking part

<sup>19</sup> W. A. Sutton, J. Kolaja, Elements of Community Action, "Social Forces" 1960, vol. 38.

<sup>20</sup> J. N. Young, S. C. Mayo, Manifest and Latent Participations in a Rural Community Action Program, "Social Forces" 1960, vol. 38.

<sup>21</sup> W. Piotrowski, Miejska społeczność lokalna a organizacje terenowe (The Urban Local Society and the Local Organizations), Zeszyty BRU, Warszawa 1968.

in the interaction, whereas the characteristic feature of the structures is the fact that all its members are not able to contact with each other all at one place and time. In the empirical sense this level of contacts was analyzed through the inter-neighbour and inter-family relations. The neighbour participation was analyzed through such facts as: the number of neighbours with whom the studied family keeps social contacts; the number and type of mutual services and meetings. The inter-family contacts were analyzed from the point of view of their connections with the area of the commune establishing for each family the number of close families inhabiting a given commune (i.e. parents, siblings, children) the frequency of contacts and mutual services. Let us add, that we were interested in the participation of the local communal community of only its permanent inhabitants.

Putting aside the procedural and technical data I will now discuss the main empirical ascertainments. Their results can be expressed as follows: one needs to state that in the sphere of self-declarations the studied persons clearly stressed the great significance of constacts and primary structures for the life of the society. The neighbour and family were the two basic spheres of reference for the inhabitants of the communes under study. The persons interviewed were first of all interested in gaining the recognition and respect of the neighbours - 58%, next the family - 55%, friends and superiors from social organizations - 29%, and other people - 6%. When referring to the patterns and participation in particular primary spheres one needs to stress the universality, intensity and duration in time. Universality means here that the inter-family and inter-neighbour contacts in the studied communes concern almost all of the families. Only 2.5% of the families did not keep any contacts with neighbours, and 4% with the families of the closest members of the family. In terms of the numbers the 3-4 family neighbourhood circles and 5-6 family circles of the closest relative were dominant. Let us add that similar numbers of neighbour circles were also dominant in the seventies in the

small town<sup>22</sup> and urban<sup>23</sup> milieu. The great intensity of contacts in this area of interaction is the effect of frequent everyday neighbour contacts and less frequent but mainly weekly meetings with chosen closely related families. The basis of these neighbour contacts are mainly meetings "for no special occasion" - 82%, whereas family contact "visits" - 71%. They result in the exchange of information and advice dealing with various matters of life. The neighbour and family contacts are repeated systematically which assures their continuity and secures its durability in time. Considering the contents or the subject basis, one may state that more and more often they evolve from their protective and economic function to the one of a social and consumptive character. That latter function is realized more and more often both in neighbour and family circles. Presently in the village the neighbourhood is an institution protecting and helping in small and everyday matters and the family in basic and sporadic matters. The evolution of the function of participation in the primary circles in the village from service-social functions to more and more solely social ones is caused, among others, by the following factors: 1) Moving of a number of economic services from the relationships neighbour-neighbour and family-family to the relationships citizen-institution. 2) Systematic decrease among the rural population of the number of individual farmers amongst which economic services and material and technical assistance are undertaken as a consequence of performing the profession. 3) A significant growing technical independence of the farms. 4) The durability of the collective and external style of life of the inhabitants of the village interpreted as a system of values worth adopting. In connection with the above, the objective basis of participation in primary circles is submitted to a certain minimal reduc-

<sup>22</sup> H. Murawska-Koprowska, *Kształtowanie się społeczności uprzemysławianego miasteczka Ruciane Nida* (The Forming of the Society of the Industrial Town Ruciane Nida), Łódź 1981. p. 205-207 [a PhD Thesis, typescript in the Library of Łódź University].

<sup>23</sup> A. Sosnowski, J. Walikowia, *Sąsiedztwo i jego odzwierciedlenie w świadomości mieszkańców wielkomiejskich osiedli* (The Neighbourhood and its Reflection in the Consciousness of the Inhabitants of Urban Residential Complexes), "Studia Socjologiczne" ("Sociological Studies") 1983, No. 1.



tion in primary circles is submitted to a certain minimal reduction since its range does not embrace all or almost all dimensions of social life but only some of them. The personal, direct character of these contacts, though, does not change. What is more, one needs to add that the patterns of behaviour typical of these structures are conveyed to other levels of contacts and structures, especially to the intermediate structures.

Unlike the patterns depicted above is the dominating pattern of partnership in the formation of intermediate contacts and structures. Participation in structures of this kind is common, only 11% of those under study did not belong to any formal organization. Secondly, one needs to state that 72% of those belonging to organizations were able to attend the abode of their organization within the village. The commonness of formal participation manifests itself not only through the high percentage of affiliated members, but also through the fact that generally it is an affiliation with two organizations at the same time. Most often these are organizations connected with services rendered to the village and agriculture such as: Village Women's Association - 52%, Farmers' Association - 34% and Communal Cooperatives - 44%. The percentage of those studied who belong to political organizations was much lower. Our studies found out, on the other hand, that the functioning of the so-called social and socio-cultural organizations in the rural environment is marginal.

The affiliation and participation in rural intermediate structures were brought about mainly by two groups of motives. Studies indicated either certain material benefits which could be obtained by the member of the organization or his family as a result of his membership, or a "situational necessity" which as it forces membership of an organization if, for example, one performs a certain profession or occupies a certain position. Thus participation is mainly an instrument for realizing personal interest or needs of the primary groups with which the individual is connected. It has little to do with ideological, political or altruistic reasons. The commonness of organization membership remains in quite significant opposition to the small involvement in organization matters. This manifests itself in hardly any activity for the sake of the organization as well as

hardly any interest in its matters. The persons who were investigated did not recall any tasks set forth jointly for realization or means that were at the disposal of the organization to which they belonged.

As far as the participation in primary circles is intensive and lasting, and in the formation of intermediate contacts it is common but passive and instrumental, then in the community structures it is the least developed and the most latent. This manifests itself firstly in hardly any feeling of common interest resulting from the fact of inhabiting the area of the commune. About 41% of the investigated persons were not able to point to any matters or social problems which needed to be solved in their milieu. I noted a similar lack of interest in 1984 during studies of elections to the commune council in two other communes. At the end of the seventies a weak articulation of local needs appeared jointly with a common participation of the population in actions for the sake of one's own locality or commune. In many cases this participation was of a routine and ritual kind, although it was much broader and less apparent than in the cities. Similarly the participation of the village inhabitants in the commune council elections was of a higher degree than of the city inhabitants to district and city council elections. However, the elections themselves were not treated as a political event but as a nation-wide fact. Thus in our conditions one cannot acknowledge without objections the participation in elections as a form of participation of only a community nature.

Furthermore, one needs to stress the lack of self-dependence in terms of making decisions, organization or financing of the local apparatus of representative government i.e. what the commune council should have been in its assumptions. As a result of subordinating the council to the influence of the Commune Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party, the commune council governed under the guidance and control of political organizations and higher levels of administration. This fact is confirmed not only by my own studies and observations but also by the studies of my colleagues concerning commune councils<sup>24</sup>. I do

<sup>24</sup> From numerous studies published in: "Problemy Rad Narodo-

not suppose that there could have been any radical changes since in the studies conducted in 1984 about 20% of the respondents considered the role of the council in their commune more "decorative" than governing. What is more, only 3% of the inhabitants of the two communes studied in 1984 stated that the average inhabitants and council members possessed a significant influence in solving important problems of the commune, whereas 82% of those under study assigned to this subject absolute lack of influence. In the rural milieu both in the seventies and today an opinion exists that in deciding about matters concerning the commune and life within its frames neither the average inhabitants nor beyond-local (i.e. beyond commune) authorities have the greatest influence, but managers of main organizations and institutions of the commune excluding the commune council.

The nomination and not the election of council members in the seventies and the lack of self-dependence of the council even in smallest local matters brought about the fact that hardly anyone took interest in the work of the council, and today the interest is not significantly higher. Similarly, the participation of the council members was passive in its forms and came down to abiding in the council and accepting decisions "rightful in advance" and not worked upon by the council. It follows from the data presented by B. Zawadzka that about 20% of the members only abided in the council and did not take active part<sup>25</sup>. This provides proof of the weak functioning of the area of community interactions within the commune which is even more superficial than the area of intermediate interactions.

Summing up, one needs to stress that the participation in the formation of primary contacts remains still in the rural mi-

wych" ("The Problems of National Councils") I will limit myself only to specify the following: J. B o r k o w s k i, *Administracja gminna, jej rola w systemie władzy gminnej* (The Commune Administration, Its Role in Governing System of the Commune), 1978 No. 41; S. D z i ę c i o ł o w s k a, *Gminna rada narodowa i administracja w opinii mieszkańców wsi* (The Commune Council and Administration in the Opinion of the Inhabitants of the Village) 1977, No. 36; B. Z a w a d z k a, *Gminny organ przedstawicielski* (The Communal Representative Body), 1978, No. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Z a w a d z k a, op, cit., p. 45.

lieu the most active and significant; the participation in the area of intermediate interactions is weaker but clearly marked, whereas participation in the community formation is the least visible and hardly drawn.

As far as the second general question-problem is concerned, one needs to state that, generally speaking, no definite, positive concurrence of the levels of participation in the determined contacts and social structures was noted. First of all, intensive and broad neighbour contacts do not absolutely exclude similarly intensive and broad contacts of friends and family. A certain principle of elimination applies, however, to the contacts of family and friends. It usually happens that if the sphere of interactions is developed in the first sphere of those listed we do not observe this phenomenon in the second sphere - the same happens in the opposite case. What is more, the level of participation in primary spheres, both family and neighbour, were positively correlated with the level of participation in community contacts and structures. Involvement in the activities of the intermediate structures was not related in a significant way in any direction to the level of participation in the community formation. I found this tendency surprising and difficult to explain. One cannot exclude the fact that the concurrence is only statistical, though on the other hand, this tendency can be explained by a concurrence of forms of social life in the primary and community structures, and their dissimilitude with the intermediate area. In the primary and community structures the involvement of the individual does not concern only one role or a group of roles but usually engages the whole personality, whereas in the intermediate structures the participation dominates through fractional roles. It was also observed that there exists a weak negative concurrence between the level of participation in primary circles and involvement in the activities of organizations, and institutions belonging to the intermediate formation. As follows from these statements, the participation of the population in the life of the communal local community is characterized by the concurrence of levels of involvement for the particular formations of structures. It is thus the selective participation, variable in its intensity of

involvement in the activity of different groups and social circles. This assertion remains in certain opposition to the opinion propagated particularly by journalism and common in the average consciousness that people usually belong to one of the two general categories: either of those who are "by nature active everywhere" or those who are "by nature passive". This assertion is rather close to the suggestions of S. Ossowski who pointed to the fact that in certain spheres of life man is active and ready for changes whereas in others he is passive, immobile and eager to achieve stabilization<sup>26</sup>. The percentage of those universally active and those completely passive amounted in our studies to 8% and 12% respectively.

When considering the importance of the features of social differentiation for the level of local participation the existence of certain statistical occurrences of various forces and directions was noted. With respect to neighbour interactions it was observed that the higher the level of rustification of a given commune, the higher the level of neighbour participation, whereas the higher the level of its urbanization, the lower the level of activity in neighbourhood circles. The coefficient of rank correlation of these two latter variables amounted to  $r_s = -0.100$ . The level of participation in neighbourhood contacts increased together with the wealth of a given family. Those under study who had high income per person and high standard of wealth measured by the possession of the so-called goods of durable usage revealed higher activity than persons of a lower level of wealth. The relation described above was also noted by P. Kryczka in urban milieu studies<sup>27</sup>. The facts thus suggest that the range of these types of relations is not limited only to the rural community. Among the social and professional categories, the highest level of participation in neighbourhood contacts was

<sup>26</sup> S. O s s o w s k i, *Z zagadnień psychologii społecznej* (From the Problems of Social Psychology), Warszawa 1967.

<sup>27</sup> P. K r y c z k a, *Sąsiedztwo i kontrola społeczna. Problem odradzania się społeczności lokalnych w dużym mieście* (The Neighbourhood and the Social Control, the Problem of Rejuvenation of Local Community in a Big City), [in:] *Nowe osiedla mieszkaniowe. Ludność - Środowisko mieszkalne - Życie społeczne* (New Residential Complexes. Population - Residential Environment - Social Life), Warszawa 1976, p. 114.



displayed by farmers and farm labourers and by white-collar workers of a high school or university education.

In the instance of inter-family contacts, only the degree of family relationship and the distance between localities differentiated in a significant way the studied population. More frequent and broader in range contacts existed between the families of the parents and their adult children, and to a lesser degree between the siblings. The degree of family relationships when inhabiting the same settlement unit possesses a greater significance than the physical spatial dislocation of families.

The level of participation in intermediate structures was differentiated in a significant way by such features as: the level of urbanization of the commune, the social and professional affiliation, education, the amount of income per person in a family, and the level of wealth of the family measured by the value of possessed goods of durable usage. The strongest connection of statistical concurrence existed between the level of participation and the level of education as well as of social and professional affiliation. The direction of this first correlation was positive and usually signified an increase of the level of participation together with an increase in the level of education ( $r_s = +0.700$ ). This tendency was also observed by M. Wieruszewska-Adamczyk in the monographic studies of the village Zaborów<sup>28</sup>. With respect to the social and professional affiliation the highest level of participation was displayed by the so-called "bi-professionals", next the white-collar workers without a high school education, as well as persons working intellectually and possessing a high school and higher than high school education. Decidedly the lowest level of involvement was presented by qualified workers and farm labourers. The farmers belonged to the intermediate group. The level of participation by overlapping with other features of social differentiations, in a way consolidates them, thus being in itself a significant feature of social inequalities in the rural milieu<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> M. W i e r u s z e w s k a - A d a m c z y k, Społeczność wiejska Zaborowa w procesie przemian (Rural Community of Zaborów in process of changes), Warszawa 1980, p. 124-125.

<sup>29</sup> P. S t a r o s t a, A. M a j e r, Uczestnictwo w organizacjach formalnych a zróżnicowanie społeczne ludności wiejskiej

When it comes to the involvement in activities and structures oriented at the commune community as an entirety, it follows from our studies that to the greatest extent it is determined jointly by three variables: a) the level of urbanization of the commune, b) the social and professional affiliation of the persons under study and c) their level of education. The level of urbanization affects the level of participation in a twofold way. Firstly, it accelerates the articulation of the needs of the commune inhabitants if the milieu is at a low level of social and economic development, but at the same time does not lead to an active involvement of the population in solving problems. Secondly, when the level of social and economic development of the community is high - then its inhabitants engage more often in activities for the sake of their own milieu, and to a lesser degree, articulate the local needs. In other words, in communes of a higher level of development less is said about the local problems, and more is done to solve them, whereas in weaker communes a strongly developed layer of consciousness is not accompanied by behavioural activity. It seems to me that one of the factors which forms this second, dominant in Poland tendency is the exaggerated substitution of the individuals' activity by a strictly formal activity of institutions and organizations. There exists a tendency for each activity or local action to be placed within forms of existing bureaucratic structures. Taking over the role of the planist, the decision-maker and the executor, the formal organization generally limits significantly the individual or group initiative thus at the same time reducing the feeling of subjectivity among the members of the action. Frequent lack of synchronization between the aim of the individual's activity and the aim of activity of the structure leads to the lack of identification with the activity and its effects and in consequence, to a psychological attitude which releases the individual in his opinion from the feeling of responsibility for the effects of the activity since he is not the main decision-maker and planist. This leads

(The Participation in Formal Organizations and Social Differentiation of the Rural Population), [in:] Z badań nad strukturą społeczną (From the Studies on the Social Structure), Łódź 1983.

further to an attitude of passiveness and anticipation. This attitude is able to restrain any activity, even in these matters which in their essence could be solved without referring to institutional structures.

From the point of view of social and professional affiliation, one can differentiate five levels of participation in community activities and structures. Decidedly the highest level of involvement is displayed by farmers. The second place, definitely much below this level belongs to the rural intelligentsia and office employees without high school education; the third place to qualified workers living in the country as well as pensioners, people on retirement and persons not working professionally. The fourth place in our studies belonged to farm labourers, whereas the last and lowest level was represented by "bi-professionals" and unqualified workers living in the country and not possessing farmland. Let us add that the distance between the level of the farmers' participation and the remaining categories was significant. Their activity was approximately by a one-third higher than that of the second category - the intelligentsia and office employees, and almost two times higher than the "bi-professionals" and unqualified workers. The distribution of levels of participation with respect to the levels of education partially confirms the previous ascertainment. The highest level of participation was represented by persons with completed elementary education, university, and completed high school education, whereas the lowest by persons with incomplete elementary education. These conclusions concur with those contained in studies by B. Zawadzka concerning only the analysis of the participation of council members in commune councils. The author states that "the most active i.e. those most often participating in sessions and committees are the individual farmers with elementary education, men over 40 years old [...]. Among the most active there are no persons fulfilling managing functions in their professional work, or any decidedly young people: there are hardly any women. There does not exist, however, any correlation between activity in the council and party membership; among the most active council members we find both members of the Polish United Workers' Party and United

Peasants' Party as well as those not belonging to any party"<sup>30</sup>.

Taking into account the presented here data, I believe that one can formulate a generalization constructing a theoretical set of features of an inhabitant with the highest level of participation in the life of the commune community. As results from our studies the set of such features should be the following: the person should live in a commune of a high level of urbanization, he should possess elementary or high school education, he should be an individual farmer of a medium or higher, but not the highest degree of wealth. The set of features depicting a theoretical image of a passive man would have been the following: first of all, he is an unqualified worker with completed elementary or lower than high school education, possessing the lowest economic status and living in a community of a low level of urbanization. Keeping in mind the artificiality of the presented above types of an active and passive citizen in the milieu of the studied communes, one needs to point to the facts that the listed features may constitute certain premises for definite socio-technical solutions in the range of local activation of the rural milieu. I believe that in various activities and actions one can mainly count on the involvement of persons of not the lowest and not the highest social status since the realization of various undertakings probably coincides to the greatest extent with the interests of these social categories.

In the final part of this paper I would like to stress that from the studies presented here there follow certain conclusions which help us comprehend the social essence of the structure which is the commune itself. It still remains an administrative unit and a place of inhabitation where institutional structures organize certain behaviours of the people. At the present moment it does not constitute an integrated local community since the local organizations which act within its frames are not sufficiently integrated with each other, and the participation does not bring about a broader and more intensive process of integ-

<sup>30</sup> B. Z a w a d z k a, Gminny organ przedstawicielski (The Communal Representative Body), "Problemy Rad Narodowych" (The Problems of National Councils) 1978, No. 41, p. 46-47.

rating the population. On the other hand, the population quite often makes use of the communal institution system, and one cannot exclude the possibility that in the future it may create a more lasting mechanism of integration.

Paweł Starosta

#### UDZIAŁ MIESZKAŃCÓW W ŻYCIU WIEJSKIEJ ZBIOROWOŚCI LOKALNEJ

W niniejszym opracowaniu podejmuję próbę odpowiedzi na następujące pytania problemowe:

1) Jakie wzory uczestnictwa wiejskiej ludności dominują w różnych układach kontaktów społecznych i struktur funkcjonujących w ramach zbiorowości gminy.

2) Czy wysokiemu poziomowi uczestnictwa w jednym układzie kontaktów społecznych odpowiada równie wysoki poziom zaangażowania w układach pozostałych.

3) Jak ma się globalny poziom uczestnictwa w życiu wiejskiej zbiorowości terytorialnej do wybranych cech zróżnicowania społecznego, takich jak: przynależność społeczno-zawodowa, dochody pieniężne, poziom zamożności materialnej, poziom wykształcenia, przynależność do ekologicznej strefy zamieszkania w gminie oraz poziom urbanizacji gminy.

Na podstawie uzyskanych wyników z badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych w 1978 i 1984 r. konkluduję, że w środowisku wiejskim dominuje uczestnictwo społeczne oparte na wzorach właściwych dla grup nieformalnych i pierwotnych. Tego typu struktury są grupami odniesienia dla mieszkańców. Poziomy aktywności w rozmaitych układach kontaktów społecznych nie są wobec siebie zupełnie zbieżne. Natomiast globalny poziom uczestnictwa jest zbieżny z określonymi zmiennymi, niezależnymi w różnym stopniu, w niejednorodnym kierunku.