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REVIVING THE VILLAGE RESEARCH TRADITIONS OF GÖDÖLLŐ AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCES OF SZIE

DEÁKY Z.

Szent István University, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Institute for Humanities, Linguistics and Teacher Training, H-2103 Gödöllő, Hungary

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ABSTRACT

The foundation of School of Economics and Social Sciences (SESS) 50 years ago was not the beginning, but was the continuance of the inwardness of predecessor in title of the University's previously active institutes. There were valuable workshop of social sciences as the names of contemporary teachers and students have indicated. Weighty scientific researches had been started by the regional problematic from the beginning of the 20th century. The country-wide village-researcher front has evolved from it and our University has joined to it. The aims and inwardness has appeared in wide social layers as it has been a part of our University's courses and has made and were now used source of sociographic literature. The methods and approaches of former village-researcher workshop are still modern and would be exemplar for the regional-researches in our days. The village-seminar course had started again by the SESS in 2006. The aim of the course is not only to discuss about traditions of village-researches and theoretic questions but also to do practical investigations in the present-day villages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thought of starting the course "Village Seminar" occurred first among the associate professors of Sociology at the SZIE in the summer of 2006 at a village research camp held in Sárospatak and its surrounding areas. The course was first offered in the spring semester of 2007. It was based on the traditions of the village research seminar of Újzászy Kálmán taught at the Sárospataki Református Teológia (School for Reformed Theology, Sárospatak). The course is an introduction to the theoretical, methodological basis for the social geography, social ethnography, sociography and sociology of the rural society, the village and small town settlements. It describes the history, the theoretical and methodological results of the 20th century Hungarian village research and village sociology, moreover the genre of sociography and social geography and their most important literature.

The course may serve the students' better knowledge of society and may help them in all areas of work to understand the economic, social and cultural questions of rural society. It prepares students to form a realistic picture of society, to consider the values of the local communities developed with the history and existing currently, as well as to present such values, the problems and the work to do. The goal of the course – consistently following the principle of interdisciplinarity – is to offer the students the opportunity to observe the characteristics, traditions, special problems of the villages of today, and without intervening into the life of the community professionally assist the persistence and development of such communities.

In the summer of 2006 at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences of Szent István University of today the 90-year-old of village research revived. When the faculty has been formed 50 years before, in its ethos it was a continuation of the theoretical framework of the institutes existing in the legal predecessor university. The names of the professors and students of that time indicate the existence of high-ranking sociological workshops.

The problems of the rural areas served as a ground for the commencement of serious scientific researches from the beginning of the 20th century. From this evolved the national village research movement to which our University has also joined. The goals and the ideas of the movement could be identified on much broader social platforms and they infiltrated the courses of our University of that time, creating a sociographic bibliography that still serves as source material. The methods and the approaches of the village research workshop of Gödöllő of that time are still valid and may be an example to be followed by the rural researches of today. Our aim was to revive and enhance the village research tradition evolved and developed between WWI and WWII at the legal predecessor of our university, as well as to adapt the village research goals, methods and views of Újszászy Kálmán to the 21st century. Our cooperation with the village research seminars of the University of Miskolc, the Teacher's Training College of Sárospatak (Miskolci Egyetem, Sárospataki Tanítóképző Főiskola) and at the School for Reformed Theology (Református Teológia) may become an important achievement.

The past and the present of village researching at our university

It is known from the researches conducted by Gyula Walleshausen that at the legal predecessor institution of Szent István Egyetem there have been village research projects of great importance and national significance in the 1920's before the village seminar of Sárospatak. The most famous researchers of the country – Teleki Pál, Györffy István, Ihrig Károly, Czettler Jenő – lectured here as tutors in non-compulsory classes on the historical, ethnographical, sociographical and sociopolitical issues of the Hungarian rural society (Walleshausen, 1995). A great emphasis had been placed on educating social sciences, the development of interdisciplinary view at the legal predecessor university, and by this the institution gained a leading position nationwide in the evolvement and education of the scientific methods of village research.

As the Professoriate and Institution for Agricultural Administration (Mezőgazdasági Közigazgatási Tanszék és Intézet) became independent in 1927 the university was the first place in the country where courses named Agricultural Administration and Village Politics were taught (Wallehausen, 1995). The theoretical basis of the courses and as such the village research itself was taught by Steinecker Ferenc, the director of the Institute. These years served as the basis for the scientific and methodological foundation of village research at the University and trained the young researchers of the village research movements of the 30's (Wallehausen, 1995)

Attention has been focused on the villages from the 18th century always during economic and social crises due to the poverty and the bad condition of the village society or as a need to strengthen the nation's identity and to find itself, later it appeared when the problems of the urbanized society started to grow. It is impossible to understand either the Hungarian or the Central-European efforts of forming a nation, the political movements, and the trends in literature, the changes in fashion, taste, lifestyle and scale of values without focusing on the village, the people, the pheasants. In each era the intellectuals had started for the villages and towns along a certain ideology, with a certain aim.

The neo-conservative agricultural movements at the end of the 19th century and the village-monograph-initiatives stemming from the Magyar Gazdák Szemléje (Journal of the Hungarian Farmers) were aiming to enhance the organization of the people living from agriculture and the development of agriculture. Both this early school may be linked to Antal Bodor (1875-1955) and the strife to provide a methodological basis overarching to the 30's (Bodor, 1935), as well. The scientific need for sociology was introduced by the Társadalomtudományi Társaság (Sociological Society) and the Huszadik Század (Journal of the 20th Century) in 1900; however attention was only turned to the village society when its sociographic department was founded. The department was founded by Róbert Braun the first scientist to apply a questionnaire in his monographic research – A falu pszichológiája (Psychology of the Village) – Questionnaire and sample answers to a purported socio-graphic picture. This stream and the national developments of sociology have been blocked by the consequences of World War I. and the so called Tanácsköztársaság (Councils Republic – communist revolutionary government), moreover it has been stopped regarding certain persons.

Despite the above the village research movement in the era between the two World Wars may be considered as part of the flow that started in the 18th century, even if we know that it is an extremely complicated and complex phenomenon that may be interpreted and analyzed in many different ways. However, starting in the 1920's the movement character of the village research is a new element, and it had become the joint initiative of the groups formed along the line of different ideologies with the aim to help, better and uplift the village, to have a mutually balanced relationship between the village and the town, and to intervene into the then existing social order. One of the keywords was socio-politics as the agricultural crisis at the end of the 19th century affected all of Europe and the effects of the forced peace treaty of Trianon caused an economic and social shock which had only been deepened by the Great Depression. The great losses suffered in

World War I, the national trauma, the stiffened social structure and the more and more severe economic situation were unfavourable to the healthy development of the society. The underdevelopment of the villages, the crisis of the agriculture, the halt in the bourgeois development of the pheasants and the destitute of the people living from agricultural lease-work, the poverty of the people without arable land and those with smallholdings became extremely visible. The vision of the country of “three million beggars” had appeared to everyone (Oláh, 1929).

In Hungary and in the territories assigned to the neighbouring states the village research groups developed around universities however, on the basis of religious denomination and political ideologies. The mutual principle was however, that village research was considered to be an issue of the nation which joined together the researchers and intellectuals inside and outside the borders of Hungary. In the late 20's early 30's the best known groups were: In Budapest the Bartha Miklós Társaság (Bartha Miklós Society), in Szeged the Bethlen Gábor Kör (Bethlen Gábor Club) and the Szegedi Fiatalok Művészeti Kollégiuma (College of Fine Arts for the Youth of Szeged), in Debrecen the Ady-társaság (Ady Society), in Sárospatak the Sárospataki Főiskolai Falu-szeminárium (Village Seminar of the College of Sárospatak), in Sopron the Magyar Társaság Falukutató Intézete (Village Research Institute of the Hungarian Society), in Romania the Erdélyi Fiatalok (Youth of Transylvania), in Czechoslovakia the Sarló-mozgalom (Sickle Movement) and the protestant Soli deo Gloria Szövetség (Association Soli deo Gloria) and the catholic Szent László kör (Szent László Society). There were a number of other smaller groups, clubs, and associations covering the whole territory of the historical Hungary. Their goal was village-research they had similar education and possessed similar resource knowledge on the subject, they communicated with each other which gave the movement character to the research, even though the quality of the work done by them differed a great deal.

It can be considered a Hungarian peculiarity that the village research was linked to youth movements and that partially similar to the streams of the beginning and middle of the 19th century it was searching for the roots of the national culture and the national values in the culture of the villages and of the people. However, a new element of the research was social sensitivity and direct will to help, and acceptance of political roles.

At the legal predecessor of our university and faculty, at the Közgazdaságtudományi Kar Mezőgazdasági Osztálya (Agricultural Department of the Economics Faculty) the students studying the ideas and methodology of village research had formed a group, the leader of which was Imre Kovács who studied at the predecessor university and wrote his book *Csendes Forradalom* (“Silent Revolution”) during his university years which is considered to be a milestone in the subject area. He drew up the goal of their group in 1935 in the April edition of the *Magyar Út* (Hungarian Road): the young village research generation “goes to the villages to follow its profession and considers it a prophetic mission to deal with the villages, but the sense of duty also leads the steps of this generation there, so that it might make up for the sinful negligence the fathers committed against the village for centuries”.

Following the Treaty of Trianon the young intellectuals on the other side of the border believed that the only basis for the Hungarian culture as a minority is the folk-culture. However, it shall be researched scientifically and shall enforce the aspects of science in getting to know it. This theory was confirmed by the fact that the majority of the Hungarian minority lived in villages (Bárdi, 1998). Strong village research groups were formed in the succession states, in Czechoslovakia and Romania. Their program was worded by József Venczel (1913-1972) who was one of the leading personalities of Transylvanian sociology between the two World Wars, and was the most significant Hungarian representative of the Romanian monographic sociology lead by Dimitrie Gusti as well as the person who elaborated the scientific Transylvanian village research. He wrote in 1931: *“The goal of the village seminar is the scientific research of the village-issue. It aims to provide scientific material tools and view to the workers of the future Hungarian intellectuals in Transylvania in order to solve economic, sociological and cultural problems of the villages. The basis for the village seminar is the conviction that the most important question of the life of the Hungarians in Transylvania is the Hungarian village for which the Hungarian intellectuals are responsible in the first place”* (Venczel, 1993).

Social sensitivity, responsibility, knowing the rural society, helping the development of peasant bourgeois, reviving agricultural society, enhancing the life conditions by apportioning arable land, redefining the idea of homeland and nation, striving for scientific standard and extensive literary work were the joint foundation of the groups standing on different ideological grounds. This remains true even if we take into account that the researches and publications are of very different standards.

It would be useful to research, analyze and scientifically evaluate the sociological, agricultural-sociological educational and research activity done by the Karon Folyó (Karon River Magazine) during the past 50 years. We have things to turn back to and lay down as a foundation.

We do not just want to educate students specializing in ethnography. Our aim is to educate professionals who have thorough understanding of the rural society, who are able to take responsibility, who are able to see and understand sociological and economic procedures and their context, and who also have broad knowledge of the relevant literature. In 2006 the idea of reviving the village research tradition was linked to choosing such a method that offers this complex view. This was exactly the reason why we chose the methodology of Kálmán Újszászy.

The Village Seminar at the Református Kollégium (Reformed College) of Sárospatak had been formed on the initiative of the students, for the students of theology inspired by Kálmán Újszászy. Their goal was to master in the methodology and practice of knowing the Hungarian villages so that when they start their services in the villages they might do it prepared and by considering the local characteristics.

The course consisted of a theoretic preparation on Wednesday evenings, studying the relevant literature and of a practical part in the villages, which was a field study every half year. The students did the scientific research in 2-person groups while living with the families and using the guidelines compiled by Kálmán Újszászy as a tool (Újszászy,

1936). The ethnographical, historical objects, documents, family photos, postcards, letters, small printed papers, etc. and the drafts, photos and drawings collected and made during the field study were given to the data warehouse of the college which is considered to be a museum collection and is one of the most valued memoir of the former village research movement. The research area of the village research seminar of Sárospatak was primarily the area surrounding Sárospatak, Hegyalja, Hegyköz and the villages of the Bodrog river, as most of the priest graduating from the college were sent to these villages as pastors. Naturally the village research job of the to-be-reformed-priest were done mainly on a church denomination basis in Sárospatak however, on the basis of the guidelines of Kálmán Újszászy the universal Hungarian aspects had to be also been taken into consideration (Újszászy, 1934).

Thus the methodological tradition of this movement is carried forward by the Village Seminar course revived by the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences in the spring of 2007 and modified to consider to characteristics of the rural settlements of the 21st century. Therefore the village seminar of Sárospatak serves as an example to us primarily from the methodological point of view however, its approach and responsibility is also a model for us. The summer village research camp is an integral part of the seminar. In the camp the students may make use of the knowledge obtained during the year at an actual site and may supplement such knowledge by the results of the field research. At the end of the research done in the camp the students – assisted by the consultations with their professors – write a paper.

Village Seminar and Village Research 2007-2008

In the winter of 2006 I received a visit from a Hungarian member of the Siklódért Alapítvány (Foundation for Siklód) and he was asking for my help for the village. The representative of the foundation requested that we examine the aging, impoverishing and more and more secluded reformed church community and find out what might be the reasons for the fast shrinking of the population besides unemployment, we were asked to research the strengths and reserves of the village and how these internal reserves may be mobilized and how to put an end to the disastrous desolation of the village and keep it from turning inward. (The village itself is well known to Hungarian professionals (Benkő, 1788; Orbán, 1868; Hegyi, 1937; Barabás, 1993; Gagy, 1993). By way of example the students of the BME (Budapest University of Technology and Economics) have been doing a survey for the past two years and documenting the architectural heritage of the village, because due to the lack of changes and the desolation the characteristics of the sekler (székely) architecture of the Sóvidék (Salt Terrain) it remained intact almost as in a (living history museum) skansen).

By linking together the goals of the already ongoing village seminar with the request of the Foundation we have been preparing the students during the course for a half year for the trip and the work. At the village seminars preparations have been put in place and research has been made on Siklód and its surroundings in the subjects of socio-ethnogra-

phy, socio-geography, geological-natural geography, church history, folk architecture and economics. During the semester all students participating in the research have studied the most important ethnographical, geographical, historical, geological descriptions of the settlement and its surroundings. Everybody obtained the basic mutual knowledge for the fieldwork. We have prepared the students on the ethnographical, sociological and socio-geographical methods of village research and discussed ethical issues as well. The field research has been based on this knowledge. Besides the general preparations each student had to prepare himself/herself on one topic that she/he researched individually on the field.

We planned the work with the students in three sections. The sections were lead by three professionals being experts in three different branches of science. The geological research focused on the assessment of the environmental-geologic status of the area moreover on the geo-morphologic and water-quality examinations. The aim of the socio-ethnographic researches was the analysis of the local society, the characteristics of the historically defined evolution and the local culture, moreover the past and the current elements that strengthen or burden the social links, the operation of the family and neighbourhood solidarity net, the organizing nature of church life, the living style, management and existence strategy of the inhabitants. By the socio-geographic researches we planned to get acquainted with Siklód, its nearer and farther surroundings, the environment of the village, and the relations in the area and within the local society.

Two professors of the SZIE Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences Zita Deáky ethnographer and Melinda Molnár geographer were leading the course and the field work in which the students of two faculties of the SZIU Gödöllő campus (Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences and Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Studies) and in July 2008 4 students of ethnography from the Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Arts) participated.

During the camp besides doing the research works we took pictures and made copies of the local family photos, and documents on Siklód. Each participant had to prepare his/her paper on the basis of the collected knowledge source, which serves as a study that makes pursuing future intense research possible. Each document and photo is stored in the Village Seminar data warehouse of the SZIE Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, the copies will be handed over to the data warehouse of the Sárospataki Református Kollégium Teológiai Akadémiája (Reformed College of Sárospatak, Academy for Theology) and to the Miskolci Egyetem sárospataki tanítóképző Főiskola Társadalomtudományi Tanszék (University of Miskolc, Teacher's Training College of Sárospatak, Faculty for Social Studies). Our university has undertaken in a contract to hold village seminar courses at the above colleges with similar thematic and to hand over the documents of the village research camps.

The thorough and diversified preparedness, the visit to the village, the getting acquainted with things, the putting down everything in writing, the analysis and conceptualizing of the problems and their possible solutions means part of the traditions of Sárospatak to us. On the other hand tutoring and educating and the way to get to know the

village means responsibility, respect and humility on the side of those who as intellectuals undertake to help and better the rural society. Most of our students wish to engage in rural development, agricultural management, agricultural economics, and agricultural policies and hopefully with some other branch of agricultural studies in the future. We believe that in order to achieve this it is necessary to provide for the methodological basis for knowing the rural society and offer the possibility to experience the theories in practice, while having the opportunity to reach a goal that is sensible, presumably useful and has prospects.

ACTA REGIONIS RURUM

We believe that the course that starts with the classroom Village Seminar and ends in the village research camp in Siklód has great results through the papers written by the students and these are worth to be compiled in a book. And not only because we owe our sponsors the documentation of have what done we. We are certain that with these papers we prove that there is justification to revive the historic Village Seminar and the incumbent village research camp in the structure and educational goals of the Szent István University in the 21st century. We are of course well aware that in one week – even if we are thoroughly prepared from the literature – it is impossible to give a full prospect of a village according to all requirements of science, and it is also not possible to make responsible suggestions regarding assistance.

The published volume of the **ACTA REGIONUS RURUM** compiles the papers written on the basis of the research done in the actual year in the researched village or area. Therefore the Acta Regionis Rurum which was first published in the fall of 2007 and will be published in 2008 contains such studies that may encourage further research. We hope that the students appearing in the volume will continue their research and will account of their results in further papers (like in their graduation studies) or eventually continue this work with similar methods in different areas and we may make statements that induce further research.

The aim of the two professors leading the village seminars (Zita Deáky ethnographer and Melinda Molnár geographer) is to publish the Acta Regionis Rurum each year, in which the best papers of the students who participated in the course and the camp will be made public, by doing so we wish to join the similar initiatives and publications of other universities.

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