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LOCAL RURAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS  
IN THE PERIOD FOLLOWING REFORM  
OF THE ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

Basic assumptions of the administration system reform at the level of rural communes, which was initiated by the bill of November 29th 1972 concerning changes in the administrative division of the country and in the system of people's councils, envisaged a perspective of comprehensive social, economic, cultural, and political development of the Polish village accompanied by intensification, modernization, and increase of agricultural production. The bill establishing rural communes was passed, as it is stated in its preamble, "... to provide more favourable conditions for socio-economic development of the village, intensification of agricultural production, and improvement of living conditions of rural population as well as to promote the process of socialist democratization, further consolidate the role and power of the people's councils and their organs in rural areas, and improve their operations"<sup>1</sup>. This reform does not encompass a change in ways and forms of state administration of rural areas and agriculture alone. Consolidation of the role and power of the people's councils in rural areas is to pave the way for acceleration of development of these areas in the field of agricultural production intensification, improvement of educa-

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<sup>1</sup> Bill of November 29th 1972 about creation of rural communes and change of previous bill about people's councils.

tion and culture, improvement of the welfare and health protection system, protection of law and social order in the village etc. Thus the point here is to transform the whole institutional system of rural areas through which the accomplishment of the assumed goals is possible.

Administrative units operating within rural communes till 1972 had at their disposal a system of institutions and organizations which, however, did not possess full features of the system<sup>2</sup>. Although the rural commune institutions were performing liaison functions for rural aggregations and their socio-professional categories with the macro-society, they were largely performing the role of intermediary links transmitting and carrying out orders coming from the stratum of general relations to the stratum of primary relations rather than functions of intermediate structures organizing and representing interests and needs of rural aggregations. The rural commune was constituting an administratively isolated system of village units while peasant farms and the population were connected with a set of rural commune institutions only through a part of their interests and needs. Majority of needs were being satisfied by rural agricultural institutions (of the village level) and by institutionalized although informal forms of social co-operation which were still functioning. It, however, stands to record that the period of rural communes brought a significant contribution to the institutionalization process of rural areas. It created prerequisites for improvements and changes in the institutional structure which was, among others, expressed in the administration system reform at the level of rural communes.

This paper sets forth to analyze possibilities of formation - within the rural commune - a system of institutions and rural organizations from the viewpoint of three fundamental assumptions of "systems approach": 1) functional completeness; 2) autonomous character of the system of institutions and independence in relation to the environment; and 3) functionality of links

<sup>2</sup> See E. P s y k, Funkcjonalne powiązania instytucji i organizacji wiejskich. Analiza układu gromadzkiego (Functional Ties between Rural Institutions and Organizations. Analysis of the Rural District's System), typescript of doctoral dissertation, Łódź 1977, p. 483.

between components of this entity<sup>3</sup>. Thus a starting point for the analysis is provided by a thesis that the rural commune reform has systems-creating aspects while the set of legal acts provides prerequisites for a positive regulation of the situation of rural institutional systems as regards their completeness autonomy, and functional integration. Thus the rural commune represents a complete functional system of institutions - to a bigger extent - than the rural district.

New units of the territorial division were created on the way of linking rural districts similar to one another with regard to their area and population size. There were linked units managed in the same way and possessing similar internal structures. The territorial division of the country into rural communes, the number of which is almost fifty per cent smaller than the number of rural districts, did not imply an automatic expansion of the lowest unit in the territorial division. Boundaries of rural communes are adapted to present and future socio-economic needs with each rural commune constituting a subsystem of the larger socio-economic system of the country. "The point was that each newly established rural commune should represent a coherent structure affording - through its size, economic potential and facilities - suitable conditions for management of the economic, and socio-cultural development as well as for satisfaction of the inhabitants' needs"<sup>4</sup>.

This administrative move towards linking rural districts into rural commune units promoted enrichment of new, bigger socio-administrative-economic areas with institutional facilities. It also created a need for adaptation of the existing formal structures to new conditions, their reorganization or establishment of new units. Thus there were merged institutions of a definite type formerly operating in rural districts with the scope of their activity being adjusted to the spatial coverage of the new rural commune. In this way there were synchronized socio-

<sup>3</sup> See M. K o w a l s k i, System życia wiejskiego w Polsce. Modele socjologicznej analizy systemowej (Rural Life System in Poland. Models of Sociological Systems Analysis), doctoral dissertation, Łódź 1975, p. 456.

<sup>4</sup> S. G e b e r t, Organizacja i zadania gminnych rad narodowych (Organization and Tasks of Rural Commune People's Councils), "Państwo i Prawo" 1972, No 12, p. 4.

-spatial coverages of operation of the most important rural-agricultural institutions. By comparison in former rural districts one institution was providing services for inhabitants of several districts or more than one institution of a given type was operating within one district. The network of the most essential rural centres belonging to institutions of the rural-commune level (such as rural commune peasant co-operative or co-operative bank) was spatially distributed according to needs. At the rural-commune level there were set up institutions which had hitherto been operating at a level below the rural district and which had been directly subordinated to larger administrative districts or provinces (examples of these institutions include agricultural circle co-operatives, rural-commune collective schools, cultural centres, or health care centres). Particular communes continue to differ from one another as regards the set of institutions and organizations operating within them. These new organizational units were introduced gradually, starting with "model" communes, and next introducing them in the remaining rural communes along principles of their earlier "success" and available financial means. The "rural-commune level" institutions are located in the commune's centre, which is usually represented by a big village - possessing in most cases traditions of the rural district's centre - or a small town. Such a centre, constituting a cluster of the most important rural-commune institutions headed by institutions of local authority, enjoys a bigger chance of becoming a centre integrating village communities within the framework of a new socio-spatial territory as well as a centre of the rural-commune administrative, economic and social microregion.

Introduction of new structures, reorganization of old ones, their adaptation to new conditions prevailing in a rural commune, uniform territorial operational frames for all institutions functioning in the rural commune area - these are elements securing bigger functional complexity of the institutional system to be found in the rural commune.

One more matter to be solved concerns explicit allocation of authorities to basic rural institutions, especially economic institutions. This matter, although outlined in assumptions of the reform, has not been finally and fully solved as yet. Some steps



in this direction have been already made through specification of tasks for the implementation of which particular institutions are responsible. In many cases, however, it is only a relative responsibility in relation to duties of the rural commune's head being explicitly expressed in the bill. And thus e.g. institutions performing mainly economic functions, whose effects determine effectiveness of the whole rural commune, continue to be directly controlled by superior branch units. Simultaneously, it is the rural commune's head who is responsible for a failure of these institutions to fulfil production or service tasks measured by concrete material effects. In turn, the rural commune's head is directly responsible before voivodeship (basic larger administrative district) authorities for effects in agricultural production which are jointly scored by all rural commune institutions. Implementation of especially economic tasks, determined by indexes of socio-economic plans of the rural district's development, calls for co-operation of all institutions. It becomes thus necessary to specify their fragmentary tasks, forming together their concrete functions, and determine the degree of responsibility of direct performers of these tasks for fragmentary results producing together the final effect. That is connected with autonomy of subsystems and of the whole rural commune system as well as with the existence of functional ties between institutions operating within the system and co-ordinated by the rural commune's institutions of local power and administration.

The rural commune represents an area isolated, to a bigger extent, from the environment owing to its horizontal co-ordinating ties. Its relative autonomy is largely restricted by the influence exerted by voivodeship authorities on the decisions (mostly economic) made by local authorities.

The rural-commune level institutions represent quite distinct centres, at least in the formal, and legal aspect of the formed "branch" subsystems. They are units subordinated to superior institutions at the present voivodeship level but at the same time they are horizontally linked and subordinated to co-ordinating powers of the local authorities. In this situation autonomous character of the rural commune institutions should be considered against the background of autonomy of local state-political authorities, which should also constitute a link in the

horizontally integrated set of institutions with each of them being linked with superior institutions by its vertical organizational subordination.

The rural commune authorities consist of two basic elements: organ of state representation i.e. the rural commune people's council, and the local administration and simultaneously executive organ - the rural commune's head, who operates through the rural commune office subordinated to him, managers of plants subordinated to the rural commune people's council, and in the field of education - through the director of the rural commune's schools. In the previous system of rural districts the people's council along with its commissions belonged to a system of local state authority while the presidium of the people's council was constituting an element of the system of administrative and executive organs performing administrative functions. The work of the presidium was directed by the chairman of the rural district people's council, who was performing this function without remuneration (personal union of two posts). At the present rural commune level representative organs are separated from executive and administrative organs. The people's council represents an organ of state power and a basic organ of social self-government. It possesses an expanded internal structure (the people's council as a plenum, its commissions and presidium). The presidium, though retaining its old name, is a new organ. It includes a chairman of the rural commune people's council, deputy chairman, and chairmen of standing commissions. The presidium is an internal organ of the people's council and it represents only the people's council externally. It no longer represents an independent administrative organ with general competences. The people's council supervises the whole economic, social, and cultural activity in its territory being responsible for implementation of both national as well as its own local tasks.

Its duty is to work out the most important guidelines of socio-economic development of the rural commune through elaboration of annual and long-term plans as well as through determination of indispensable means of their implementation, organization and supervision of implementation of these plans. The plan provisions are binding for all organizational units both organizationally subordinated and unsubordinated to the rural commune

people's council. Thus on the strength of law it possesses strictly specified co-ordination and control powers in relation to all state, co-operative units and social organizations operating in the rural commune in the sphere of implementation of plan provisions. It also supervises their economic performance, enforces discipline, law, and order, and administers to adequate satisfaction of needs.

The rural commune's head is a one-person state administration organ as well as executive and administrative organ of the people's council being responsible for execution of bills passed by the council. From the formal and legal point of view he occupies along with the people's council a central position and performs an important role in the whole institutional system of the rural commune. In fact, however, poor performance of the people's councils furnishes him with a leading position.

It should be added here that in recent years the head of the rural commune is supposed to meet very demanding qualifications standards. At present he should possess academic background. This implies that performance, effectiveness, ability to use properly his co-ordinating powers depend, to a large extent, on subjective and instrumental characteristics of people holding the post of the rural commune head.

Scope of power of the local branch of the Polish United Workers' Party has increased in the rural commune although in practice it happens quite often that the position of the party's secretary continues to be weaker than that of the rural commune head. Co-operation between the rural commune head and the first secretary (being no longer an unpaid post as it was the case before) depends, to a large extent, on personal arrangements between these institutions determined by personal features of their chiefs and "reputation" enjoyed by people employed in both institutions among organs of state power at the voivodeship level. In the situation of even small conflicts of personal nature these become competitive positions which often affects negatively possibilities of co-operation with other local institutions and even implementation of certain tasks of the rural commune's plan.

The head of local power possesses numerous co-ordinating competences in relation to all state and co-operative units as

well as social organizations linked with activities of the rural commune. With reference to plants only indirectly connected with the rural commune's economy he can control launching and implementation of joint undertakings connected with socio-economic development of the local area.

He possesses special authorities in relation to those units which are directly involved in implementation of the socio-economic development plans. The rural commune's plan is a fundamental instrument promoting formation of functional ties, and at the same time it provides a basic formal and legal platform of co-ordinating activities initiated by local government bodies.

These comprehensive co-ordinating powers are accompanied by responsibility for performance of all economic and social units located within the rural commune's area and operating for its benefit. In practice there is strictly observed responsibility of the rural commune's head for implementation of tasks posed before all institutions. However, not all people holding this responsible post can fully carry out their co-ordinating powers, and that for various reasons. In relation to institutions failing to accomplish the tasks posed before them the rural commune's head can employ penalties such as e.g. he can move a resolution that managers of these institutions should leave their posts. In practical life, it happens very often that a given man is not only and exclusively guilty - there are sometimes difficulties with procurement of materials, financial troubles etc. Moreover, there are instances when some managers despite justified arguments put forward by the rural commune's head cannot be sacked. On top of it all he will have to find a proper man to replace the former manager.

These examples point only at some co-ordination problems. It can, nonetheless, be stated that co-ordinating institutions possess considerable powers, which are largely dependent upon concrete people and their proper background to perform their functions. There are other tasks the head must tackle. He is, among others, an organ of state administration of first instance. And thus he must protect interests of individual inhabitants as well as other general interests, especially those connected with the socio-economic development of the district.

The best index of actual autonomy of the state power insti-



tution are possibilities of making independent decisions concerning primary problems of a given area, and provision of appropriate means as a basis for activity. In this sphere the situation was largely improved as compared with the previous set-up although there continue to be imposed here some restrictions.

Decisional powers of the rural commune's head and of the local people's council are relatively insignificant in elaboration of tasks, especially economic and investment ones. There must still be observed some parameters in the field of the most important tasks imposed by the voivodeship level, which are of obligatory nature. In most cases, superior authorities do not make provisions for existing local possibilities, these are often much smaller (and not necessarily artificially lowered by rural commune authorities) than those recommended from above. In the field of resources, the main difference lies in increased budget of the rural commune earned, among others, through increased taxation of local plants and socialized institutions. On the other hand, financial means for schooling, health, and culture centres etc. continue to be restricted and determined by superior units of these institutions, to be next transferred through intermediary of the local people's council and the rural commune's head. Insufficient amount of resources earmarked for activities of different types and coming from different sources of financing of these activities constitutes an important factor hampering implementation of tasks aiming at satisfaction of basic social needs.

In the rural commune there can be observed a bigger degree of functional ties than in the rural district especially in the framework of branch subsystems.

It is worth mentioning here the consequences of reorganization of some structures for creation of additional opportunities in the area of instrumental ties on the basis of resources concentration. And accordingly, reorganization of rural educational system, which aimed among others at creation of better accommodation, personnel conditions, and better provision of didactic aids facilitated concentration of these resources in buildings adapted to teaching purposes thus creating more favourable conditions for learning for children from the rural commune area.

Simultaneously there were created new possibilities of passing former school premises over to other institutions. The reorganization of the network of rural schools is accompanied by other problems including transport of children to distant schools, transport difficulties due to bad roads etc. which - in turn - makes it necessary for other institutions from the rural commune's area to render assistance.

Concentration of mechanization equipment for individual farms within the framework of one local institution - co-operative of agricultural circles - having at its disposal sometimes several technical centres favours better utilization of its equipment for agricultural purposes, its better maintenance through skilled personnel, proper distribution of the equipment according to the needs of a given area and its farmers.

Professionalization of institutionalized tasks is accompanied by certain changes in the field of subject ties in the local institutions system. In rural territorial aggregations of the former type the activity of institutions and organizations was based on social unpaid work of local people, who were sometimes performing several functions in different institutions at the village and district level. Today the changed organizational structure, definite requirements put before candidates applying for posts in the rural commune institutions - and especially managerial posts or those requiring specialist professional qualifications - cause that much smaller emphasis is placed on social unpaid work. The personnel employed in the rural commune institutions does not necessarily have to be recruited from among inhabitants of a given village or even a given rural commune. Similarly the previously multifunctional tasks performed by one social worker have been cut down recently and especially in the case of those who have full time jobs. They are sometimes performing some social unpaid functions in collegiate bodies (commissions, councils, boards). In rural communes with a relatively high economic level and a considerable proportion of large, well prospering farms - in councils and on boards of institutions can be found farmers representing interests of highly productive farms. Thus the economic activity of farmers continues to be combined with their social activities this time performed in institutions providing concrete services for agriculture.

The scale and scope of transformations effected in the rural areas from the moment of establishing rural communes allow to put forward a thesis that the institutional systems approach being evident in formal and legal spheres affords big opportunities for formation in a longer time perspective of a system of rural-agricultural institutions and organizations within the boundaries of rural commune administratively determined socio-spatial units, which may become an integrated rural-agricultural microregion.

Already today the set of institutions and organizations operating within a rural commune possesses some features qualifying it for a quasi-system. Fulfilment of systems-type conditions (as discussed above) is feasible in the situation of agricultural communes with supremacy of individual peasant farms in areas not encompassed by direct influence of rapid industrialization and urbanization processes or of big towns.

In these novel conditions processes shaping diverse forms of rural life take a different course, there are different ties between elements of the Rural Life System, and the system of the rural commune's institutions and organizations has a different form and character.

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INSTITUCIONES LOCALES Y ORGANIZACIONES RURALES  
DESPUÉS DE LA REFORMA  
DE ADMINISTRACIÓN TERRITORIAL

La ponencia tiene por objeto investigar las instituciones y organizaciones locales del campo con relación a los cambios producidos por la reforma de administración territorial en 1972-1975.

Se puso como punta de partida la tesis de que la reforma tiene aspectos encaminados a creación de sistemas respecto a las instituciones rurales, que el aparato legal creó premisas positivas para: 1) la formación de un sistema relativamente completo de estructuras capaces de satisfacer las necesidades locales, 2) el aumento del funcionalismo y de las conexiones de dichas estructuras, 2) la conservación de relativa autonomía por

medio de este sistema con relación a más altas estructuras sociales (las instituciones del nivel de voivodía y centrales). En la ponencia se trata de verificar dicha tesis, manifestando el análisis de la actual situación hasta qué punto se están realizando prácticamente en las locales instituciones rurales tres principios fundamentales arriba indicados de su sistematización, señalando también posibles fenómenos o procesos que puedan provocar desviaciones o deformaciones de las tesis admitidas en esta ponencia.

Эльжбета Псык

МЕСТНЫЕ ИНСТИТУТЫ И СЕЛЬСКИЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ  
ПОСЛЕ РЕФОРМЫ АДМИНИСТРАЦИИ  
В ТЕРРИТОРИАЛЬНОМ ОТНОШЕНИИ

Темой доклада является характеристика изменений, происшедших в местных институтах и организациях, действующих в сельских местностях в 1972-1975 гг., т.е. в период реформы администрации в территориальном отношении.

Исходным пунктом для рассуждений стал тезис, что упомянутая реформа имеет системообразные аспекты в отношении к сельским институтам и что свод правовых актов создал благоприятные предпосылки для образования относительно полной системы структур, удовлетворяющих местные нужды, для более полного их функционирования и взаимосвязей и, наконец, для соблюдения относительной автономии этой системы в отношении к более развернутым общественным структурам (напр. в отношении к институтам воеводского и центрального уровня).

В докладе делаются попытки верификации этого тезиса. Анализ функционирования местных институтов в сельских местностях показывает степень выполнения в практической деятельности трех основных положений их "системности" и какие относительные явления или процессы вызывают нарушения или отклонения от принятых в настоящем докладе предположений.



*Elżbieta Psyk*LOKALNE INSTYTUCJE I ORGANIZACJE WIEJSKIE  
PO REFORMIE ADMINISTRACJI TERENOWEJ

Przedmiotem artykułu są lokalne instytucje i organizacje funkcjonujące na obszarach wiejskich w aspekcie zmian, jakie w tym zakresie poczyniła reforma administracji terenowej dokonywana w latach 1972-1975.

Punktem wyjścia rozważań jest teza, że reforma ta ma aspekty systemotwórcze w odniesieniu do instytucji wiejskich, że zbiór aktów prawnych stworzył pozytywne przesłanki: dla kształtowania, względnie kompletnego układu struktur zaspokajających lokalne potrzeby, dla większej ich funkcjonalności i wzajemnych powiązań, wreszcie dla zachowania względnej autonomii przez ten układ w stosunku do szerszych struktur społecznych (jak instytucje szczebla wojewódzkiego i centralnego). Artykuł jest próbą weryfikacji tej tezy, a analiza istniejącej sytuacji w zakresie funkcjonowania lokalnych instytucji wiejskich ukazuje, w jakim stopniu spełniane są w praktyce trzy podstawowe założenia ich "systemowości" i jakie ewentualne zjawiska czy procesy powodują odstępstwa lub odkształcenie od przyjętych w artykule założeń.