

Draft

Translating Knowledge, Practicing Rurality: Rural Youth in the People's Republic of Poland and Beyond

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During the second half of the 20th century youth culture and adolescent behavior became important topics in scholarly studies of the industrialized world – for example the famous Shell Studies which accompanied, mirrored and coined the *Zeitgeist* of Western Germany since 1953. The studies based on empirical surveys with a “representative” group of girls and boys/young men and women were published in paperbacks and they were discussed in public. The worldviews of the youngsters counted (and still count) as important signs of or hints to fundamental changes in society, the young people were seen as a social avantgarde.¹ Not only in West Germany or the Western Part of Europe empirical studies on youngsters and young adults played an important role. Since 1984, the “Institute of Research on Problems of Adolescents (Instytut badań problemów młodzieży)” has been publishing studies on *Polish youth (Młodzież Polska)*. The studies comprised juridical, demographic, social and educational information, including “social pathology” and political activities. Not surprising in times of material law, the 1986 study diagnosed that the adolescents had lost interest in political and social organizations.² It also devoted a chapter to customs and manners and discussed the role of fashion. The scholars observed the importance of “life style (styl życia)” among the adolescents, a term which does allude not only to the transnational aspects of youth cultures but also the transnational aspect of scholarly concepts. Those empirical studies represented knowledge on young people. The contemporaries took those studies on youngsters seriously because they judged them as knowledge about but also as knowledge of adolescents. They judged the studies with regard to the future of society. The term “life style” moved through disciplines, through the Iron Curtain, and through groups of young adults who knew about the coolness of clothes, music or leisure practices.

While some historical studies refer to those empirical works as a reflection of reality, others analyzed them as a mean for societies to produce knowledge on themselves. Referring to Foucault and others, the history of science and knowledge stresses the aspect of how research categories and contemporary discourses construct the research objects which they want to

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² Jan Bogusz (Hrsg.), *Polska Młodzież 1986*, Warszawa, 1987.

study.³ In comparison, Agnieszka Kościańska shows in her studies on sexology and sexual education in the People's Republic of Poland how the surveyed people and patients of sexologists influenced scientific and popularized knowledge on sexuality.⁴ Her studies throw light on the reciprocal and translational aspects of making and spreading knowledge. The translational turn has pushed processes of communicating into the center of historical and cultural studies. The concept of translating helps to analyze the production of social knowledge in a more complex and reciprocal way. While praxeology strengthens the processes of constructing via doing, a translational approach strengthens the aspects of communicating that are linked to the processes of doing.⁵ Society is understood as complex and reciprocal, as something that is constructed via doing, communicating and translating. The processes of communicating need media. The messages of doing and communicating must be transported via language, via the body, via visual signs and via the media. These mediators, means and tools form different, overlapping or separated meanings, actors, spaces and times.

Using the concept of translating and mediating, the following reflections will analyze knowledge production on rural youth in Poland. To do this, I will analyze different media – scholarly studies, memorial texts of youngsters and young adults, films and magazines. I understand them as mediators or practices of translating knowledge – not only about the topics themselves but about social relations, habitus and using media. I will use a very general understanding of media as tools for constructing and transforming knowledge. These tools form social practices and they are connected with other practices. Translating and mediating stresses the participation of all actors. The empirical studies translated the results of surveys, interviews and other material into statistics and scholarly narratives. Their authors placed themselves in a national and an international field of academic habitus. Nevertheless, they had to be aware of political intervention and censorship. The adolescents/young adults brought with them their own knowledge. They translated their experiences and ideas, they assumed expectations of interviewers/researchers in answers to surveys and interviews. To analyze

³ See for example Benjamin Ziemann/Richard F. Wetzell/Dirk Schumann/Kerstin Brückweh, Introduction: The Scientization of the Social in Comparative Perspective, in: Kerstin Brückweh (Hrsg.), *Engineering society. The role of the human and social sciences in modern societies, 1880-1980*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York 2012, S. 1–41; Benjamin Ziemann, *Die Metaphorik des Sozialen: Soziologische Selbstbeschreibungen westeuropäischer Gesellschaften im 20. Jahrhundert*, in: Lutz Raphael (Hrsg.), *Theorien und Experimente der Moderne. Europas Gesellschaften im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2012, S. 193–227.

⁴ Agnieszka Kościańska, *Sex on equal terms?: Polish sexology on women's emancipation and "good sex" from the 1970s to the present*, in: *Sexualities* 19 (2016) 1-2, S. 236–256.

⁵ Andreas Reckwitz, *Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken: Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive*, in: *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32 (2003) 4, S. 282–301.

these processes of translating/communicating I will refer to autobiographical texts of adolescents written for a competition which was organized by the Committee for Research on contemporary culture at the Polish Academy of Science (Komitet badań nad kulturą współczesną polskiej akademii nauk). The competition aimed to gain material for studying rural youth.⁶ Like scientific studies these texts followed rules of writing and publishing. They are not a lens into an authentic world, but they represent knowledge production of young writers – of knowledge on writing, on hopes and on “life style”. In addition, I will follow the ways of popularization via media which assumptions on rural youth took: fiction, films, magazines. I want to show the permanent practices of participating and translating, of communication.⁷ I will try to understand socialist societies from a praxeological perspective which means asking how actors made sense of the world via knowledge.⁸ In this way I will understand producing knowledge as a practice of constructing society beyond the master narrative on the domination of “the political”, the state and ideology.⁹ Taking rural youth as a focus opens up a new perspective on the multiple ways the social/the society was made. My tools for following the roving knowledge of socialist villages will be three “topics”:

- Making rurality and forming social groups
- The countryside, culture and making progressive facts
- The meanings of sexuality and the making of communist truth

I will follow crucial topics of youth and rurality through different media. The examples are not representative but will prove the concept of translating knowledge. Before discussing the examples, I will start with some remarks on the meanings of rural youth.

Why this? Understanding the meanings of youth and the meanings of rurality as products of translating and mediating knowledge will throw new light on some aspects of socialist societies and of rurality as well. When dealing with socialist countries, censorship, controlling politics and policy via the party and the hierarchical top-down organization of socialist countries were taken into consideration. Above all the assumption dominates that a strongly controlled relationship between empirical studies and politics makes a closer look unnecessary.¹⁰ Against these “blank spaces beyond the wall”¹¹ scholars strengthen the

⁶ Józef Chałasiński (Hrsg.), *Awans pokolenia. wstęp Józef Chałasiński*, Warszawa, 1964.

⁷ Frank Bösch/ Annette Vowinckel, *Mediengeschichte*, <http://docupedia.de/zg/Mediengeschichte> 24.11.2016.

⁸ Reckwitz, Reckwitz 2003.

⁹ Müller, Müller 2014; Ziemann, Ziemann 2012.

¹⁰ Tim B. Müller, *Konvergenz und Kritik im Kalten Krieg: Sozialwissenschaftliche Gegnerforschung und intellektuelle Selbstbeobachtung in den USA*, in: Gangolf Hübinger (Hrsg.), *Europäische Wissenschaftskulturen und politische Ordnungen in der Moderne (1890-1970)*, München 2014, S. 249–272.

¹¹ James M. Robertson, *The Great Blank Space Beyond the Wall: Eastern Europe in Modern Intellectual History*, in: *Contemporary European History* 25 (2016) 1, S. 177–189.

complexity of intellectual history and everyday life in Eastern Europe.¹² They emphasize the social potential of political ideas and criticize the dominant dichotomous structure of interpreting communist states between “dissidents and commissars”¹³.

Taking up these approaches, I will understand the People’s Republic of Poland through knowledge on rural youth and I will question some familiar assumptions on the socialist societies and their place in the world. I hope this will sharpen our understanding of the performative ways of making rurality in times when approximate the rural to the urban was on top of politics and analyses on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Nevertheless, it is an experiment and I am not sure where it will take me.

The meanings of rural youth

“Rural youth” combines two strong terms of socialist politics: progress and its opposition backwardness. Progress marked the way to communist society. Therefore, it was strongly connected with youth, the new generations which represented “the new man”, the new, now socialist society on its way to communism.¹⁴ Youth often represented the addressee of politics and achievements, even the worker represented in propaganda often was young or a young adult.

In addition, progress mediated a history of meanings: The Marxist analyses of societies and history of the 19th century, the demands of the socialist movements in those times, progress also may refer to achievements of the interwar years, like social and educational politics, scientific research and the establishing of institutions for medical and social findings. The term also transported association of its opposition: backwardness which was connected with poverty, lack of institutions of education, traditional social institutions like the family and often religiosity as well.

The ideas of progress and backwardness were structured by some general assumptions, i.e. mapping the urban and the rural as progressive and backward. The countryside was regarded as important for supplying the towns and industrial sites with foods and as a space which needed a fundamental restructuring. Modernization mainly meant urbanization of the

¹² Joachim von Puttkamer, *Gesellschaftliche Selbstbeschreibungen und soziales Krisenbewusstsein in den ostmitteleuropäischen Volksrepubliken*, in: Lutz Raphael (Hrsg.), *Theorien und Experimente der Moderne. Europas Gesellschaften im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2012, S. 229–251.

¹³ Costică Brădăţan/ Sergej Ušakin (Hrsg.), *In Marx's shadow: Knowledge, power, and intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Lanham, 2010.

¹⁴ Katherine Lebow, *Public Works, Private Lives: Youth Brigades in Nowa Huta in the 1950s*, in: *Contemporary European History* 10 (2001) 2, S. 199–219.

countryside. Progress and backwardness seemed to be strictly divided or assigned to the urban and the rural.

The socialist answer to mainly agrarian societies like Poland was not only a strong emphasis on heavy industry and the building of industrial centers with a strong connection to urban surroundings of which Nowa Huta, the newly built center of an iron and steel work combined with a newly built workers' town, is only the best-known example. Industry especially heavy industry stood for a social, economic and technical modernity and the emphasis on a workers' state. In addition, politics addressed the younger generation of the lower classes via new education systems which offered social advancement and academic knowledge and via political organizations. Another part of the answer was the restructuring of the countryside via mechanization, electrification and collective farming. Political organization and integration in party politics via rural organization, the intensifying of education possibilities especially of visiting academic colleges and universities offering agrarian studies was meant to fulfill the adaption of "urban structures" in rural surroundings.

The modernization ideology lying underneath these politics was not specific to socialist countries. In the 20th century, progress and youth had a strong meaning in all industrialized societies.¹⁵ With the focus on "rural youth" the article takes into consideration intersections of specific socialist developments and developments beyond different political systems and nation states.

Making rurality and forming social groups

On April 22nd, 1953, the Polish Film Chronicle (Polska Kronika Filmowa), a biweekly newsreel, was titled *Operator was podpatrzył* (The cameraman is watching you)¹⁶ and was dedicated to a new phenomenon of adolescent behavior which was supposed to be called *bikiniarstwo* or *chuligaństwo* (hooliganism) and later was analyzed as the first youth culture after the Second World War. The title already evokes the message of the film: control. The 3-minute propaganda describes young men with special clothes, coats, boots, cravats, drinking, playing cards, dancing. An off-camera voice reveals the clothes and the conduct of the young men as American criminal culture born in *Sing Sing*. One of those so called *bikiniarze* tries to tempt a group of male and female adolescent but they withstand and are introduced as members of a Warsaw sports club practicing sports together and preparing themselves for

¹⁵ Luisa Passerini, Youth as a Metaphor for Social Change: Fascist Italy and America in the 1950s, in: Giovanni Levi/Jean-Claude Schmitt (Hrsg.), A history of young people in the West, Cambridge, Mass./London 1997, S. 281–340.

¹⁶ Operator was podpatrzył (The cameraman is watching you), Polska kronika filmowa April 22nd, 1953, WFDiF: Wytwórnia Filmów dokumentalnych i fabularnych, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys7ywCbpZlY>.

building communism. The film underlines the confrontation of the two opposite groups of youngsters by changing the underlying music and the social structure. While the *bikiniarze* were male only, hanging around, the members of the sports club were male and female, represented as equal, laughing. The propaganda character of the film does not need to be stressed. Nevertheless, the way the two groups are represented as two different youth cultures, differing in social structure, activities, conduct and appearance cannot be stressed enough. The short film makes and picks up knowledge about adolescent practices turning them into two different cultures.

In the 1950s, several empirical studies on adolescents were published in Europe. The authors were criminologists, sociologists and pedagogues. What they shared in their publications was the topic: they described leisure practices as specific to adolescents and young adults and at the same time as criminal.¹⁷ Thereby, these studies took part in the invention of the so called “hooligans”.¹⁸ Hooligans meant “rebellious”, mainly proletarian and mainly male groups wearing special clothes, biking and drinking, listening to Rock ‘n’ roll, longing for James Dean as an idol and tending to brawls and “vandalism”. The conduct often was criticized as bad American influence. The Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies identified the importance of “life style” for those groups and established the term “subculture” which was formed by specific signs like music, habitus, consumption goods and dress codes.¹⁹

After 1956, during the so-called Thaw, when sociology was established at the universities again after the Stalinist demolishing, Polish scholars picked up the topic. The scholars who devoted their work to the behavior of youngsters were for example Tadeusz Cyprian (1898-1979), a professor for criminal law, or Anna Pawełczyńska, a sociologist who dealt with juvenile delinquency, and others. They took over the English term “hooliganism (chuligaństwo)” and tried to understand the behavior. They related to German and American studies to discuss the practices as behavior of a “social group”. They tried to prove *chuligaństwo* as a special criminal behavior of juvenile groups and as a social phenomenon

¹⁷ Günther Kaiser, *Randalierende Jugend: Eine soziol. u. kriminol. Studie über d. sogen. "Halbstarke"*, Tübingen [Heidelberg], 1962 [1959]; Tadeusz Cyprian, *Chuligaństwo wśród młodzieży: Problem społeczny i prawny*, Poznań, 1956; Jerzy Sawicki (Hrsg.), *Chuligaństwo, studia pod r[...].d... J. Sawickiego*, Warszawa, 1956.

¹⁸ Thomas Großbölting, *Von "Halbstarke" und "Apo-Aktivist": Jugendkultur, Jugendgewalt und Jugenddiskurs in der Bundesrepublik*, in: Frank Becker (Hrsg.), *Politische Gewalt in der Moderne. Festschrift für Hans-Ulrich Thamer*, Münster 2003, S. 301–321.

¹⁹ Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56*, Ithaca, 2013.

which needs sociologist explanations.²⁰ By this they distinguished themselves from Stalinist politics and Stalinist interpretation of American propaganda and Western provocation. The scholars wanted to show that social circumstances mattered, that they evoked criminal behavior. Their first argument was that *chuligaństwo* was established during war times and hinted at the moral state of the early post-war years. The adolescents were born during occupation and learnt to survive via theft and other illegal practices which in those times was something like a national duty. The lack of family and school authorities and the experiences of violence should be taken into consideration as well. The second argument called to account the socialist system itself which lacked education as the scholars detected. *Chuligaństwo* resulted from the fundamental changes in the society. These changes produced insecurity and breaks, assumed unlimited possibilities of new times, the concentration of young workers of both sexes in cramped collective accommodations etc.²¹ The most expressive phenomenon of these radical changes was seen in migration from the countryside into towns and the most extreme example was Nowa Huta. The young villagers moving to the new industrial center built in the open countryside were described as still “rural” in their behavior being confronted with new surroundings and new social practices. The adolescent newcomers were perceived as unsteady and disoriented because they were not used to “urban habitus” and “urban rules”.²² The answer to the disapproved behavior was education. The national youth organization, the brigades and others offered music, literature, a meeting point without alcohol and other leisure practices which sometimes missed the interest of the adolescents. As Katherine Lebow argued, the measures of education and culture can be interpreted as “civilization/cultivation mission” of rural youngsters by members of a middle class, the academic intelligentsia.²³

The empirical studies, the practices of adolescents and the social and political measures fit together, they formed a “Polish” phenomenon of *chuligaństwo* and understood it as a “clash of cultures”, a clash of rural practices with the modern socialist world in the making.²⁴ The clashes were translated not only in a propaganda film like the above-mentioned newsreel.

²⁰ Jerzy Sawicki, Przepięstwo chuligaństwa w polskim prawie karnym, in: ders. (Hrsg.), *Chuligaństwo*, studia pod r[...]. J. Sawickiego, Warszawa 1956, S. 7–49.

²¹ Anna Pawełczyńska, O niektórych przyczynach chuligaństwa, in: Jerzy Sawicki (Hrsg.), *Chuligaństwo*, studia pod r[...]. J. Sawickiego, Warszawa 1956, S. 89–127, hier; Anna Pawełczyńska/Wanda Tomaszewska, Urbanizacja kultury w Polsce, Warszawa, 1972; Tadeusz Cyprian, Niektór formy i przyczyny chuligaństwa, in: Jerzy Sawicki (Hrsg.), *Chuligaństwo*, studia pod r[...]. J. Sawickiego, Warszawa 1956, S. 145–199.

²² Katherine Lebow, Socialist Leisure in Time and Space: Hooliganism and Bikiniarstwo in Nowa Huta 1949–1956, in: Christiane Brenner/Peter Heumos (Hrsg.), *Sozialgeschichtliche Kommunismusforschung*.

Tschechoslowakei, Polen, Ungarn und DDR 1948 - 1968, München 2005, S. 527–540; Lebow, Lebow 2013

²³ Lebow, Lebow 2001.

²⁴ Ziemann et al., Ziemann et al. 2012

There were also books and films dealing with hooliganism, the novel *Zły* (1955, The Man with White Eyes; literally: The evil) by Leopold Tyrman or the film *Koniec nocy* (1956, End of night) by Julian Dziedzina, Paweł Komorowski, and Walentyna Uszycka with the Polish “James Dean” Zbigniew Cybulski²⁵. Though the scholars (in those times as nowadays) took rural-urban migration into account, the handling in popular culture stresses the life style of those youngsters as an urban phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the rural adolescents themselves learnt a lot from those coining processes: coming of age needs group formation, needs rituals, needs practices, needs marks. In 1961, the Committee for Research on Contemporary Culture at the Polish Academy of Science organized a competition to collect life stories from young adults on their rural youth.²⁶ Józef Chałasiński a Polish sociologist and pupil of Florian Zaniecki the founder of the biographical method before the Second World War was head of the huge project. The task of the 1961-competition was to tell about the experiences of someone’s time of adolescence and young adulthood in the countryside. The competitions can be interpreted as a culture of public expression.²⁷ They are not authentic in a simple understanding of the term. Nevertheless, they represented translated and translating practices of how to make sense of the world.

A young woman, born in 1943 in a village near Białystok in East Poland, devoted her autobiographical work which she sent to the competition to her experiences with motorbikes.²⁸ She said that she was mad about boys with motorbikes: “girls only go for them” she assured.²⁹ But she also made great efforts to learn biking herself. She tried with her brother’s motorbike and she proudly told about a tour to Warsaw with her brother as fellow passenger. Biking meant freedom to her – experiencing a borderless space: the possibility of easily overcoming distances and the skills of managing a heavy machine as a woman (even with a fellow passenger).

Motorbikes conquered the most remote villages: they represented the success of communist industry, consumption and new leisure practices – and they represented masculinity similar to the practices of hooligans. Like the young female tractor divers on the propaganda poster of

²⁵ Piotr Buratyński, Miejsce pracy: ulica, Zawód: chuligan, www.filmoznawcy.umk.pl/teksty/buratyński_koniec_nocy.html 24.7.2017; *Koniec nocy*, Poland 1956, reg.: Julian Dziedzina, Paweł Komorowski, Walentyna Uszycka.

²⁶ Chałasiński, Chałasiński 1964.

²⁷ Dietlind Hüchtker, Gender, Politics, and Participation: Memoire Competitions in Poland, in: *The European Journal of Life Writing V* (2016), S. 45–66; Katherine Lebow, The Conscience of Skin: Interwar Polish Autobiography and Social Rights, in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development 3* (2013) 3, S. 297–319;

²⁸ Diary number: 5303: *Przepadam za jazda motorem [I am crazy for biking]*, Chałasiński, Chałasiński 1964, 211-238.

²⁹ *Przepadam za jazda motorem*, ebenda, S. 218.

the early 1950s Stalinist campaign “women in male occupations” the young women on heavy machines represented gender equality with femininity. The young writer was aware of the relations between motorbikes, masculinity and femininity. In her narrative she played with these different associations. And she made very clear that a motorbike meant leisure practices and mobility. In an implicit way, the story made use of “life style”, of Stalinist propaganda and transported the combination to the countryside. And in this aspect, it differs from the propaganda poster which connected femininity with socialist work and rural progress. The debate on youth and adolescent violence is an example of the mutual penetration of academia and public, the translations between youngsters, scholars, experts and the cultural scene on the one hand. On the other hand, it is an example of the penetration of the Iron Curtain by “cultural icons”: films, music and by scholarly knowledge.³⁰ The practices of the actors constructed rurality in relation to change (not necessarily in relation to urbanity) – they represented the implicit and explicit knowledge of group formation. The story about motorbikes is an example of translating “life style” between different media.

The countryside, culture and making progressive facts

Modernizing the countryside not only meant economics but also mass media which spread through the village and which abolished in some aspects the differences between urban and rural. In 1965, Jan Pacek, a scholar at the Department for Research on Mass Culture of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Science”, published the study *Rural Youth Interests in Culture [Zainteresowania młodzieży wiejskiej]*³¹. Pacek wanted to investigate „what was interesting for the young villagers“ and „how they organized their lives“³². His main focus was on what he called „the new mass culture“: film, radio, TV, reading and access to public libraries, music, dancing and folk art.

The study consists of two parts. In the first one, Pacek devoted himself to the topic „regional culture” in relation to the culture of broader society. The chapter analyzes what he called „traditional village culture” and the factors of change: new leisure activities of young men and women. The second chapter consists of results which came from a survey he carried out in 37 villages near Warsaw. The investigation included participant observation, surveys and interviews. The results are represented in tables and descriptions.

³⁰ Kaiser, Kaiser 1962; Robin Schmerer, Jugend(bewegung) in Filmen der Nachkriegszeit: Zur filmischen Inszenierung der Halbstarren in Ost und West, in: Barbara Stambolis/Markus Köster (Hrsg.), Jugend im Fokus von Film und Fotografie. Zur visuellen Geschichte von Jugendkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen 2016, S. 269–284.

³¹ Jan Pacek, *Zainteresowania kulturalne młodzieży wiejskiej*, Warszawa, 1965, 1. Aufl.

The aim of the study was to inform about the access the young villagers had to modern culture: For Pacek access to modern mass culture was a unit of measurement of integration, integration in the Polish nation and integration in the socialist society and its values of education, equality and educated knowledge. Pacek's starting point was that the differences between rural and urban had blurred because of growing industrialization. Now, the differences were gradual not fundamental. Therefore he analyzed that „the connections between the development of the modern culture in the nation as a whole and the development which changes the values of a traditional and modest village culture”³³.

He sums up his findings: The desires and hopes of the young villagers do not differ from those of the entire (socialist) society. He also offers some suggestions or advice for future activities in regard of the countryside. Of course, a successful overcoming of the barriers between old and new would depend on national culture politics, on a further expansion of mass culture into the village. However, the author judged it more important to develop a local promotion of culture which would convince the younger generation than following general state politics. To reach the world of the rural adolescents it seemed necessary for Pacek to grapple with the traditional village culture and the “most progressive parts of folk culture”³⁴. He ends with the statement that the results of his study offer a diverse picture of cultural phenomenon but a remarkable dynamic and convertibility as well”.³⁵

Pacek's study is built on a teleological idea of progress and it equates progress, urban and “the society”. The rural world remained particular, the other, differing from the general. And it remains the explanandum. While the urban implicitly represented the universal, progress, modernity, the village represented the specific, backwardness and tradition. Now, this is not surprising and though the ductus corresponds to socialist ideology in regard to its outspokenness it can be found in “Western” modernist studies as well. Pacek's reference to diversity and convertibility is more interesting and, even more so, his reference to the “progressive aspects of folk culture” which he took into consideration for designing a successful transformation of the village.

In this context, the presentation of results as facts seems to be most interesting. The study uses scientific sociological methods of those times (the international scholarship on both sides of the Iron Curtain) which were strongly connected to facts and objectivity. The facts were depicted in tables which made them still more “objective”. For the author who wanted to direct attention to the “local possibilities of village culture”, the tables played an important

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role, the role of truth or fact givers. By his methods he took part in scientific practices and scientific culture and via taking advantage of science and facts in socialist ideology he connected facts with a more dynamic perspective on rurality: he found a place for the diversity of progress – a rural progress.

The empirical studies based on surveys or interviews represented a certain distance to a hierarchical top-down-ideology. They offered some ideas of a reflexive understanding of science/knowledge. This is because the facts, the tables consisted in the participation of the research “object”, the adolescents and young adults, who filled out the surveys. The first translation which took place was the translation made by the adolescents. They translated their experiences and also their answers according to what they supposed was expected from them by the creators of the surveys. This meant access to scholarly thinking and expectations for them. Their answers were translated in results (tables) and qualitative descriptions of culture etc.

To come back to the competition texts: The connection “countryside and progress” is not a topic of empirical studies only. It left its marks on several competition texts as well. The authors mentioned mechanization and electrification of the villages: “The village now possesses two tractors, a land machine for binding, combine harvesters and ploughs”. The author commented that she got annoyed about her father who treated the reforms with caution and preferred “running after the horses”.³⁶ The younger generation told about land reform and modernization as generational conflicts. Often, these stories were combined with poverty and violent fathers, of being forced to work instead of learning. At first glance, the reports on modernization seem to fit in state propaganda very well, the young generation seemed to have understood what the state was offering to them: social advancement for socialist propaganda. Nevertheless, the positive evaluation of mechanization and collective farming should be connected to other aspects of modernity that were mentioned. For example, the space flights fascinated the young authors.³⁷ But they also welcomed very much the mobile cinema which came to the villages and the first record players.³⁸ They appreciated new leisure practices (like the above mentioned example of biking), hanging around, listening to music, watching films. They knew about those practices which they shared with contemporary young adults in cities. The hopes and desires they expressed when they distanced themselves from their parents’ generation included transnational knowledge on “life style” which they connected to rural

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³⁷ Ebenda.

³⁸ Przepadam za jazda motorem, Chałasiński, Chałasiński 1964, S. 215, 236; Diary number 5060: Do równouprawnienia jeszcze daleko [It’s still far to equality] ebd., 205-210, here 209.

practices of modernization like harvesters. Similar to Pacek's results the young authors connected experiences of social rise, socialist politics of modernization with unexpected aspects of modernity, the leisure practices. Similar to Pacek, they translated modernity to rurality and to adolescent practices. The concept of translation opens up a perspective on how diversity was integrated in socialist societies via translating knowledge.

The translations of knowledge (in this case on rural youth and cultural activities) clasped several practices: understanding the aims of the competition, constructing a story, writing, the selection and publication process, designing a survey, contacting adolescents, interviewing them, constructing answers, ideas and desires, analyzing the data and designing new forms of presentation, developing a narrative on youth and cultural activities. All these activities took part in constructing a modern rurality via integrating unexpected or unintended practices.

The meanings of sexuality, rurality and the making of (communist) truth

The discourses, meanings and practices of sexuality after the Second World War may be seen as the most striking example of the self-reflexive way modern societies dealt with themselves on this side and that side of the Iron Curtain. Sexuality reflects individualization, the popularization of scientific knowledge, the culture of advice and consultation, the changes of values and attitudes, life style, consumer culture, the meaning of youth – in short, the meanings and practices of sexuality were identified with change.

[...]

Conclusions

The article traces elements of knowledge about rural youth. Understanding the ways these elements of knowledge took as translations allows to connect different places, times and media. For example, the practices of hanging around, biking at the end of the 1950s migrated from one knowledge culture to the other, through the Iron Curtain, between village and city, between science and youngsters. The concept of translation throws light on these reciprocities of communication instead of analyzing them as a bottom up process, the criminalization of an authentic youth subcultures, or as a top down process, an adaptation of socialist ideology. Following the topics of group formation, rural progress (and socialist truth) offers insights into the diversity of voices and reflexive relations between state and society, opposition and conformation. It shows unexpected and unintended effects and spaces of original interpretations. The concept allows to stress the transsystemic, transnational and transregional practices of making rurality in Socialist States – and beyond.

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