

Cost Action A 35 Progressore
Programme for the Study of European Rural Societies
Second Workshop of Working Group 3 – Peasant Societies
Call for papers

*Wealth and Poverty in European Rural Societies
from the Middle Ages to the present day.
Standards of living, material culture and consumption
patterns*

Toruń (Poland)

September 21-22 2007.

Co-Ordinators:

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‘Poverty’ and ‘wealth’ have never been purely economic terms and have always had social and cultural connotations. The variety of aspects and types of poverty and wealth calls for a comparison, in a long-term perspective, of the standards of living characteristic of the rural communities of various European countries and regions. A combined analysis of the economic, social and cultural factors determining poverty and wealth makes it possible to approach these phenomena while taking into consideration their complex form and nature.

The workshop will focus on the following areas:

1. Economic situation, household budgets and commercialization of consumption - from the pre-industrial economy to the market
2. Property, material culture and consumption as categories of social stratification

3. The invention of leisure: the contrasts between work and leisure

Such a formulation of the fundamental problems aims at situating the subjectively- felt economic situation of individuals and households within the context of changing economic climates and the profitability of agricultural production. It seems interesting to consider decision-making processes shaping the household budgets and consumer attitudes, in connection with the evaluation of overall economic conditions and the perspectives of their continuation or fluctuation in the future.

The attempt to follow the spread of commercialisation, in the field of consumption, aims not only at gaining profound knowledge about this crucial economic process but also at tracing the appearance and development of the new networks of economic and social relations, bringing together rural communities and the outside world.

The attempt to determine social stratification by using and combining various criteria such as property rights, standards of living, education, and the reception of outside consumer patterns seems to be very important. The process of identifying such patterns as well as naming the groups mediating their inflow and reception constitutes a crucial task. Since social status is not merely a consequence of abstract affluence but is primarily manifested through culturally acceptable patterns of consumption and consumption-related attitudes, the analysis of these patterns may provide a description of material conditions of living (food, accommodation, clothing, etc.) and disclose the mechanics of social advancement. The motivations behind the behaviour of groups and individuals following different strategies of advancing or defending their positions, seem to play a particularly crucial role in this respect.

The relationship between work and leisure time constitutes an important factor determining the standard of living. The technological, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of the rhythm of life and time-management, and in particular the emergence of the phenomenon of leisure time within rural areas, deserve individual attention and detailed analysis, especially in a comparative perspective between Western and Eastern Europe.

These problems will be the subject of a workshop organized within the framework of a European Concerted Research Action (COST A35 - Programme for the Study of European Rural Societies) on 21-22 September 2007 in Toruń (Poland). We invite scholars representing different disciplines from all parts of Europe to present their research projects and their results related to the specified areas of study. Proposals for contributions should be sent to the organizers (jd@his.uni.torun.pl) in form of a one-page abstract **by January 31, 2007.**

Travel and accommodation:

Travel and accommodation costs will be reimbursed for conference members from participant countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom), according to COST rules.

Because of budget constraints, **please let us know if your home university or research centre would be willing to pay your travel costs.**

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