

In Memoriam

Krystyna Dziubacka (1959–2023)

Dr habil. (PhD) Krystyna Dziubacka was professionally associated with the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Wrocław. However, in terms of her scientific interests and joint research projects, perhaps mainly concerning the sociology of Toruń, she collaborated with us for almost 40 years, co-organising many key scientific, organisational and editorial initiatives for the development of Polish rural sociology.

She became involved with the sociology community in Toruń in the early 1980s, inspired by Prof. Władysław Misiak,¹ her master's thesis advisor (followed by PhD). Prof. Misiak considered it necessary to broaden the intellectual horizons of the newly graduated pedagogue from Wrocław (1985) through participation in team empirical studies conducted by researchers from Toruń, and above all, through contact with Prof. Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki.² Both relationships permanently shaped the young researcher's cognitive sensibility and scientific thought processes, while the former triggered her interest in panel research on the social problem of rural environments.

¹ We presented the profile of this Polish sociologist, also relatively recently deceased, in *Eastern European Countryside* 2021/77, pp. 259–261.

² We have depicted the importance of Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki for the development of international and Polish rural sociology several times in our periodical. See, inter alia, *Eastern European Countryside* 2009/15, pp. 185–187; 2017/23, pp. 235–238. Under his guidance from 1987 to 1988, Krystyna Dziubacka gained her qualifications as a rural sociologist at the Postgraduate School of Rural Sociology.

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Krystyna Dziubacka

By the 1990s, she had already conducted panel research independently in the gradually forgotten convention (an absolutely wrongly one and to the detriment of the Polish sociological research tradition) of researching the industrialised region.³ Focusing on quality-of-life issues, she pursued them in the Polish-German-Czech border region, in the lignite mining area. She presented the results in her doctoral dissertation (2001), her habilitation thesis (2017) and several other research papers, published, *inter alia*, in our periodical.⁴

From Professor Wierzbicki – she considered him as her mentor until the very end of her prematurely interrupted life – she took over the research directive of “action and research”, always ready, as he was, ... *to burn to ignite others*.⁵ She externalised it in dozens of undertakings, activating academic and local communities for the renewal of rural areas struggling with the social and environmental threats posed by opencast lignite mines.

Most of these were carried out under the label of ECOVAST – European Council for the Village and Small Town – of which she has been a member

³ Large-scale studies, initiated in Poland in the early 1960s on the transformation of rural environments under the influence of growing industrial centres. Conducted by the end of the 1970s by the Institute of Industrial Regions of the Polish Academy of Sciences [Zakład Rejonów Uprzemysławianych Polskiej Akademii Nauk], these studies resulted in 79 published volumes of “Zeszyty Badań Rejon Uprzemysłowianych”.

Krystyna Dziubacka’s book “Przemysł w krajobrazie kulturowym wsi” [Industry in the Cultural Landscape of Villages] (Wrocław 2015) is considered to be their 80th volume, unfortunately the last.

⁴ See *Borderlands of the Countryside. Dilemmas of the Quality of Life – Experience of the Polish Transformation*, EEC 2016/22, pp. 135–149 (with Justyna Pilarska).

⁵ Krystyna depicts Professor Wierzbicki’s role in shaping her scientific biography in her recent paper titled “Kto chce zapalać innych, sam musi płonąć”, [One who wants to ignite others shall be on fire himself], published in the book “Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki. Uczony i społecznik” [Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki. Scientist and social activist] (Toruń 2021). *Graduation* [at the Postgraduate School of Rural Sociology – d. EEC Editorial Board] *did not mark the end of contacts with the Professor. As a “former student from Wrocław”, over the following years, I had the opportunity to meet him on the occasion of scientific seminars and various conferences held by the Institute of Sociology of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, in which he always actively participated. During one of such meetings, I was jokingly renamed by the Professor from “former student from Wrocław” to “workmate from Wrocław”. The significance of this honour can be appreciated only by those who knew the Professor personally.*

since its inception (1989), actively participating in its programmes.⁶ From 1997 to 1999, she was Secretary and from 1999 to 2004, a member of the Management Board of the ECOVAST Polish Section.

The council was a meeting ground for representatives from various fields of science and practice united by their interest in rural affairs and concern for its future. In Poland, sociologists founded it, and were soon joined by architects. Krystyna was always looking for common areas of research and initiating joint activities. She broadened her interest in social problems to include issues concerning the preservation of the cultural identity of the village and the protection of its material heritage. She has been one of the organisers of interdisciplinary conferences on the subject, e.g. in Wrocław, Karpacz and Bogatynia. Besides the exchange of experiences and interesting discussions, the conferences resulted in publications. Issues of regional architecture were particularly close to her heart, prompting her long-standing collaboration with architects and landscape architects, including those from the Poznań community.

One of her most recent projects was a study of the attitudes and opportunities of local communities in a lignite mining area as part of the so-called Just Coal Transition. She combined this with efforts to protect Upper Lusatian (Łużyce Górne) architecture region and historic avenues in the area, rightly recognising that the preservation of cultural and natural heritage is essential to strengthen identity, a sense of responsibility and causative power and, consequently, the socio-economic activation of the inhabitants.⁷

When we bid farewell to our dear Krysia (shortened form of Krystyna) at the Wrocław cemetery at the end of this summer, we remembered her not only as an excellent scientist, a committed social activist and an outstanding teacher but also as a person always open to others, kind and ready to help, inspiring others with her infectious optimism and joy of life.

Andrzej Kaleta, Elżbieta Raszeja

⁶ She has participated in many ECOVAST conferences in Poland and abroad (e.g. Hungary and Germany).

⁷ She initiated and coordinated the collaboration of the association of “Dom Kołodzieja” with the University of Wrocław in the implementation of local projects, e.g. the project for strengthening the social activity potential of Opolno-Zdrój and Wigancice.