Rethinking Eastern Europe: family systems as welfare regimes in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (18th century)

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This presentation deals with...

FAMILY SYSTEMS

↑

WELFARE REGIMES
and SYSTEMS OF CARE

Original fig. by J. Kok
…it refers to the corpus of knowledge stemming from……

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD SYSTEMS ↔ WELFARE REGIMES

HOUSEHOLD CORESIDENCE ↔ CARE

P. Laslett, *Family and collectivity* (1979)
P. Laslett, *Family, kinship and collectivity as systems of support* (1988)
D. I. Kertzer, P. Laslett (Eds.), *Aging in the Past* (1995)
P. Horden, R. Smith (Eds.), *The Locus of Care. Families, Communities, Institutions, and the Provision of Welfare* (1998)

- and many papers by R. Wall
This presentation brings a new setting…

- The marchland of Europe
- Fault lines' dividing West from East
- European civilizations
- 'Transitional, peripheral zone'
- 'Between the poles of civilization and barbarism'
- 'The East on the West' and 'The West on the East'
- 'More western-oriented and more 'civilized' Central Europe vs Balkan Europe' and 'Eastern Borderlands'

What is so special about Eastern-Central Europe?

UNIVERSAL MARRIAGE

MULTIPLE-FAMILY CORESIDENCE

FAMILISTIC VALUES
M. Handelsman (1933)

- the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as the principal framework for the history of the whole ‘Central European’ region.

- The Commonwealth as encapsulating the essence of ‘east-central’ or ‘central Europeanness’

- The essence or synthesis of East-Central Europe: a condensed version of all cultural variety of the region
Research hypotheses

- The macro-regional family & marriage patterns correspond to contrasting systems of welfare provision and family well-being.

- Joint family systems functioned as private institutions to redistribute the poverty of nuclear family by the way of the kinship system and were generally better prepared to escape life cycle induced poverty.

- Joint family organization encouraged solidarity and support for the elderly and other vulnerable individuals.

Research questions:

Does the distinction between different household regimes in Eastern-Central Europe have any implications for the way families performed their welfare functions towards the most vulnerable?

- aged
- widowed
- parenting alone

Which family system was ‘better’ for the most vulnerable?
Vulnerable population as minority population

- aged (63+): \( 3.2\% \) of total population with ages given
- widowed: \( 2.5\% \) (M), and \( 5.5\% \) (F) of the respective population with known marital status
- parenting alone: \( 4.2\% \) of the total population
What a blessing is it for a house, if children, seated on their grandmother’s knees, can listen to the family traditions, and if age blossoms again, because the old generation lives in the midst of their grand-children and great-grand-children! (...) The house is a whole and whole blessing is on it, only if great-grandmother, grandmother, child and grandchild live in harmony together ... (Riehl 1856, 156).

W. Riehl
1823-1897

‘Degenerated peasants’ and the inhabitants of towns: ‘fragmentation of land’ and ‘the spirit of the modern absolutely monetarised economy and economic individualism’
[In patriarchal families] independence is checked by traditional moral influences. This frame of mind is based on firm religious beliefs. It ensures the respect for the established order (…) rather than developing a spirit of initiative (…) But, on the other hand, the community allows less diligent and skilled, and morally deliquent individuals to share in the common well-being” (La Reforme Sociale, 1872, 352-353).

[On ‘unstable family’]: It establishes itself by the union of two free adults, growth with the birth of children, shrinks with the successive departure of the members of the new generation and dissolves finally, without leaving a trace, with the early death of the abandoned parents”. “(…) In this system, a single or married individual is no longer responsible for the needs of his relatives and rapidly rises to a higher situation if he possesses outstanding aptitudes” (La Reforme Sociale 1878, 2:9)
The fate of the elderly: Eastern European ethnographies (1)

“...The youngsters show much respect for the elderly. A farmhand, even if already married, will salute a venerable host and bend to his knees before him. This does not mean that the young generation does not send for baggarhood superfluous old men no longer capable of tending their grandchildren; the practice however is perceived as natural and does not insult any of the involved sides” (Kolberg, 1867).

Oskar Kolberg
(1814-1890)
In Polesie "the will of the father, the mother or the gramps, in short - of the family's progenitor – is law, it is undisputably sacred" (Dovnar-Zapolsky, Kiew 1909 [1897], p. 10

“PATROLATRIA” (god-like sanctity attributed to the father) as an essential feature of the family relations of Polesuks in southern Belarus.

The cult of the father - one of the most prominent features of Polesie's grandfamilial organization - generally also translated into a widely accepted notion of exceptionality and superiority of the social status of the elderly.
Central European Family Forms Database:

- 90% of lists from 1766-1799
- all precede the abolition of serfdom
- 89% of listings include information on the ages;
- 77% of population with ages

Libri Status Animarum: 11%

Russian 5th Revision, 1795-96: 37%
Data spatial distribution within Poland-Lithuania (ca. 1772)

- Parishes or estates = 236
- Households = 26,652
- Persons = 155,807
- Time coverage: 1766-1799 (90%)
Historical data and present-day borders
Family systems in historical Poland-Lithuania

ANOVA + pairwise multiple comparison procedures (Holm-Sidak method)
Different demographic regimes?

EAST 1

EAST 3

WEST
Proportions never married by age groups

EAST 1 (NMM freq.)=4.128 ind.
EAST 3 (NMM freq.)=1.220 ind.
WEST (NMM freq.)=5.586 ind.

EAST 1 (NMF freq.)=2.307 ind.
EAST 3 (NMF freq.)=531 ind.
WEST (NMF freq.)=4.268 ind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST 1</th>
<th>EAST 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27,7</td>
<td>21,3</td>
<td>23,7</td>
<td>19,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,9</td>
<td>16,8</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Summary households characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>REGION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WEST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total hhs</td>
<td>11.638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total pop</td>
<td>66.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean size of houseful</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean size of household</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFU per one household (mean)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% hhs with CFUS of 2+</td>
<td>10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offspring per household (mean)</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crs Kin per household (mean)</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% households with crs kin</td>
<td>20.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crs Kin as % of total pop</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% households with servants</td>
<td>38.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants as % of total pop</td>
<td>12.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers per household (mean)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% households with lodgers</td>
<td>24.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers as % of total pop</td>
<td>11.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Household structures: a view from the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laslett's household types</th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST 1</th>
<th>EAST 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>CFU</td>
<td>HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% distribution of households and CFUs by household type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a-3d</td>
<td>78,0</td>
<td>72,9</td>
<td>53,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a-4d</td>
<td>11,2</td>
<td>10,4</td>
<td>14,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a – 5f</td>
<td><strong>8,9</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,7</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summa</td>
<td>11638</td>
<td>12644</td>
<td>10002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CFU=conjugal family units (married couples + solitary people with at least one unmarried child)

See: Hammel & Laslett 1974; also: Berkner 1977
Thresholds of old age among men

After L. Dillon *The Shady Side of Fifty* (2008)

- Household headship: arguably the most important characteristics defining young-old age
- Heading a household with children
- Living with a spouse
- Working
- Owning property
Headship rates among males

61,681 individuals; 18,992 heads
Headship rates among females (women being head or head’s spouse)

59.744 individuals; 18.694 heads or heads’ spouses
67.503 individuals; 18.356 males heading household with at least one child
Residence patterns of the elderly heads (63+) by sex

‘WEST’: Nuclear hardship or ‘intimacy at a distance’?

Living in nuclear household may not necessary mean ‘nuclear hardship’, but living in solitary hhs may do so...
Household position of elderly males (63+)

% in age group

WEST

EAST1

EAST3

Regions

Children

Servants

Heads

Other kin

Non-kin

2301 individuals
Household position of elderly females (63+)

- Servants
- Heads
- Other kin
- Non-kin

1637 individuals
Living with kin other than spouse (all males)
Living with kin other than spouse (all males 63+)
All widowed M and F aged 63+ not living with children and other kin

![Bar chart showing residential patterns of the elderly across different regions.](chart.png)
### Distribution of men 63+ years among predominant household statuses (all male domestics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence pattern</th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST 1</th>
<th>EAST 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrelatives</td>
<td>8,6</td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse only</td>
<td>5,4</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>1,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP+ others (no child)</td>
<td>17,5</td>
<td>3,2</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child with or without other persons</td>
<td>67,2</td>
<td>90,3</td>
<td>91,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives (no spouse or child)</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=100%</td>
<td>1157</td>
<td>1136</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MALES**

Residence pattern
## Distribution of men 63+ years among predominant household statuses (all female domestics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence pattern</th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST 1</th>
<th>EAST 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrelatives</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse only</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse and others (no child)</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child with or without other persons</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives (no spouse or child)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMA (l.bz=100%)</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Not married female household heads having in their household:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WEST</th>
<th>EAST 1</th>
<th>EAST 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nobody: Alone (AL)</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freq.=100%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship patterns of the elderly females (63+) by type of relation (all domestics)

- **WEST**
  - Wife: 33%
  - Lone mother: 43%
  - Other kin: 3%
  - Non-kin: 21%

- **EAST 3**
  - Wife: 31%
  - Lone mother: 53%
  - Other kin: 14%
  - Non-kin: 2%
3756 individuals
Back to Le Play’s and Riehl’s dreams: consequences of differences in household position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grandchildren per 100 hh</th>
<th>Grandparents per 100 hh</th>
<th>Grandparents per 100 persons aged 0-7 years</th>
<th>% 3-generational households extended downwards (parents, children, grandchildren)</th>
<th>% 3-generational households extended downwards (parents, children, grandchildren); with heads aged 63+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>3,0</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>0,73</td>
<td>10,8</td>
<td>12,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST1</td>
<td>29,4</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>2,03</td>
<td>21,0</td>
<td>57,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST3</td>
<td>48,2</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>8,88</td>
<td>27,1</td>
<td>63,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The traditional image of overly familistic Eastern Europeans does not hold true.

2. Within prevailing demographic constraints, different societies of historical Poland took decidedly different attempts at taking care for their most vulnerable members.

3. Different systems of household organization in historic Eastern Europe, well corresponded with different systems of family welfare.

4. Non-nuclear family system seemed to be quite different from the nuclear system in respect of their welfare functions.

5. By this, a usual contrast between simple family systems of the West and complex family systems of European East or Asia, was replicated within Eastern Europe itself.
1. Family arrangements in two eastern regions of Poland-Lithuania can be regarded as coming very close towards ensuring that no one who grew old, got widowed or was destined to single parenting, would ever find himself or herself outside his or her own family group or close kin community.

2. On the contrary, societies of western and central Poland lived under a set of familial conventions which did not ensure a place in a family group for every older person, necessitous parents or other needy individuals.

3. Neither the persistence of strong family ties precluded the existence of conflictual relationships and power inequalities within the family, nor the exclusion of the vulnerable from the kin coresident group necessarily implied lack of love and full neglect.

4. The question remains, how could that be that Slavic societies functioning within a common framework of the second serfdom system, developed cultural values so different as regards the treatment, *solidarity and support for the elderly and other vulnerable individuals*. 