Effects of Legal Changes in Lithuanian Countryside

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Fig.I Still the most common way of milking in present-day Lithuania. *Knudsen 2006*

Research

In my current research I focus on the transformative process of the Lithuanian agricultural sector in the years leading up to and since EU membership. The aim is to investigate the impact of institutional and legal changes initiated by EU agricultural programs for new member states on local rural daily life. I look at how EU legislations are implemented "below" and how local cultural models are transformed in the interaction with external influences. I thus consider how new legal influences are understood, reshaped and integrated into already existing modes of local regulation and practice and how it affects the economic and social situation for the farmers.

I will argue that the EU is not arriving at an empty place, and development is not only coming from "above." People already have their own social settings, their own daily practices and their own (unwritten) norms and codes of behavior. New legal influences are understood, reshaped and integrated into already existing modes of regulations and practice. Indeed, systems and responses dating back to the Soviet system do still influence present development in the countryside.

Fig.II Villagers cleaning the body of a pig immediately after the slaughtering. *Knudsen 2007*

Fig.III My research is carried out in two settings: near Marijampole and close to the Polish border.

Entrance to the EU

As the time of EU accession in May 2004 grew closer the countryside became a highly important issue in political discourse, as agriculture always has been central for the EU politics. For the rural population the perception of the "global" market and EU standards of farming changed from mere abstractions to concrete factors of influences in daily life as they were introduced to new regulations and requirements set for farm products.

The EU evaluated the main problem for Lithuanian agriculture to be the many small farms, which as a rule are run by elderly people close to or above the age of retirement.

In opposition to the current state of things, the EU and the Lithuanian government aim at the establishment of a few big and competitive farms run by younger people. This means that a restructuring of the Lithuanian agricultural sector has started with great costs for the older generation of small farmers, a generation that dominates the agricultural sector. This generation is in particular the focus for my research.

Fig.IV The collective farms are not that far back in history. *Private photo*

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