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### FROM PEASANT VILLAGE TO WORKER VILLAGE: CHANGES IN SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF POLISH COUNTRYSIDE IN 1918–2018

*The goal of this publication is to present the synthesis of transformations occurring in regard to the social structure in the countryside of Poland during the last century (1918–2018). As rural Poland has been influenced by several factors, including political, economic and social, understanding those processes that have already taken place are crucial for the evaluation of the current situation and can aid in future investigations and prognoses of upcoming transformations and their impact upon the society and its development. The object of this research is the rural social structure in Poland, while*

*the subject matter covers the historical changes of this structure and the environment that have been the cause of particular changes, including the review of specific factors.*

*An analysis covering the last century reveals peculiarities in the development of the Polish countryside in regard to its social structure in three development phases: pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial. The influences of political systems are analyzed in parallel with the country's development phases, which are both set as the background for occurring transformation processes: a) peasantisation, and a complex and multi-vector b) professionalization.*

*The research strives to aggregate numerous previous researches conducted during the analyzed century and is aimed to deliver complex synthesis regarding changes in the social structure of rural areas in Poland.*

**Keywords:** social structure, labour, transformation, rural development, agriculture, Poland.

Халамска М., Звеглиньска-Ґалецка Д., Крупін В.

### ВІД СЕЛА СЕЛЯНСЬКОГО ДО РОБІТНИЧОГО: ЗМІНИ У СОЦІАЛЬНІЙ СТРУКТУРІ ПОЛЬСЬКОГО СЕЛА УПРОДОВЖ 1918–2018 рр.

*Метою публікації є представлення синтезу трансформацій, що відбувалися в соціальній структурі села Польщі протягом останнього століття (1918–2018 рр.). Оскільки на сільській території Польщі впливала велика кількість факторів, включаючи політичні, економічні та соціальні, розуміння тих процесів, що вже відбулися, є вирішальними для оцінки поточної ситуації і може допомогти у подальших дослідженнях та прогнозах майбутніх перетворень та їх впливу на суспільство і його розвиток. Об'єктом дослідження є соціальна структура села Польщі, в той час як предметом дослідження є історичні зміни цієї структури та середовище, що спричинило окреслені трансформації, включаючи огляд конкретних факторів.*

*Аналіз, що охоплює минуле століття, виявляє особливості розвитку сільської місцевості Польщі в розрізі її соціальної структури на трьох етапах розвитку: доіндустріальному, індустріальному та постіндустріальному. Впливи політичних систем аналізуються паралельно з етапами розвитку країни,*

*водночас обидва явища слугують контекстом процесів трансформації, що відбувалися: а) селянізація, а також комплексна і багатовекторна б) професіоналізація.*

*Дослідження було зосереджене на зборі та аналізі численних наукових праць, виконаних протягом обраного століття, і спрямоване на здійснення комплексного синтезу питання змін соціальної структури сільських територій Польщі.*

**Ключові слова:** *соціальна структура, праця, трансформація, сільський розвиток, сільське господарство, Польща.*

**Definition of research problem.** The subject of the following research concerns the changes in social structure of rural population in Poland in 1918–2018. During this timeframe Polish society goes through three developmental phases, in each of which the village takes a new dimension and provides different functions, which result, among other, in changing number of inhabitants and their share in the country's population. In the analysed century, we observe a progressive process of country's deruralisation, meaning the decrease – by ca. 30 p.p. – of the rural population [2]. Intensification of this process, despite the nearly constant absolute number of the rural inhabitants, took place in the timeframe of 1950–1990. After the 1990, the process of deruralisation has halted, mainly as a result of demographic (relatively lower urban population's growth rate) and migration (slowing of rural population's migration to the cities, progressive migration of urban population to the countryside, and significantly higher share of urban population in foreign migration) processes [9].

The social structure is defined very generally as «the arrangement of any elements, starting with individuals and families, and ending with segments of the social class structure, such as workers or peasants. In sociological analyses, we focus primarily on the more narrowly understood structure identified with inequalities and social hierarchy» [4]. The social structure «always characterises the state of a given society, constitutes its peculiar legitimacy, a set of identity features, and at the same time is an element and a causative factor of social dynamics» [12, p. 17]. In a relatively long one hundred year timeframe we are interested to analyse that, due to the development of social sciences, there are substantial changes undergoing in the approaches to definition of social structure and study of its shape or description (cf. [32]). From the class-stratified approaches typical for the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, sociology moves to the approaches

split by socio-occupational groups/categories; where each of the approaches may have varying methodological assumptions that affect the way of analysing the mutual relations between the elements of this structure. This means that for different periods we have different, not necessarily comparable data, which limits the possibilities of description, analysis and comparison.

**Analysis of latest research and publications.** The latest century of Polish independence was fruitful in regard to research of rural development, in particular its social aspects. As a vast timeframe is being analysed in this article, it is important to note only the latest publications, but also those prepared in earlier years, yet having a tremendous impact upon understanding of development issues and bringing those crucial elements. In these terms the scientific findings of Czerniewski K. [3], Gałęski B. [10; 11], Jagiełło-Łysiowa E. [17], Kochanowicz J. [19], Manteuffel R. [20], Mendras H. [22], Turski R. [29; 30], are fundamental to the researched issues and allow to put together a complete picture. These are excellently built upon by contemporary researchers, which not only deal with the current social issues in rural areas, but go beyond to understand the long-going prerequisites and dependencies that have led to the current state. Among such are Frenkel I. [7–9], Domański H. [4–6], Czarnecki A. [2], Ślabek H. [26; 27] and other.

**Unresolved research issues needing attention.** While there were many quality researches devoted to the social development of rural areas in Poland in particular periods of time, as the full century is complete since Poland regained its independence, there are prerequisites present to rethink and aggregate existing data and research findings. Such synthesis in regard to changes of the social structure in rural areas of Poland covering whole century can be the basis to outline and define key factors and relations between occurring phenomena.

**Research goal and objectives.** The goal of this publication is to present the synthesis of scientific findings describing transformations occurring in regard to the social structure in the countryside of Poland during the last century (1918–2018). In order to structure the information it will be analysed according to three country's development phases (pre-industrial, industrial, post-industrial), as well as key transformation processes (peasantisation and professionalization, with the latter divided into three paths: depeasantisation, proletarianisation and embourgeoisement/gentrification).

### The background of changes in Polish countryside's social structure

In the analysed century, the countryside's social structure underwent substantial changes under the influence of political, economic and social factors, some being regional or national, while other – global. Its evolution must be embedded in the wider context of changes in the socio-occupational structure of the entire Polish society. Therefore it went through three phases of development during this time: from pre-industrial through industrial to post-industrial.

Each of these phases has a specific employment structure divided into three economy sectors: the first sector covering agriculture, forestry, fishery and mining industry, the second sector – industry and construction, and the third sector including broadly understood services. This is illustrated by the dynamics of employment structure (Figure 1). In the pre-industrial phase, employment in the first sector of the economy (including agriculture) dominates, in the industrial phase – employment in the second (industry) and third sector (services) exceeds 60%, and in the post-industrial phase – the majority of employees work in the third sector. These phases of economic development (divided in Figure 1 by two vertical lines) do not coincide with periodisation, determined rather by political events, influencing the type of political system in the country.

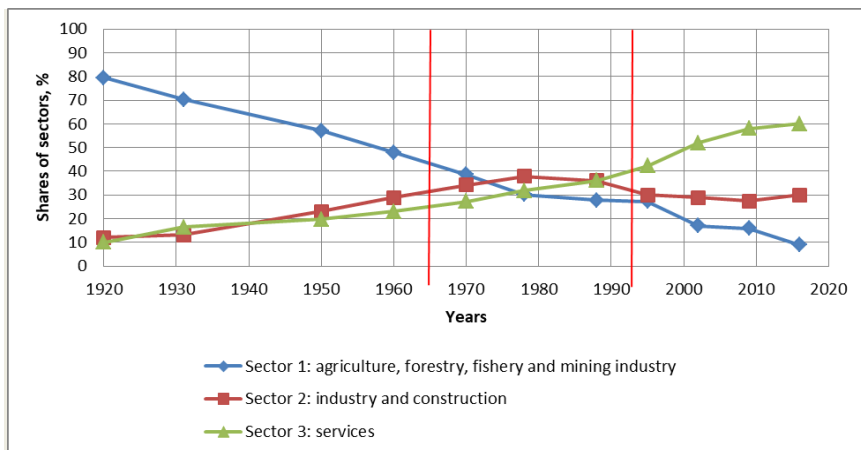


Fig. 1. Dynamics of employment in Poland during 1920–2018 according to economy sectors

Source: own compilation based on [18; 23; 28].

The entire period of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939, pol. *II Rzeczpospolita*, abbreviated as II RP) is homogeneous and belongs to the pre-industrial phase. There are very slight changes in the employment structure: employment in the first sector falls, slightly increases in the second sector. The socialist period in Poland (1944–1989), most of which was the Polish People's Republic<sup>1</sup> (1952–1989, pol. *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, abbreviated as PRL) period is very diverse: until around 1970, Poland is still in the pre-industrial phase (it is a mix of industrial and agricultural production), although employment in the first sector drops by more than 30 p.p. The industrial phase is the period of the next twenty years, which ends with a relative balance in employment in three sectors around 1990. It is a very dynamic period in which the vectors of further changes are formed. In the Third Polish Republic (1989 – present, pol. *III Rzeczpospolita*, abbreviated as III RP), during the transformation of the economy and its adjustment to the market principles in the 1990s, the transition to the post-industrial development phase occurs: 60% of employees work in the third sector, 30% in the second, and 10% in the first.

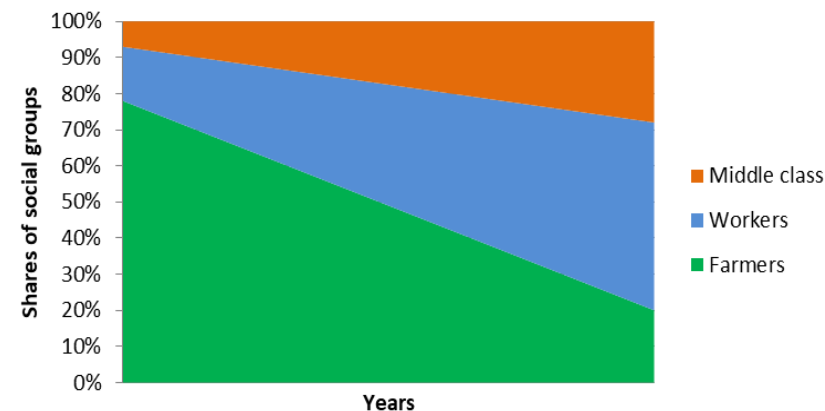


Fig. 2. Changes in the countryside's social structure broken down into three groups: the middle class, workers and farmers

Source: own research based on [15].

<sup>1</sup> Officially the Polish People's Republic was enacted in 1952 with promulgation of new Constitution (called July Constitution or Constitution of 1952) and lasted until 1989, yet often the whole period of 1944–1989 being the time of communist rule is referred to in the society as PRL.

Processes of changes in the socio-occupational structure of rural Poland must be considered in such broad context. The course of these changes can schematically show the process of differentiation of the countryside's social structure from being dominated by farmers (peasants) to being dominated by workers (Figure 2 revealing such data for 1920–2020), with relatively low (albeit very high compared to developed European countries) employment in agriculture. In the period of 1918–2018, the shape of the social structure was determined by two main processes: peasantisation and professionalisation, which resulted in the deagrarianisation of the village.

### ***Changes in the Polish countryside's social structure***

**Peasantisation.** In the interwar period (1918–1939), changes in the social structure were small and resulted mainly from the widespread use of peasant family farms in agriculture: increasingly more land was owned by peasants, more rural families lived on agriculture. The absolute and relative increase in the share of peasant population in society is called «peasantisation» in the literature. It is a process started in Poland by enfranchisement of peasants and ending at the beginning of the 1960s, when the land collectivised in the first half of the 1950s returns to peasants. In the Second Polish Republic, peasantisation was driven by two major causes: agricultural reform (so-called «parceling» or breaking land (estates) into smaller parts) and division (fragmentation) of farms. The research of the Institute of Social Economy<sup>2</sup> from 1934 shows that in the period 1920–1934 nearly 19% of new farms were created. However, the vast majority (72%) were created as a result of the division of other farms, 13,7% by land purchase, 6,3% on previously parceled land plots, 6,1% on leased land plots and 0,8% – other reasons (cf. [3]). The process of division of farms had a fundamental impact on the number and relative growth of peasant population. It intensified during the Great Depression (1929–1934), during which economic emigration abroad and emigration to the cities were limited. Due to this «negative agrarian

<sup>2</sup> The scheme of research was developed by the Institute of Social Economy (1934). First research was carried out in 1947, the last in 2011 (it was the sixteenth edition). The research had an original methodology: structures of entire villages selected for research were examined. In 1934, 53 villages in Poland were examined, including 2,122 rural families, which were located in five regions of the country. In 2011, the sample included 8,477 rural families.

evolution», peasantisation was often associated with the pauperisation of the peasant population.

After the Second World War, in the second half of 1940s, the peasantisation process gains a temporary impetus. As a result of the land reform of 1944, 1,2 million ha of land in the Former Lands and 5 million ha in the Western and Northern lands<sup>3</sup> were allocated between landless and low-income peasants. Overall 347,000 of new farms were created and 254,000 existing farms expanded their area. The process of peasantisation of villages had a specific form during this period, because it led to «averaging of villages»: a decrease in the shares of the smallest and largest farms and an increase in share of small and medium farms. Descriptions of the social structure of the village from the 1940s to the early 1970s exposed (in accordance with the paradigms of Marxist sociology) the class differentiation of the peasant village, its antagonisms and conflicts of interest. In the 1950s – using sophisticated, Soviet-borrowed arguments – they divided the peasant population into landless and poor, middle-class and «kulaks»<sup>4</sup>, and defined the function and future for each of these groups in development of the new socialist society<sup>5</sup>. Helpful in this undertaking were to be the landless, poor and (temporarily) middle-class ones, while their opponents were the kulaks, especially those employing hired labour. Descriptions of the social structure showed not only the diversity in the village, but also the relationships between its elements, still based on the institution of patronage and clientele. Analyses tracking class systems (and class exploitation) also indicated a fairly dense network of cooperation in the countryside. Every second farm provided employees, every fourth family owning land and two-fifths of landless families did various jobs on larger, more prosperous farms. In total, three-quarters of rural families were members of work-based social networks based on a modified patron-clientelist formula. The system of dependencies changed: it was not

<sup>3</sup> Contemporary Polish borders were established in 1945 at conferences in Potsdam and Yalta. Former Lands include mainly Mazowsze and Małopolska, term «recovered» lands refers to Western and Northern regions, while the lost lands (pol. *ziemie utracone*) are so-called «Eastern borderlands» (pol. *kresy wschodnie*).

<sup>4</sup> Kulak, according to the Soviet collectivization propaganda, is a wealthy peasant owning large land area. Assumed to be a typical enemy of the socialist regime.

<sup>5</sup> «To some extent, this refers to the previously recognized trichotomic division of the peasant layer. In its simplified form, as it was known, it emphasized the class division of the village, the conflict of interests and the ongoing struggle between individual groups treated almost as separate political groups» [11, p. 77].



a landless man who had to «bow down» to the host, but the landlords had to look for a worker and «win him over», because a new competitor was arising on the labour market – new state or collective workplaces<sup>6</sup>.

**Professionalization: its paths and effects.** In the inter-war period, about 1/3 of the rural population belonged to the «non-peasant population» and its share between 1921 and 1938 dropped from 31,1% to 28,4%. The dominant process was peasantisation, but regionally, due to large investments (e.g. such constructions as the Central Industrial District or port in Gdynia), there was an abandonment of agricultural activities and the emergence of new categories of workers, primarily the blue-collar employees. This process intensified in the post-war period, when the village began the process of liberating itself from the state of «backwardness balance» and the social structure began to lose its specific features in favour of universal ones [30]<sup>7</sup>. The initial openness of the social structure was conducive to this, «which was associated with the processes of industrialisation and mass migration from villages to cities. The main shifts in the social structure occurred due to switch from the category of farmers to the category of workers and the influx of representatives of both these categories to white-collar workers» [6, p. 43].

Changes in the countryside's social structure throughout this period were primarily the result of transformations in the structure of national economy. The entry of Poland into the industrial phase meant not only the gradual decrease in importance of agriculture in the economy (disagrarisation of the national economy), but above all the *professionalization of the social structure, being the process of shaping the social diversity, which was based on a profession that determined the placement of individuals in the society*. Occupational positions are becoming clearly visible only at some stage of socio-

<sup>6</sup> The availability of non-agricultural jobs and the mechanisation of agriculture are causing them to disappear, but their existence can still be discovered in the early 1980s (cf. [21]).

<sup>7</sup> «The term «specific system of social relations» means a social order that is based on the assignment of positions and social roles to individuals (and social groups) that are strictly designated and generally stable in terms of individual life. On the other hand, the term «universal system of social positions» means a social order which is based on the dynamic achievement of positions and social roles by individuals (and social groups)» [30, p. 213].

economic development<sup>8</sup>. In industrial society, «professions are the kind of position that must be achieved by individual effort, based on skills, training, knowledge» [4, p. 105]; are the activities resulting from the division of labour, performed for the benefit of others and bringing contractors the means of subsistence. Professionalization understood in this way was a complex process, having not only the real dimension (in the form of the emergence of new or emergence of unknown sets of professional activities), but also the dimension of consciousness; it made the society realise the need for a different construction of the social world's image, the existence of other hierarchies of values, the existence of new, yet difficult to articulate, social divisions [17]. Through this process, the social structure of the village – as Turski [30] cited above – lost its specific features and gained universal ones. Józef Chałasiński pointed out that professionalization was «an evolution of fundamental national significance» [1, p. 11]. This complex process has changed over time and three paths can be distinguished within it: depeasantisation, proletarianisation and embourgeoisement/gentrification. They will be characterised below.

**a) Depeasantisation path.** The community most closely related to agriculture, for which it was the sole or main source of income, consisted of three groups: peasants (i.e. peasants/individual farmers), hired farm workers (at private or state-owned farms) and – after the war – a small group of cooperative peasants. The last two groups have always been a diverse community, the core of which have always been the manual workers. This rural sub-community was the first to be professionalised. Its initially flat structure (unskilled agricultural workers and a few qualified professionals), was increasingly diversifying, especially after the war as a result of changes in the organisational structures of state-owned farms. «In the group of engineering-technical and administrative-office workers were the: production directors and supervisors, managers of separate entities, a whole team of specialists: zootechnicians, agronomists, agricultural

<sup>8</sup> «The genesis to introduce the profession into the circulation of sociological analysis therefore has objective premises. Professional diversity has become independent of other structural forms, gaining an independent ability to create positions, distances and barriers that determine the functioning of societies and the fate of individuals. Professional roles began to determine human actions, regardless of different forms of attribution governed by their own logic, consistent with the requirements of the functioning of industrial societies» [5, p. 435].

mechanisators, economists, chief accountants, employees of local governments and social services. Workers with various qualifications and specialisations were employed, including manual workers dealing with crop and livestock production, operators of combines and tractors, warehouse workers, mechanical repairmen (mechanics, turners, electricians, and restorers), worker groups providing repair, construction, transportation services» [25, p. 152].

The core of the countryside's «agricultural» community was formed by those peasants who were the owners of individual farms, treated for a long time in post-war sociological analyses as a social class (layer) that is disappearing or «transitional». As the basic – though not too precise – criterion for their differentiation starting from the interwar period was the farmland area; in later studies – the economic strength of the farm. Two paths of professionalisation were typical for this agricultural sub-community: depeasantisation and proletarianisation of the countryside.

The first path of professionalisation of the countryside's social structure is the *transformation of the peasant into a «professional» farmer, professionalisation-depeasantisation*. In an industrial society, a food producer ceases to be a «peasant» and becomes a representative of one of the many socio-occupational groups – a «farmer who lives in a mass industrial society in which local communities have no more autonomy than other groups and organisations, and who become the lowest level of the political and administrative ladder» ([22, p. 11] translated by Maria Halamska). It was emphasised that a farmer is a special profession with many peculiarities, such as the fact that the work is performed by the family and is largely autonomous, that its activities have a very wide range [10], this profession has a number of humanistic and ethical aspects [20], favours the autonomy of the individual, giving him a professional status [17]. The phenomenon of peasant's professionalization, described in Western literature as «the end of peasants» (cf. [22]), took place under the influence of modernising and innovative agriculture [11] and was associated with abandonment of both agriculture and countryside. In Poland, in a centrally controlled economy, due to the specific features of modernisation («imperfect modernisation» [19]), the transformation of the «peasant class» into a «socio-occupational group of farmers» was slow, although politically desirable.

In the 1960s, peasants' professionalization was favoured by loosening the compulsory supply system and introducing agricultural

production contracting, which tied family farms to a socialist quasi-market. It was a gradual process, and the multitude of characteristics that should define someone practicing the profession of farmer<sup>9</sup> made it very difficult to estimate how many farmers could be included in the group of «farmers». The source of income became the decisive criterion: work on a family farm being the sole or main source of income. By adopting such criterion at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the group of «professional farmers» constituted from nearly one-fourth to one-third of the rural population.

A further drop in agricultural employment occurs in the second half of the 1990s and in the next decade. Then, significant changes take place in the way family farms function. Since 1990, diversified post-traditional peasant farms have been surrounded by an aggressive market economy environment. Under such influence they begin to diversify: ca. 1/3 of family farms tightens relations with the market, increasing their size and intensifying production. Their managers can undoubtedly be called the «professional farmers».

**b) Proletarianisation path.** Professionalization, understood here as *saturation of the social structure with professional groups classified as workers led mainly through transformation of peasants to workers*. The person that had a farm and at the same time worked outside of the farm was becoming a peasant-worker. The peasant-workers were «a heterogeneous and diverse category in terms of position and role in the family (being its head or member), the nature of the conducted work (mental, physical), the nature and place of employment (permanent, seasonal, industrial, crafts, etc.), area of the farmland, personal income (generated at farm or non-farm work), broadly understood conditions of additional work (qualifications, position, distance, travel conditions), etc.» [26, p. 77]. Peasant-workers appeared at the end of the 1940s along with the country's industrialisation. Employment outside the agriculture and area of their residence was sought by «obsolete people» in the countryside: the landless and owners of small, neglected and poor farms, ruined houses and farm buildings. With time – also from medium-sized and larger farms. Aside earnings, also the lack of systemic social security was pushing people from agriculture and towards the non-agricultural

<sup>9</sup> «A profession is a set of activities distinguished within the social division of labour, requiring preparation (qualifications), performed permanently or occasionally and constituting a source of income» [24].

employment: free medical care was available to them only from 1972, while the option of retirement was introduced in 1977<sup>10</sup>.

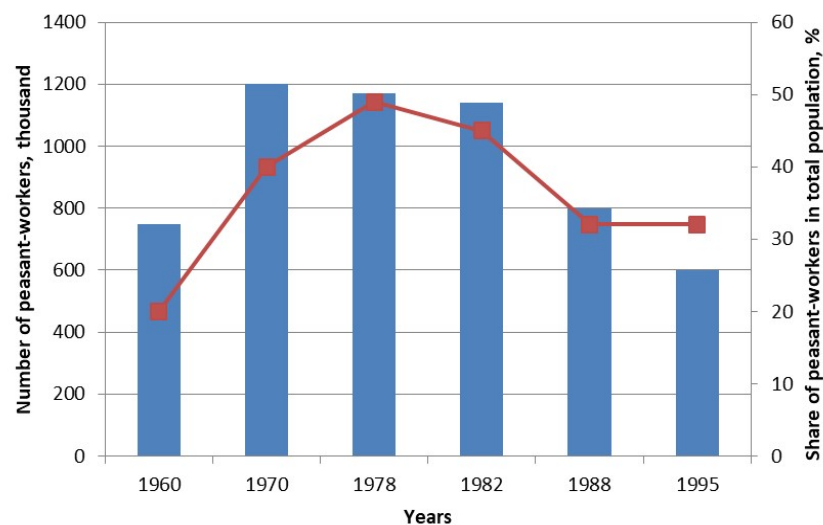


Fig. 3. Peasant-workers (heads of families/farms) in Poland in 1960–1995 (in absolute and relative terms)

Source: own compilation based on [7; 27].

The size of this diverse dual-professional social community has changed over time (Figure 3). In 1950, 477 thousand farming families were relying mainly on the work of the head of the family outside the farm, in 1960 there were over 600,000 and if the other family members who were generating income outside the farm were added here then the number would be ca. 1,400 thousand. Despite many studies, it is difficult to accurately estimate the scale of this phenomenon<sup>11</sup>. Certainly it was of a mass nature and in various forms oc-

<sup>10</sup> These social rights are an important element of professionalization, which means «levelling the field» for farmers compared to other professional groups. The final moment of this «social professionalization» is the Act on social security for farmers signed in 1990.

<sup>11</sup> The reason for this is the lack of precision in statistics. First, it depends on the adoption of the changing size of the land, based on which the owned land is treated as a farm and the people having it are treated as the peasant population. If, for example, the criterion of 0,1 ha is adopted, then «professionally active members of

curred in 2/3 of «agricultural» households. This number reaches its highest value and share in the 1970s, after which it begins to shrink. But in the mid-1990s, over 600,000 people being heads of their family farms worked outside of their farms, which means that almost every third (31,7%) «head of farm» worked outside the agriculture.

Professionalization of peasant-workers was specific. Initially, most people undertaking work outside the farm had no professional training. Most of the peasant-workers in the 1960s were unskilled workers. Turski [29] reports that several percent (16–17%) of farm family heads performed clerical and intellectual work, 32,4% were skilled workers and 47,3% were unskilled employees. Thus, the peasants supplied primarily the «blue-collar worker» segment. The process of professionalization took place gradually: the peasants gained their profession by apprenticeship at the workplace or by taking additional courses. It was important to participate in «non-rural» social structures, built on the professional division of labour, where qualifications and skills determined the social position. The progressing professionalization is even confirmed by the nomenclature: more and more often peasant-workers are called «dual-profession population». This dual occupation was still quite common in the eighties in the life strategy of families owning a farm. Often parents planned such future for their children, and then the acquisition of a non-agricultural profession by children was the way to implement these family strategies; generally, the children already had better vocational training and began to integrate into the middle class community. This phenomenon begins to disappear in the nineties of the twentieth century. Even in 1991, every fourth inhabitant of rural areas has both peasant and worker income source, in 1995 – every fifth, in 2003 – every tenth. Proletarianism consumes the largest part of the dual-professional population. In the last thirty years, the share of workers in the countryside's social structure has been steadily growing, reaching half of the village inhabitants at the end of the century. During the analysed last hundred years, the countryside transforms from peasants' village to workers' village.

peasant-worker families (farm area over 2 ha), worker-peasant (0.5-2 ha) and worker-allotmenteer (0,1-0,5 ha)» in 1960 constitute ca. 1,800,000 people, in 1970 – 2,600,000-2,900,000 people. It was assumed that on farms (up to 2 ha) the main source of income is the work outside of agriculture, and on the farms of over 2 ha – farm income (cf. [27]).

**c) Embourgeoisement/gentrification path.** The new path of rural professionalization is *the embourgeoisement of the village*, i.e. *the saturation of the social structure of the village with people occupying higher positions in social stratification, having higher cultural capital, income, and a lifestyle different from the one typical for the rural folk*. In short – it is the appearance of a «middle class» in the countryside, which is not a rural phenomenon. It appears in capitalist industrial society, grows and changes as it evolves. In modern, most developed market societies of Europe, its participation in the social structure of villages is similar to that in cities. In the Polish countryside, again with a specific development path, it appears at the beginning of the 20th century in the form of a quite lonely intellectual: usually a priest and teacher, then an agronomist and a municipal clerk, sometimes a doctor. A layer of «working intellectuals» has been forming in the Polish People's Republic. The criteria for belonging to this group were not too strict, and recruitment occurred in various ways. Rural youth gaining education were mostly «given away to the city», and the following return to the countryside, especially in case of successfully acquired university education, was most often treated as a personal failure (cf. [31, pp. 18–57]).

The embourgeoisement is a process of transformation of the countryside's social structure, which in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dominates in developed Western countries. This process is defined differently. Anglo-Saxon literature aptly describes it as a process of social gentrification [16], i.e. the saturation of the countryside's social structure with people occupying higher positions in social stratification<sup>12</sup>. The embourgeoisement has become statistically noticeable primarily due to the increase in the share of people with medium and higher levels of education among the rural population, as it gives entitlements to pursue professions belonging to the middle class<sup>13</sup>. Over the past thirty years, this is the most dynamic process. Its characteristic feature is primarily an increase in the share of the «new» middle class. At the beginning of the 1990s, the share of the

<sup>12</sup> This term was introduced by the British urban sociologist Ruth Glass [13] in the 1960s to somewhat ironically and jokingly describe the appearance of «urban gentry» in the London suburbs, similar to «rural gentry» in the 18th century.

<sup>13</sup> This is evidenced by the growth rate in the share of people with at least secondary education. In 1960, the population with this level of education constituted 3,7% of the rural population, in 1970 – 5,7%, in 1978 – 9,8%, in 1988 – 14,9%, in 2002 – 26,7%, 2011 – 33,0% [8].

«old» craft and merchant group in the middle class is much higher in the countryside than in the city. In 1991, one representative of the «old» middle class is opposed by one and a half representative of the «new» middle class, while in 2013 – it is by more than three (3.37). The internal composition of the rural middle class loses its specificity and approaches the national average.

The ongoing gentrification process has two sources: endogenous and exogenous. The first, endogenous, is an increase in the education level of the rural population, especially an increase in the share of people with higher education, entitling them to occupy higher positions in the socio-occupational structure. The process intensified in the 1990s, when the share of rural residents with higher education increased fivefold compared to 1988. The second factor was also important in this process – stopping the outflow of educated rural youth to the city. It was influenced by several factors occurring with varying intensity in the analysed period: the transformational crisis in the 90s resulting in unemployment, transformation of the rural economy and appearance of new, mainly non-agricultural jobs, a significant improvement of living conditions in the countryside causing many young educated people wanting to live in the countryside. Research from the turn of the century shows that every second young educated rural inhabitant wanted to live in rural areas, but over 70% wanted to work in the city, because it is only there that a satisfying work and fulfilment of their professional aspirations can be found [14].

This translates into spatial changes in the population of rural areas: communes concentrating the population, including the well-educated people, are located in the vicinity of urban agglomerations, while peripheral communes lose their inhabitants. Exogenous sources of middle class growth in the countryside are migrations from the city to the village, which are a characteristic element of the gentrification process. The analyses identify two groups of people migrating to the countryside: middle-class representatives and elderly people of retirement age, often seeking *rural idyll*, meaning «positive observation of the village as a friendly, healthy and close to heart environment. (...) The vision of rural idyll is an expression of human longing for harmony resulting from contact with nature and social closeness» [33, p. 47]. As indicated by statistical data, mainly young people from the 25–44 age group with permanent family status mi-



grate to the countryside, while migrations of older people are relatively rare<sup>14</sup>.

### Conclusions: regularity or specificity of changes?

The processes of changes in the socio-occupational structure of rural Poland must be viewed in a broad context. Let's start with the processes transforming the share of agriculture, which gives the vast majority of employment in the first sector. Transformations in agriculture in the 20th century result in peasantisation, relatively late compared to Western Europe, yet quite typical for Central Europe. It ends with the commencement of agricultural collectivisation in Poland in 1949, which was unsuccessful, but inflicting specific pressure throughout the entire decade of the 1950s. The process of limiting the share of employees in agriculture begins in the 1960s, yet its acceleration occurs only in the 1990s, when post-communist agriculture and family farms must comply with market economy rules. An important element of these transformations is depeasantisation, which began in the 1970s, along with the liberation of individual farms from compulsory supply quotas. It is accompanied by the decomposition of peasant culture, homogenising the village and providing peasants with ideological domination.

The second stream of changes in the socio-occupational structure of village is caused by industrialisation and manifests itself primarily through the countryside's proletarianisation. The share of workers in the countryside's social structure has been growing steadily until recent years, while farmers – as in other developed countries – become the dominant group in the rural social structure; there is a sort of «ruralisation» of workers, when most of them reside in the countryside. An important path of proletarianisation is the dual occupation, which also brings professionalization to the countryside. Changes in the structure of the entire economy and its transition to the post-

<sup>14</sup> Frenkel reports that in 2008, 2010 and 2012, the participation rate of the 25-29 age group was 14,8, 14,8 and 13,0 respectively per 1,000 rural population in a given age group; the rate in the group of 30-44 equalled 11,8, 13,1 and 12,2 respectively, while in the group of 60 and over years – 3,2, 3,5, 3,4 respectively. In each of these years, the category of married was ca. 70% [8, p. 40]. Younger age groups are better educated than older groups and based on this alone – despite the lack of data on the education of migrants – it is possible to conclude that they are also a source of gentrification. This is also confirmed by case studies (see [34]).

industrial phase result in the next process: the embourgeoisement of the countryside's social structure, i.e. the growth of the broadly understood middle class. The intensification of this process falls on the last decade of the twentieth century, when the increase in the share of the middle class in the countryside is the effect of both: the increase in education level of rural residents and the arrivals of the urban middle class representatives to the countryside for permanent residence.

Visualisation presented below depicts the phases in the development of Poland, while emphasizing particular transformation processes occurring during various periods of time (Fig. 4).

Country's development phases	pre-industrial			industrial			post-industrial				
Types of system	II RP			PRL			III RP				
Transformation processes	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>Peasantisation</b>	■										
<b>Professionalization</b>	Depeasantisation					■					
	Proletarianisation		■								
	Embourgeoisement							■			

Fig. 4. Changes in the social structure of the Polish countryside  
Source: own research.

**Summary and possible directions of future researches.** To what extent were the processes of change in the socio-occupational structure of the Polish countryside typical and to what extent were they specific? The answer depends on which analysis dimension we assume. To a large extent, these processes result from economic transformations, but their pace and direction were shaped primarily by political and administrative decisions. Therefore, their course is different from those in developed Western countries, which started a hundred years ago at a different level of development and did not have a centrally planned economic episode, lasting almost half a century. The course of these processes was also specific in Central Europe. It was decided not to collectivise agriculture. Therefore, deagrarianisation was gradual and two-staged. Its slow dynamic before the 1990s was associated with the widespread dual-professionalism. As a result, in the nineties there was an accumulation of transformation processes: we are observing depeasantisation, proletarianisation and embourgeoisement, all occurring almost simultaneously. At the same time, due to transformation of the economy and transition

to the post-industrial stage – the deindustrialisation occurs. This means that the stream of emigrants from agriculture is not directed, as it was in the 60s and 70s – towards large industrial plants, but (at least to a large extent) – allowing them to look for jobs in the third sector, dominated by small and medium enterprises. The uniqueness of this process in rural Poland is therefore determined not only by the «shift in time» in relation to the West, but by the overlapping of processes that took place there in a certain succession: deagrarianisation is associated with tertiarisation, and not – as it has been so far – industrialisation of the economy.

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