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## **The Polish Countryside in the Process of Transformation 1989–2009**

*Abstract:* The author of this essay argues that, when viewed from a longer time perspective, four major processes have been taking place in the Polish countryside, changing its character, just as they have been doing in other Western and Eastern European countries: deruralization, deagrarianization, development of a new model of agriculture (peasantization/depeasantization) and restratification. These processes are changing 1) the place of the countryside in society, 2) the place of agriculture in society and the economy as well as 3) the structure of the countryside as a social subsystem. These changes have been taking place throughout the last two decades, albeit with different speeds in different segments of time. Three of these processes, deruralization, deagrarianization and restratification, are continuations of processes which were already in motion before 1989. Their dynamics do not differ from the Western and Central-Eastern European canon. A fourth, more original process can also be detected in the development of a new agrarian model, however, adjustment of the post-communist structure of agricultural production to market economy.

*Keywords:* countryside; transformation; deruralization; deagrarianization; restratification; new agrarian model.

### **Introduction**

The nature of social reality is dual. It involves the socially static and the socially dynamic, stability and change. The dynamics themselves, and the changes they lead to, vary in intensity. The tempo of change in modern and post-modern societies is typically much quicker than it used to be. Multiple changes in ways of production and lifestyle are taking place in the lives of just one generation. The consequences are not always positive. The countryside has traditionally been slower to change, almost by definition, largely because that is how peasant culture works. We may therefore assume that, despite its continuing decomposition, peasant culture is still affecting the tempo of change in the countryside to a certain extent.

Social dynamics have various rhythms. Sometimes they slow down, sometimes they speed up. Changes in the Polish countryside greatly accelerated in the 1970s and at the turn of the 1980s. In the latter case, this acceleration correlated with the economic and social crisis. One of its particularly salient features was “growth without development,” the “bulging” of the peasantry which also showed signs of disintegration. This was well-prepared soil for the rapid cultural change brought on by the political transformation in 1989. In many ways this was a cultural trauma. The

transformation led to changes in many areas of social life and these changes continued more or less intensively throughout the next two decades. There was a logic behind these many changes. The consequences of certain changes were the sources of them. What I propose here is a dynamic look at the reality of the countryside within the last twenty years when the changes which took place were rather special: they overlapped in various proportions, some erased the deformations of the old system, other ones led to the development of a new order.

An important methodological debate emerged after 1989: are these changes a “transition” or are they a much more complex “transformation”? The debate was rather “premature” at the time and reluctance to accept the “transition” concept was partly caused by the critique of another equally premature idea, “the end of history.” I do not think I will be too heretical if I say that, from the methodological point of view, it is not illegitimate to suggest that the change was “transitional.” The first reason is sociological tradition itself. Most sociological theories are evolutionary, they are theories of change in a specific direction. The second reason is that although, by formulating “transitional” hypotheses, we run the risk of overlooking canonical changes, such hypotheses allow sociologists to ask whether the changes they are observing are similar to earlier ones or unique; whether they are universal or specific. I shall conduct my analysis in the second vein. I shall define social change in the simplest, textbook mode: change is the difference between the state of the social system at the time one (t1) and the state of the system at the time two (t2). I shall be concerned not only with the difference between the states of various elements of the rural social system in 1989 and 2009 but also with the internal dynamics of this change, its moments of acceleration and deceleration.

No social reality is absolutely stable although stabilizing processes may be more dominant than processes leading to change. This, for example, is typical in the countryside. Here, various changes—some faster some slower—take place and some of these changes fall into sequences which head in a particular direction and are causally related: social processes. In this essay I want to point out that in the longer perspective four major processes have been taking place in the Polish countryside and changing its character, just as they have in other Western and Eastern European countries: deruralization, deagrarianization, development of a new model of agriculture (peasantization/depeasantization), and restratification. These processes are changing 1) the place of the countryside in society, 2) the place of agriculture in society and the economy and 3) the structure of the countryside as a social subsystem.

### **Deruralization or the Changing Place of Agriculture in Society**

Deruralization is a process which is affecting the whole of society. It involves the gradual shrinking of the share of the rural population in the national population. According to the National Census, the rural population in 2002 was 14,619.7 thousand, that is 38.2% of the national population. In 2002–2007, despite the overall reduction of the national population, the rural population increased to 14 799 thousand, that

is 38.8% of the national population. This is one of the highest rates in the European Union.

The present ratio of rural to urban populations in Poland is the result of the deruralization which took place throughout the twentieth century: the estimated share of the rural population in Poland was 71.7% in 1910–1923 and 63.1% in 1939–1941 (Eberhard 1991). In 1946, just after the wartime and post-war migrations and territorial shifts, the share of the rural population in the entire population was 66%. Ever since, this ratio has been slowly but systematically dropping: to 51.7% in 1960, 47.7% in 1970, 41.3% in 1980 and 38.2% in 1990 (Frenkel 2003) although the absolute number of rural inhabitants has not changed (about 14.5 million). Deruralization practically came to a halt in the 1990s and remained more or less constant throughout the decade (just over 38%). The 2002 National Census confirmed this observation. The rural population increased between 2002 and 2007 by about 120 thousand due to the overall reduction of the population by 0.6%. What we are observing within this short time-span is reruralization. The nature of this process is not quite clear, however.

First, we can see this in the structure of the components of the changing rural population. These changes are the end-product of three groups of factors: the natural migration of the rural population, internal town to countryside migration and foreign migration, and changes in the administrative structure of the country.

Table 1

**The Rural Population Balance 1991–2000/2003–2007 in thousands**

Specification	1991–2000*	2001–2003	2004–2007
Changes in total population	199.0	93.0	122.0
Change components			
—Birth rate	456.3	48.1	29.2
—Net permanent country-to-town migration	–364.2	58.7	157.2
—Net permanent foreign migration	–17.1	–13.1	–22.8
—Changes in administrative structure	–103.0		–77.0**

Source: Frenkel 2003: 75, 2008: 177; Demographic Yearbook 2008.

\*The following items are missing: the migration for temporary residence > 2 months which amounted to 226.7 thousand.

\*\*For the entire 2000–2007 period.

Following a period of high negative country-to-town migration balance, this tendency began to weaken in 1980. The tendency reversed in 2000: we now have a positive internal migration balance in the countryside. However, foreign migration also began, including long-term temporary residence but there is no precise data, only estimates. Presumably about 2 million people were living abroad in 2007; about 30% of them were members of the rural population. Izaśław Frenkel thinks that if we were to adopt the strict criterion adopted by the National Census and count only individuals actually present in their place of residence, the “absolute rural population in 2007 would be

lower, not higher than in 2000” (Frenkel 2008:181). Reruralization is the effect of imperfect statistics during the period between censuses.

Second, this process differs from region to region. The highest share of rural population (more than half) is to be found in the Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie and Lubelskie voivodeships (provinces) and the lowest (less than a third) in the Śląskie, Dolnośląskie and Zachodniopomorskie voivodeships (provinces). The dynamics of the rural population in the different regions also varied immensely in the analyzed period. The share of the rural population increased in 12 voivodeships (provinces) in 1990–2007; there was a systematic increase in four voivodeships (Małopolskie, Pomorskie, Śląskie and Zachodniopomorskie) and a systematic decrease in three voivodeships (Mazowieckie, Opolskie and Podlaskie).

Table 2

**The Rural Population by Voivodeships (provinces) 1990–2000–2007**

Voivodeship (province)	The share of the rural population in percents		
	1990	2000	2007
Poland	37.0	38.2	38.8
Dolnośląskie	28.5	28.4	29.4
Kujawsko-pomorskie	38.2	37.7	38.9
Lubelskie	55.3	53.2	53.4
Lubuskie	35.5	35.3	36.1
Łódzkie	35.5	35.1	35.6
Małopolskie	48.6	49.6	50.6
Mazowieckie	36.1	35.7	35.3
Opolskie	48.3	47.6	47.5
Podkarpackie	59.5	58.9	59.4
Podlaskie	44.5	41.5	40.5
Pomorskie	30.6	31.6	33.3
Śląskie	19.0	20.6	21.6
Świętokrzyskie	55.3	54.1	54.6
Warmińsko-mazurskie	41.0	39.9	40.0
Wielkopolskie	42.4	42.3	43.4
Zachodniopomorskie	30.2	30.3	31.1

Source: Frenkel, 2003: 15, Demographic Yearbook 2008.

Third, we must look at the problem of deruralization in the context of the increasing diversification of the countryside. Some, more peripheral, rural territories are becoming depopulated whereas other, suburban ones are becoming increasingly populated. In 1950–1960 the rural population decreased in 18.8% of the country's administrative districts. The respective figures for later years are: 1960–1970—42.2%, 1970–1978—68.5%, 1978–1988—64.4%, 1988–2002—61.5% (Pięćek 2006). The process is continuing according to Andrzej Rosner's analyses. Rosner says that “the population of suburban areas is growing whereas the population of areas located at a greater distance from the large cities is decreasing. (...) Obviously there are densely

populated areas and areas which are becoming depopulated” (Rosner 2008: 216). This is leading to the increasing heterogeneity of these areas. We have suburban zones which are under powerful urban influence: 194 of the administrative districts (8.9%) are within the range of direct impact of medium-sized towns with populations of more than 100 thousand. Here we find not only increasing populations but also the rapid development of nonagricultural functions and consequent changes in the structure of economic activity, employment and education. We ought to pay special attention to so-called metropolitan areas of influence (Czarnecki 2008: 230). These are areas which serve the cities and are served by the cities and which are expanding and swallowing up the positive town-to-country migration ratio. In fact the process of deruralization is continuing.<sup>1</sup>

We must also remember that this process has been taking place in unfavourable conditions (if we may say so) in the years we are analyzing here. On the one hand, we had a transformational economic crisis in the early 1990s which forced the redundant workforce back to the country and also limited the non-agricultural demand for this workforce. On the other hand, the late 1980s were a time of “return to the country” in Western Europe with its programs and manifestos of rural revival, appreciation of the countryside’s cultural merits, the concept of sustained and balanced growth. What this meant in practice was a new tendency in EU policy which strove to replace its “rural development policy” with a new “common agricultural policy.” It also led to a new “fad:” it was now fashionable to live in the country (as it had already become in Western Europe) and the increasing wealth of certain social groups helped to realize this fad.

### **Deagrarianization or the Shrinking Influence of Agriculture**

Deagrarianization means the shrinking of agrarianism, i.e. the significant impact of agriculture and farmers on society, and also on the economy and the rural community. We have been observing this process since the early twentieth century when its most frequent indices, i.e. the share of agriculture in the GNP and the share of the population employed in agriculture, have been systematically diminishing. The same indices are often used to measure the country’s socio-economic development.

Deagrarianization has been observed in Central Europe since the early twentieth century when agrarian societies in this region gradually lost their rural character. The process gained increasing impetus after 1990 as attested to by the dynamics of the share of agriculture in the GNP. It was 7.2% in 1992, 6.2% in 1996, 3.1% in 2002, 4.1% in 2004, and about 4% in 2008. It has stabilized at about 4% since Poland’s accession to the European Union.

Another indicator of the level of society’s agrarianization is the percentage of people employed in agriculture or making a living in agriculture, that is the share of the

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<sup>1</sup> This process is also unclear due to the administrative criterion of the countryside adopted in Poland. If we use the morphological criterion of population density, then 34.4% of the Polish population lives in the countryside according to the OECD criterion and 29.3% according to the EUROSTAT criterion.

national or rural population associated with agriculture in some significant way. We have a problem here, however, because there are considerable differences between various estimates of the share of the population associated with agriculture in one way or another. In the context of this general process it is also worth mentioning the difficulties involved when we try to define the agrarianism of the Polish countryside and Polish society. One of the reasons for these difficulties is the number of different criteria used to define agrarianism. For example, the 2002 National Census included the “farming population” category meaning people living in households with a farm user. These people were not always farmers themselves. The farming population thus defined amounted to 27.4% of the Polish population and 71.5% of the rural population. But there is also another way of defining associations with farming: working on a farm or gleaning income from farming. When we use this criterion, the scale of agrarianism is different. Moreover, it will also be different when we use other criteria depending on how restrictive they are. For example when the criterion is:

- *possessing a farm*, agrarianism in Poland will range from 22% of households with a farm user to 6.8% of households with a user of a farm with an area of over a hectare and producing mainly for the market;
- *working in agriculture*, from 32.2% of the population who contribute anything at all to the farm to 11.6% who work on the farm regularly or exclusively for more than 3 hours a day;
- *income*, from 17.9% of the population who have at least some income from working in agriculture or doing work associated with agriculture to 7.2% who glean the majority of their income from current work in agriculture (Halamska 2005). As far as the countryside is concerned, these measures of agrarianism are about 2.5 times higher on the average. In other words, the concept of “agrarianism” is fuzzy and fluid. This is well illustrated by the data on income-related associations with agriculture. About 7% of the Polish population (and 17% of the rural population) make a living in agriculture but if we include those who live on farmers’ disability or retirement pensions then this share increases to about 15% of the entire population (and 38% of the rural population).

Whatever criterion we use, however, dynamic analysis shows that agrarianism is shrinking or, to put it another way, the process of deagrarianization is progressing. The dynamics of this process have increased since the beginning of the transformation. Statistics, surveys and sociological research have all registered this rhythm of deagrarianization. According to the sociologists, the share of two “agrarian” categories (farm owners and farm workers) is systematically diminishing in the Polish social structure.

Table 3

**Changing Shares of “Agrarian Categories” in the Polish Socio-occupational Structure**

Socio-occupational categories	1982	1987	1994–1995	1998–1999	2002
Farm workers	1.8%	1.5%	2.0%	2.1%	2.7%
Farm owners	23.5%	19.8%	13.4%	12.2%	10.2%

Source: Domański 2004: 218.

When analyzing this process we have to bear in mind that deagrarianization can be considered on at least two planes: objective and subjective. The foregoing data are subjective. They apply to phenomena which take place at the level of social consciousness, expressed in declarations of work in agriculture. Meanwhile, the subjective dimension of agrarianism, e.g. identification with farming and an “agrarian” outlook, is much broader. On the objective plane agrarianism is analyzed on the level of such facts as employment in agriculture or income gleaned from agriculture.

Table 4

**The Dynamics of deagrarianization 1988–2007**

Year	Employed in agriculture			
	total		including those working in the countryside	
	in thousands	% employed	in thousands	% employed
<b>A. According to the 1988 National Census and the 1996 National Agricultural Census</b>				
1988	5003	27.1		56.1
1995	4781	30.4		62.1
<b>B. According to the Agriculture and Rural Areas Statistical Yearbook 2008. Figures as of 31 December</b>				
1995	4125.3			
2000	4245.9			
2002A	4229.4			
2002B	2109.0			
2003	2088.7			
2004	2094.2			
2005	2092.8			
2006	2092.9			
<b>C. According to BAEL*</b>				
2000	2715	18.7	2525	45.5
2003	2497	18.3	2301	43.7
2004	2472	17.9	2272	42.5
2007	2239	14.7	2058	35.3
Average annual tempo of reduction	68 thousand a year		67 thousand a year	
2000–2007	0.1%		0.45%	
2000–2003	0.75%		1.8%	
2004–2007				

The author's own estimates based on Frenkel 2008: 19; Agriculture and Rural Areas Statistical Yearbook 2008, Error 2009.

\*The Population Economic Activity Survey.

These data are also difficult to analyze because, due to the change of criteria, the data are not fully comparable.<sup>2</sup> But even these data show that the rhythm of the process

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to begin the analysis in 1989 because the criteria of inclusion in the “employed/not employed in agriculture” category changed after the 1996 National Agricultural Census, “producing” a statistically enormous reduction in employment in agriculture: between 1996 and 2002 employment in agriculture dropped by 2.6 million. According to Frenkel, 42% of this number was the effect of introduction

varies: the beginning of the transformation in the early 1990s brought a transitory, relative increase in agrarianism due to the drop in employment in agriculture (part A of the table). Two paths of change accounted for this minor drop in employment in agriculture: the drop by about 300 thousand in employment on state-owned farms due to their privatization and loss of nonagricultural work and return to the farm of about 600 thousand members of farmers' families. Deagrarianization definitely speeds up after 2000. We can see this clearly by analyzing the BAEL data. Between 2000 and 2007 the share of the population employed in agriculture dropped by 4 percent nationally and by 10.2 percent in the countryside. The EU accession clearly speeded up the process: within the four years prior to accession, the average annual tempo of reduction of employment in agriculture was 0.1% and 0.45% in the countryside whereas after the accession it was 0.75% a year on average and 1.8% in the countryside. Other BAEL data support this observation: in 2007 the rural population aged 15 and over was only 46% compared with 51% in 2003.

The picture of agrarianism clearly varies from region to region. Let us take a closer look at it on the basis of two types of so-called objective data: the share of agriculture in the generation of regional GNP and the share of the rural population employed in agriculture in different regions.

Table 5

**Regional Varieties of Rural Agrarianism**

Voivodeship (province)	Gross added value of agriculture	% of rural population employed in agriculture	Voivodeship (province)	Gross added value of agriculture	% of rural population employed in agriculture
1	2	3	1	2	3
Dolnośląskie	2.7	26.3	Podkarpackie	3.0	37.4
Kuj.-pomor.	4.6	44.3	Podlaskie	7.1	68.2
Lubelskie	7.0	59.9	Pomorskie	2.4	25.6
Lubuskie	4.0	22.2	Śląskie	1.2	17.7
Łódzkie	3.9	50.2	Świętokrzyskie	5.0	53.6
Małopolskie	2.3	32.4	W.-mazurskie	6.3	38.6
Mazowieckie	3.5	44.2	Wielkopolskie	6.7	37.8
Opolskie	5.0	31.9	Z.-pomorskie	4.3	25.0

Source: The author's own estimations based on Frenkel 2005; The Voivodeship Statistical Yearbook 2008.

Two different pictures of agrarianism now emerge. Some voivodeships (provinces) are "very agrarian," as the data testify, e.g. Podlaskie, Lubelskie, Świętokrzyskie and Łódzkie but also Mazowieckie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie where more than two-fifths of the rural population are employed in agriculture. At the other extreme we observe voivodeships (provinces) where employment of the rural population in agriculture is relatively low: Śląskie, Lubuskie, Dolnoslaskie, Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie.

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of a new definition of employment. The actual drop in employment in agriculture was 1554.6 thousand, i.e. about 44.1% (Frenkel 2005: 89).

Also, the type of agrarianism has affected its present evolution or shrinkage. On deeper analysis we can see that in recent years the tempo of deagrarianization has been highest in those voivodeships (provinces) where employment in agriculture is already relatively low. Another relation is more obvious, however: deagrarianization has basically not progressed in places where the share of employed in agriculture was high (e.g. Małopolskie) or very high (Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie). This analysis only covers a very short period and must be continued and based on comparable, reliable data for the whole analyzed time span.

### **Development of a New Model of Agriculture**

Development of a new model of agriculture is a very important process and one which carries many social consequences, for example in the social structure of the countryside or the new social divisions. When striving to present such a model we must take three groups of factors into account: relations within the means of production (between land, capital and workforce); the goal of production—this goal determines the nature of the relations between agriculture and farmers on the one hand and the national economy and society on the other hand; the role which the state plays in the functioning of this model (Rey 1996).

The model has been changing for the third time in the whole of Eastern Europe in the twentieth century: from peasantization and the agricultural reforms between the wars and in the 1940s, through collectivization which began after 1948 and lasted until the 1970s, to decollectivization in the 1990s. The Polish countryside participated in this dynamics only partly because it was never fully collectivized. Hence the dual family-collectivist model of agriculture in this country, which functioned according to its own specific logic<sup>3</sup> until 1989.

The new model developed quite spontaneously, albeit with state permission. Important changes took place in the structure of land ownership and management in the 1990s. Polish agriculture entered the two decades I analyze here with a post-socialist, three-sector ownership structure: state-owned, co-operative and private farms. The sector which changed most was the state-owned farm sector which worked 18% of the arable land in the country and which was privatized from 1992 on, on the basis of a separate act of parliament. The former state-owned farms were either sold or rented to private hands although these structures are not yet fully stabilized. Only a very small portion of arable land, 933.5 thousand hectares (5.5%), is being operated by the public sector. At the time of EU accession the arable land ownership structure was already clearly outlined and practically all farming in Poland is private. In 2002 the private sector was using 15,965.8 thousand hectares, i.e., 94.5% of the country's

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<sup>3</sup> I have presented a detailed analysis of the logic of collectivist farming in my "Decollectivization of agriculture in Central Europe and its social consequences," Warszawa: IRWiR PAN 1998. This book also contains an analysis of the rationality of the functioning of peasant farming as a symbiotic system vis-à-vis centrally planned farming.

Table 6  
**Changes in Arable Land Ownership 1989–2002**

Owner	1989	1992	1996	2000	2002
The private sector	80.3	80.3	91.2	92.2	94.5
—individual farms	76.2	76.4	82.1	83.9	87.9
—agricultural cooperatives	4.0	3.6	2.7	2.0	1.9
—companies and other owners	—	0.3	6.4	6.3	4.7
Public sector	20.0	19.7	8.8	7.8	5.5
—state-owned farms	18.7	17.7	6.7	5.7	5.4

Source: Dzun, 2005: 241.

arable land and the dominant user was the individual farm which farmed 87.9% of the country's arable land.

Individual farms are continually changing. The first clear tendency is the systematic albeit slow reduction in number of farms and, consequently, the change in area structure. This gradual reduction could already be observed in 1950–1988 when the number of farms decreased by 434.8 thousand (14.6%). The rhythm of area structure increased between 1988 and 2002 when about 216 thousand farms disappeared (about 10%) (Halamska 2007).

Table 7  
**The Dynamic of Change in Farm Structure 1996–2007**

	Year		
	1996	2002	2007
Farms in thousands	3066.5	2933.2	2579.2
—including farms without farming activity	303.1	755.6	188.2
—under 1 ha	1019.7	977.1	771.1
—1–5 ha	1130.0	1146.9	1036.9
—5–20 ha	828.0	693.5	644.3
—20 and more	88.4	115.8	126.8
Dynamics in 1996 = 100			
Farms in thousands	100	95.7	84.1
—including farms without farming activity	100	249.3	62.1
—under 1 ha	100	95.8	75.6
—1–5 ha	100	85.7	80.3
—5–20 ha	100	83.4	77.9
—20 ha and more	100	131.0	143.4
Average annual dynamics—percents			
		1996–2002	2003–2007
Farms in thousands	100	(–07)	(–1.2)
—including farms without farming activity	100	(+25)	(–37.4)
—under 1 ha	100	(–0.7)	(–4.9)
—1–5 ha	100	(–0.25)	(–1.9)
—5–20 ha	100	(+2.9)	(–1.1)
—20 ha and more	100	(+5.2)	(+2.5)

The author's own calculations based on Dzun 2008: 98.

The area structure rhythm changed yet again after 2003, i.e. after Poland's accession to the European Union. The number of farms continued to decrease at the same rate or even faster although we now see two different rhythms. The first one applies to small farms where the tempo of disappearance increases. The second one applies to larger farms where the tempo of increase in number slows down, largely due to the lack of new sources of land (now that there are no more former state-owned land to buy).

This is one aspect of the changes in the social structure of production, i.e. farms. Their private nature is a synthetic source of information concerning internal relations among various production factors: privately owned land remains in private hands with private capital, used in the production process, which is either based on the work of the family or based on the wage labour.

Another equally important aspect of the emergence of a new model of agriculture is the farm's goal: whether people produce "just for themselves" or "for the market." This process has been quite well described since the early 1990s when farms clearly begin to fall into two categories: agricultural produce (market) farms and farms operated for other reasons ("subsistence," "quasi-peasant" farms) (cf. Szemberg 1998). Some exist in order to produce. This allows them to integrate closely with the economy, market and society. Others are not subordinated to the market but function autonomously and usually have other functions than production. This means that farms function according to two different rationales because they have different logics, different methods and mechanisms of operating, different goals of production and different principles of integration with the national economy and society. About 19% of all farms produce only for the market, 40% produce mainly for the market (but on a small scale) and 41% produce only for the farmers' own needs (Zegar 2007).<sup>4</sup>

At the face level, the logic of subsistence farms is similar to the logic of classical peasant farms: few or no ties with the market, autonomy of market dictate, only surplus produce is sold—these are the classic features of subsistence farms described by Aleksandr Czajanow. But the peasant farm also has other characteristics, e.g. its own attitude towards work and striving to put every pair of hands to good use. Subsistence farms in Poland do not share these characteristics as testified, for example, by the amount of fallow land and other unused "productive capacities" they have.<sup>5</sup> On the classical peasant farm the family depends on the farm and is subordinated to it because its capacity to feed itself (subsistence) and its economic relations with the economy (taxes) depended on it. We have no new data concerning the scale of satisfaction of food needs by means of subsistence but from what we know (for example on the basis of our analysis of the structure of production of these farms) these needs are only partly satisfied. These farms can afford to withdraw from the market and be incompletely subsistent because as many as 92% of them have other sources of income, unrelated to agriculture. It is this extra income which has ensured

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<sup>4</sup> This is also true only with regard to "real" farms, registered in the IACS system. About 1750 thousand farms are currently registered in the system and the estimated number of market farms is 463 thousand (Zegar).

<sup>5</sup> Zegar mentions, for example, their unused farm buildings and depreciated equipment.

their autonomy but this has nothing to do with the autonomy of the peasant farm. This is why I call these farms quasi-peasant farms and view them as a uniquely Polish outcome of the “end of the peasants” (Halamska 2004).

Two series of changes are proceeding in parallel: in market integration and in farm area. Greater integration with the market can mainly be observed among the largest and economically strongest farms which are striving to enlarge their area, assets and intensity of production. These farms are on an ascending trajectory. At the other extreme we have farms which are loosening their ties with the market and withdrawing from the commercial logic of functioning. These are mainly small farms which are simplifying and reducing their production and also striving to reduce their area. These farms are on a descending trajectory and are becoming increasingly marginalized.

When we analyze the development of this dual model of Polish agriculture we must pay attention to its regional heterogeneity. This heterogeneity can be measured in terms of the presence or absence of quasi-peasant farms in the farm structure. Their spatial allocation varies greatly. There also seem to be several regional types. There are:

1. regions where small, quasi-peasant farms dominate and define the character of the countryside. Such farms can be found in the Małopolskie and Podkarpackie voivodeships (provinces) where subsistence quasi-peasant farms dominate in the farm structure (60% and 66% respectively) among small farms (with an average area of 2–2.5 ha) and occupy a considerable portion of arable land (over two-fifths). These farms absorb very much of the agricultural workforce. In addition to the characteristics already mentioned, agriculture in these regions is poorly connected to the economy. This is testified by the low value of its sold produce per hectare (1100 PLN and 820 PLN respectively). The Świętokrzyskie province is not far behind;
2. regions where subsistence quasi-peasant farms complement the region’s otherwise relatively healthy agrarian structure. This is the case in Western and Northern Poland—in the Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeships (provinces). These voivodeships (provinces) have quite a large share of subsistence farms in their overall structure (about 40%) but their share in the structure of arable land is relatively small (about 10%). These small farms are surrounded by large farms with low rates of employment in agriculture and quite high levels of production (from 1500 PLN to 3300 PLN per hectare);
3. regions where subsistence quasi-peasant farms are marginal compared with the otherwise intensive farming, for example Wielkopolska, Kujawy, Ziemia Opolska and Podlasie. Relatively few and small subsistence farms occupy just a small percent (10–15%) of arable land and so they cannot affect the very high commodification of this farming and its strong integration with the economy. These are also regions where the contribution of farming to the regional economy is considerable.

All in all, regional varieties of the dual model basically stay within the limits of historical regions. They overlap with the boundaries of the nineteenth-century parti-

tions although not without some exceptions (e.g. Podlasie where significant changes in agriculture have been taking place recently).

### Restratification: Selected Elements

By restratification we mean the changing social structure of the countryside and the ensuing changes in its stratification hierarchy. This process has also been going on for a long time, ever since the share of the rural population which makes its living in agriculture began to shrink. The Polish People's Republic greatly contributed to restratification. This was a time of extensive industrialization, unaccompanied by urbanization. The emblematic outcome of this process was a large group of peasant farmers who worked in factories. This group practically disappeared during the transformation. According to Andrzej Kaleta, 30% of farmers in Poland were dual-occupation farmers in 1975 (Kaleta 2005). Another parallel tendency, promoted by new rural development, has also emerged: multi-occupation. This is an outcrop of the multifunctional development of agriculture which now also has several non-productive functions. A third tendency, whose consequences are very important, is the shrinking of the farmer group. This phenomenon has two aspects: a physical aspect in the form of reduction of the absolute and relative share in the social structure, and a symbolic aspect expressed in the fact that the farmer has been stripped of the myth of feeder of the nation and is no longer a central figure in the countryside.<sup>6</sup> I shall focus here on the changes in the rural socio-occupational structure, the education structure and the income structure, although not all the presented data cover the entire period under study.

We have no completely comparable data on the social structure of the Polish countryside since the onset of the transformation. Yet the first few years of transformation witnessed several important changes. Between 1988 and 2003 employment decreased in state-owned enterprises and cooperatives and increased in private enterprises, and a new, hitherto unknown, category emerged in the countryside—unemployment.

Table 8

#### Rural Population Rates of Employment in 1988 and 1993

Year	State-owned enterprise	Cooperative	Privatized enterprises	Private enterprise	Unemployment	Disability or retirement pension
1988	51.6	10.5	1.8	33.3	1.0	1.8
1993	36.8	6.0	3.0	37.6	9.4	7.2

Source: Based on Kovach 1997.

Eight years after the onset of the transformation we read in a CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre] report (BS/135/135/98 p. 5) that “half of the working

<sup>6</sup> Farming still occupies a high 5th rank in a 2006 study of occupation hierarchy.

indigenous rural population<sup>7</sup> are farmers or unqualified workers, and only 11% can be categorized as managers, intelligentsia or junior white-collar workers.” Systematic changes in the rural social structure can be observed from 2000 on by analyzing the representative sample structure in consecutive editions of *Social Diagnosis* based on the same methodological principles.

Table 9

**Rural Household Structure by Socio-economic Group 2000–2009, percents**

Socio-economic group	Year				
	2000	2003	2005	2007	2009
Workers	28.3	30.2	30.2	36.0	42.1
Farmers	11.4	11.7	11.7	12.0	14.1
Farm-using workers	12.7	10.2	10.2	8.5	*
Disability and retirement pensioners	38.9	38.0	38.0	35.1	34.6
Self-employed	5.8	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.8
Living on unearned income	1.8	5.0	5.0	3.7	4.3
N—size of rural sample	945	1280	1280	1879	4079
% of national sample	31.75	32.87	32.87	33.96	33.00

The author’s own calculations based on *Social Diagnosis* 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009.

\* This category was absent in the sample structure in 2009—it was possibly “absorbed” by two categories, workers” and “farmers.”

Although the data actually apply to household structure, they confirm the observation that occupational categories relating to agriculture are shrinking whereas categories making a living in non-agricultural occupations are expanding. The share of disability and retirement pensioners is also diminishing. Recent analyses support these observations: in 2005 14.4% of the total number of employed people were employed in “farming, horticulture, forestry and fishing.” The proportions for 2007 and 2009 are 13.3% and 12.8% respectively (*Social Diagnosis* 2009: 117). The countryside is no longer a place inhabited mainly by farmers.

This new social structure is still inchoate. This is illustrated by the CBOS study “How well are we living” conducted in 2007.<sup>8</sup> As the farmer and worker category in the countryside shrinks, the manual labour category no longer dominates. Manual workers now make up only one-fourth of the rural population. This will surely lead to changes in the rural population’s value system.

A rather large category of blue-and-white collar workers is now emerging. This category is associated with the widely-understood service sector. Another emerging category (not very large yet) is the so-called middle class, including quite a large representation of the so-called new middle class.

The rural social structure is changing and re-stratifying. “Transitional transformation groups” are cropping up. Their position in the structure is unclear and

<sup>7</sup> Only 4% of the rural population at the time was born in towns or cities.

<sup>8</sup> This study was conducted on a large (38,866) random sample of adult Poles.

Table 10

**Hypothetical Socio-occupational Structure of the Countryside in 2007**

Self-identification with suggested socio-occupational group	%	New (hypothetical) stratification groups
Countryside	100.0	Countryside
Individual farmers and helping family members	13.0	Farmers
Senior managers, specialists, creative professions, junior managers	4.0	New middle class
Owners of private firms, shops, agents	3.0	Old middle class
Administrative and office workers, junior specialists	7.0	Higher category manual-clerical workers
Manual-clerical workers, shop assistants, postmen	8.0	Lower category manual-clerical workers
Disability and retirement pensioners	27.0	Disability and retirement pensioners
Qualified workers	11.0	Qualified workers
Unqualified workers	6.0	Unqualified workers
Unemployed	9.0	“Transitional transformation group”
Other: pupils and students, homemakers	12.0	Other

Source: Fedyszak-Radziejowska 2008; 62 and other studies by this author.

ambivalent.<sup>9</sup> The unemployed, including the “professional unemployed,” are such a group: a group whose size changes with the vicissitudes of the economy and part of which works in the so-called “grey zone.” “Quasi-peasants” are another such group. These are the users of small farms who glean the majority of their income from non-agricultural sources and for whom farm ownership is a significant element of self-identification. Emigrants are a third group. These are either people who have left the country for a long time and who are regular seasonal emigrants. This group is quite large because, according to a CBOS survey, nearly one rural family in ten declared that a family member was working abroad in 2007. The group of rural emigrants, mostly temporary, increased considerably when Poland joined the European Union. These groups cannot be found in traditional social structure categories yet their presence is registered in social consciousness and this translates into the perception of social hierarchies in the countryside.

<sup>9</sup> I am referring here to the ideas of Artan Fuga who says that the groups are mid-way between town and country. “They are the socio-cultural product of transformation and, consequently, they are unstable, fluid, open to other groups, in the process of constitution and dissolution. They are both groups “as such” and groups in the process of becoming someone else, i.e., in the process of identifying with other, more stable and more traditional groups. Therefore they are groups in transformation, dynamic, bursting with energy, with a dual or treble social identity, in the process of creation. Naturally, they do not have clearly defined boundaries and they often overlap. The social status of individuals who belong to these groups is make-shift and the individuals themselves can easily leave the groups and integrate with other groups” (Fuga 2007: 377). Fuga gives examples of such groups in Albania: migrant-peasants, peasants—new townfolk, village tradesmen and virtual landowners. He indicates the functions of these groups in emerging social conflicts, their role in the creation of social imbalance and hence—their being a menace to the stability of social and political institutions.

A second very important factor in the restratification of the countryside is the changing level of education of the rural population. The number of people with secondary and higher than secondary education is growing rapidly. And although basic education (junior high, primary or lower—36.5%) still predominates, one rural inhabitant in three now has secondary or higher than secondary education.

Table 11  
Educational Structure of the Rural Population 1988–2007

Level of education	1988	2002	2004	2007
Primary and lower*	60.9	44.0	40.7	36.5
Basic vocational	24.2	29.2	29.4	30.5
Secondary	13.1	22.4	24.5	25.7
Higher	1.8	4.3	5.4	7.2

Source: Frenkel, 2005, 2008.

\* In 2007: junior secondary and lower.

The change in educational structure is very important because education has a very powerful effect on social and material status and it also affects opinions, attitudes and behaviour. This means that new behaviours and attitudes, violating traditional village norms and standards, are likely to intensify in the countryside. This is bound to unsettle social cohesion, all the more so that the divisions caused by differences in education are overlapping with another, generational division: it is the young people who are getting an education.

The countryside has always been heterogeneous as far as property is concerned. This is also true today although the basis difference is the difference between town and country: the average income in the country is about two-thirds of the average income in the largest cities. People are earning more all over the country—slightly more quickly in 2005–2007 than in earlier years and the slightly quicker increase of income in the country is reflected in the (gradually) diminishing income disparity. Income differences in the countryside are not large and have remained more or less stable since 2000. The EU membership has speeded up the general increase in income and the tempo of increase is quicker in the country than in the towns. The accession had rather powerful and positive effect on farmers' income but even this did not alter the overall level of rural incomes significantly because of the small share of income from farming in the overall income. The rural population, and even the individual family, has many sources of income: 38% of it comes from hired work, 15% from farming, 8% from non-agricultural business, and 37% from social and social welfare benefits (Zegar 2008).

On the other hand, farmers' income has increased substantially. It is hard to find comparable data on the dynamics of this process. In the already quoted *Social Diagnoses* we read that in 2005 farmers' income (in equivalent units) was 702 PLN compared with 794 per village dweller; the respective figures for 2007 are 908 and 914 PLN. Evidence that the level of respective incomes has changed can be found by analyzing the average income in farmers' households: according to *Social Diagnosis 2007* it was 2491 PLN and was higher not only than the income of the average rural

Table 12

**Evolution of Income in the Countryside 2003–2007**

Income	2000*	2003	2005	2007	2009
Average income per household	735	1887	2122	2399	2572
Income in rural households (Total income = 100)	77.2	90.2	89.6	91.5	95.3

Source: *Social Diagnosis* 2000, 2009; Zegar 2008.

\* In 2000—equivalent income per conversion unit, taking into account the savings coefficient resulting from the distribution of fixed costs in various types of households.

household (2195 PLN) but also than the income of the average Polish household (2451 PLN). It means that the wealth hierarchy has changed in the countryside, leading to improved wellbeing among the farming population (CBOS 2008/BS 89). This group also has the most diverse income compared with other groups of households.

Despite their improved well-being, people in the countryside do not feel rich: 64% of the rural population feels that it is poor (*Social Diagnosis* 2007: 292). This is quite a legitimate feeling because all the available indices: relative poverty (25.8% compared with 12.7%), statutory poverty (22.6% compared with 10.5%) and the subsistence level (12% compared with 5.25%) are still twice as high in the country as in the towns and cities (Zegar 2008: 26).

Restratification of the Polish countryside increased its tempo during the systemic transformation. The social structure of the Polish countryside is heading toward post-modern society as demonstrated, for example, by the fact that several distances from the towns and cities are shortening (education, income). EU membership is upholding this tempo. Its impact is particularly evident when we analyze farmers' income position and the emergence of several "transitional groups," a factor which is contributing to the restratification. This process too differs from region to region and restratification correlates strongly with the level and tempo of socio-economic growth.

### Concluding Remarks

The changes I have outlined above are not all the changes which have been taking place in the countryside. For example, I have not analyzed changes in the extra-agricultural structure of the rural economy, nor have I focused on the country's contribution to public life, change of attitude, change of values etc. However, just four series of changes demonstrate that the countryside is dynamic and is changing rapidly. Spectacular changes have taken place in farming, once the foundation of the rural economy. A new model of farming has begun to emerge: dual farming in several regional varieties. Also, farming is becoming less important in country life although the tempo of this change differs from region to region. The countryside is in the process of deagrarianization. Changes in the rural economic structure, i.e. farming's loss of its dominant role, are leading to changes in the social structure. Farmers are a shrinking stratum and the social structure is becoming permeated by

new socio-occupational categories. The tempo of these changes depends not only on the village's regional location but also on its location vis-à-vis the town or city.

The changes within the four processes described in this article have been taking place throughout the entire two decades analyzed here although their tempo has varied in shorter periods. Three of these processes—deruralization, deagrarianization and restratification—are continuations of processes which were already taking place before 1989, processes also common in other Western and Central-Eastern European countries. Temporal similarities can also be seen: deruralization in Poland loses its impetus when it is losing its impetus in the West. So what is this? “Transition” or widely understood “convergence”? Some would say they are just myths... On the other hand, a certain degree of originality can be found in the process whereby a new agrarian model is developing—a process of adjustment of the post-communist structure of agricultural production to market economy.

The changes I have described synthetically above have their regional varieties and although I have analyzed them within the confines of the new administrative regions (voivodeships), their rhythm and nature are not immune to their history or their location in historical regions (which largely converge with the boundaries of the nineteenth century partitions). The agrarianism and deagrarianization of the different regions or the regional varieties of the dual model of agriculture are some examples. But there is also a third level which is affecting the rhythms of change and even its direction: the place of the countryside on the centre-periphery axis where towns and cities of different sizes are the centres. The importance of this factor has clearly increased in the two analyzed decades. Hence the Polish countryside is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, making it increasingly difficult for sociologists and other social scientists who study the countryside to define their object of investigation.

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