

KEY ISSUES IN RURAL-URBAN RELATIONS IN POLAND: BETWEEN PEASANT PAST AND EUROPEAN FUTURE

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Abstract

Two ways of development in Polish society are presented in this paper. These ways reflect divisions between rural and urban areas. We would argue that, basing on the case of Poland, one might consider the hypothesis on rural-urban divisions as a major line of different mode of development. Two theoretical frameworks are useful in this context: the Smelser theory of modernisation and well known sociological theories founded on the contrast between traditional and contemporary types of social order that describe changes taken into our consideration. Based on the theoretical framework and empirical data the authors claim that 'two Polands' emerged from the presentation of the composite picture: urban Poland (better developed) and rural Poland (worse developed). The consolidation of such a division has been pointed out as main factor destabilising Poland's development and the functioning of democratic institutions in the longer term.

Introductory Remarks

Despite the common history after the World War II countries of East-Central Europe should be seen as a complex and diversified community. Even under the communist regimes such differences and peculiarities were observable (see for example: Ekiert 1996). They presented peculiar modes and rhythms of society's mobilisation as well as party-state's control of economic, political and cultural life. But what seems to be even more important lies in the internal diversification in particular societies. In this paper we would argue that, basing on the case of Poland, one might consider the hypothesis on rural-urban divisions as a major line of different mode of development. In other words, there might be still "the other Poland", falling behind the images of major cities, academic centres and shopping malls glittering from TV screens.

One may put forward general statement that processes of modernisation in rural society mean simply its depeasantisation. Changes from agrarian to industrial economy, from traditional structures to modern institutions, from particular to universal values, reflect processes of modernisation occurring on various levels of social organisation. The most consisted formula of such a theory may be found in the well-known theory of modernisation developed more than thirty years ago by Smelser (1964).

Changes taken into our consideration are described in general terms by various well known sociological theories founded on the contrast between traditional (agrarian, pre-modern) and contemporary (industrial, modern) types of social order. One may point out in this context theories by Durkheim (mechanical versus organic solidarity), Tonnies (Gemeinschaft versus Gesellschaft), Spencer (military versus industrial), Becker (sacred versus secular), Maine (status versus contract), Weber (traditional versus rational) and Redfield (folk versus urban).

Changes in the image and logic of farm operation are also part of this broad process of modernisation. Typical changes reflect transition from self-subsistence peasant farm, focused on preserving its assets and survival of farming family, run by traditional way. It reflects

simply the change from the farming as a way of life to farming as an entrepreneurial undertaking.

1. The Peasants' Past

This type of change that became the grand theme of classic sociology has been described as depeasantisation. To put it more precisely this type of depeasantisation recognised as a part of modernisation might be called farmerisation. European peasants liberated from various forms of feudal domination have become entrepreneurial farmers. However, one may bear in mind, that farmerisation simply reflects reality experienced by very few societies, namely: Western Europe and, to some extent, the so-called white colonies, especially: North America and Australia. Some other parts of the world have tried, in various ways, to copy this "Western" experience with mixed and sometimes quite unexpected results. In this context one should point out a peculiar developmental trajectory of Eastern and Central European societies. We must agree with Daniel Chirot who suggests a very deep perspective in order to analyse this process, and stresses that: "(...) Eastern Europe was in some sense economically backward long before it was absorbed into the broader Western world market. This backwardness had roots in the very distant past, not in any distortions imposed on Eastern Europe in the past few centuries" (Chirot 1989, p. 3).

Such peculiarities - stressed by Chirot - consist of specific system of organization in agricultural production, namely: the system of serfdom land estates, as well as domination of gentry over peasants and other categories in social structure. Jacek Kochanowicz, Polish economic historian, argues in a similar way considering the problem of Poland's fitness to capitalist system (Kochanowicz 1991). According to him, one of the most important part of contemporary Polish socio-economic system is peasant family farm called as "post-traditional peasant farm" (Kochanowicz 1992). This phenomenon results mainly from the late (comparing to the West) modernisation. It brings also: the so-called agrarian over-population, emergence of selective markets, the dominant position of the State in the process of modernisation (see: the extensive analysis by Konrad and Szelenyi (1979) and slow process of the transformation from serfdom semi-slave position to citizens and fully recognised members of national community. The last process was, in fact, completed after World War II, when Nazi occupation put peasants as well as other classes and/or strata of Polish society under the heavy threat of extinction. But, as Kochanowicz says: "The emergence of some characteristics of modern economic system did not change the nature of peasant economy - its tendencies towards survival and risk avoiding. (...) But East European peasants as a social category were no longer traditional ones in a sense of pre-industrial era when their farms operated on the basis of natural forces, with no connection to the world market and nation-state culture. But they did not become western-type farmers, treating their farms as capital and a means to gain some profit" (Kochanowicz 1992, p.157).

One might, however, point out the other type of depeasantisation observed in Central and Eastern Europe in the communist period. Under this regime de-peasantisation took form of collectivization. In other words peasants were transformed by political pressure and various administrative means from the status of small owners to the status of formal co-owners of large collective farms. In fact, however, their status was reduced simply to agricultural workers subordinated to and commanded by state bureaucracy. This policy following the communist dogma of superiority of collective ownership was implemented in the Soviet Union from late 1920's to early 1930's. Then, after World War II, other countries of Eastern and Central Europe belonging to the Soviet bloc took the same route. As a result by early 1960's the significant (if not almost the all) parts of agricultural sector in such countries, like: Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic and Hungary were collectivised. Despite various economic performance (quite good in the case of German

Democratic Republic of Hungary and much less than in the case of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria or Romania) the general effect of collectivisation seems to be especially important. It should be remembered that collectivisation in each country resulted in the declining number of farms as well as percentage of labour force employed in agriculture. It also resulted in the enlargement of the average area of farm.

In other words the results of collectivisation mentioned above were quite similar to changes in the West during the slow process of farmerisation. Collectivisation also, however using quite different measures, has given an opportunity for "economy of scale". In this sense both types of depeasantisation might be treated as alternative routes of agricultural modernisation.

Poland, however, seems to be the only exception among countries of the Soviet bloc because its unsuccessful collectivisation. Attempts at Soviet-type collectivisation as well as later state agricultural policies, like: so-called "growth without development" (in the 1960's) and "socialist reconstruction of agriculture" (in the 1970's) paradoxically strengthen peasant character of Polish agriculture. Polish peasant farms were not collectivised and, at the same time, the process of their Western-type farmerisation was also blocked. As a result they became - to use Kochanowicz's term once again - "post-traditional peasant farms". Such a phenomenon caused that: "Poland remained the country of quite traditional structure of agricultural landholdings, with quite few modernised farms and with a strong majority of them which do not produce for the market as well as do not provide their owners and their families with appropriate standard of living" (Kochanowicz 1992, p. 87). In this sense Polish peasants successful struggle against collectivisation resulted in preserving strongly peasant character of Polish agriculture in the second half of the 20th century.

As we can see, the past determines the picture of Polish country in many aspects. It is concern demographic structure of Polish country, the level of education and aspirations its inhabitants and positions in the labour market.

Demographic developments in rural areas were cyclical with steadily decreasing fluctuations, which were much smaller than in urban areas. This was mainly because urban areas took over major demographic sur-pluses from the country. On January 1, 2000, Poland's rural population numbered 14,753,000. It shrunk only 844,000 or 5.4% from December 31, 1946, when it stood at 15,597,000. It means that rural Poland "sent" to urban areas mainly the results of its higher birth rate. The main reason lies on the one hand in an unsuccessful collectivisation that resulted in fragmented agrarian structure as well as in the process of the so-called under-urbanisation. Investigators of migration processes stress that neither in the period of heavy industrialisation in the 1950's and 1960's as well as later i.e. in the 1970's the intensity of urbanisation did not catch up with industrialisation. Such a trend led to the under-urbanisation resulted from under-investment in municipal structure in urban areas, especially housing (see Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979). Accompanied by the unsuccessful collectivisation underurbanisation resulted in the emergence of a major portion of so-called "peasants-workers". These people with a relatively low level of qualification (if any) who formed the important part of industrial labour force dividing, at the same time, their economic activities between work in industrial plants and on their small and mainly traditional farms.

Therefore at the end of the 1990s, Poland was among the leading countries in Europe in terms of demographic resources in rural areas but in terms of the rural population share, it displayed quite a typical structure. Among 30 countries in Europe above 1.5 million inhabitants (not including Albania and Macedonia), 20 (including Poland) featured a rural population share of over 30%. In Portugal, Slovenia and Yugoslavia, the level is at least 10% higher, while in Belgium, United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the Czech Republic the level was at least 10% lower. However, what should be stressed, unlike most countries of the European Union with relatively high share of rural residents in the population (above 30%), Poland has not seen a major flow of people from urban areas to rural communities for

residential purposes.

Then the current condition of human resources in rural areas results from the relative backwardness of the countryside at the beginning of the post-war period, followed by the Soviet-type industrialisation after WW II. By 2030, the rural population is expected to decline by 8%, and its share in the country total population is expected to fall by 2%. What is probably the most important fact lies in the low level of education as the major characteristic of rural population. No major changes have occurred in this area, which is largely due to cultural factors, primarily in absence of developed educational aspirations as well as economic reasons, mainly the growing poverty of various categories of rural population. That factor exposes rural population to an increasing risk of unemployment, so in such a situation, the continued existence of small private farms seems to be a veritable buffer zone that reduces the scope of unemployment and its consequences.

In the three decades of accelerated industrialisation (1950-1980), the living conditions of Poland's rural population were perceived as worse than those of urban residents. Rural areas were a source of accumulation and of labour resources for the development of industry. Instruments of exploitation of the countryside included obligatory contracted deliveries (introduced in 1951-1952) and a high and steeply progressive land tax. The prices of produce in free-market trade were four times higher than the prices paid for produce delivered within the obligatory contracts. Investment outlays for rural areas were addressed mainly to the State-controlled segment. The private-farmer segment received 10% of the total investment outlays assigned to the countryside (Golinowska 1990).

The 1970's brought a substantial change in the policy towards agriculture and rural areas. At first this consisted in previous barriers (chiefly abolishing the obligatory deliveries) and restoring produce imports. In the second half of the decade, outlays on agriculture grew significantly. The growth of prices of produce sold to the State was allowed, especially for meat, together with a loan policy favourable for farmers as well as subsidies to the prices of feed and artificial fertilisers. 1977 saw the introduction of social insurance for farmers along the same principles that applied to the employee population. Previously, farmers could obtain retirement benefits only in return for transferring their farm to the State. The change in the policy towards agriculture, including individual farmers, meant that in the 1980's farmers had the same income on average as the employee population, and near the end of the decade this income was actually higher. The parity of agricultural income was 150% in 1989 (Hausner, Marody, 2000), the highest in the whole period after World War II.

2. Rural Poland Facing the New Millenium

Regardless of its actual definition and selection criteria, rural Poland accounts for more than 80 percent of the country's total area and well over 30 percent of the population. In this sense, Poland has a much greater rural population than European Union countries, for example. Using the EU criterion of population density up to 100 persons per square kilometre, it turns out that rural areas, which in the EU account for 80.9 percent of the area are inhabited by only 17.5 percent of the population (NHDR 2000). However, the percentage of the population living in rural areas varies considerably from one country to another. In Finland, for example, half the population lives in rural areas, and in Sweden--two-thirds of the population, while in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands the figure is only 5 percent.

Poland's rural areas represent a major part of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. The rural community constitutes a major though strongly diversified demographic and economic potential. But at the same time Polish countryside displays a high level of social underdevelopment, which severely impedes changes in rural areas. The Human Development Index (HDI) calculated on the basis of criteria such as: average life expectancy, overall education participation rate, literacy rate and per capita GDP (according to the purchasing

power parity of the currency, in PPP \$ terms), shows that the parameters of human development in rural areas are below the national average (0,794 to 0,809) and far below the urban average (0,794 to 0,828). Individual components of HDI reflect this disproportion between country and city more clearly. Adequately rural and urban area: index of life expectancy - 0,794: 0,799, index of literacy rate - 0,987: 0,994, index of overall education participation rate - 0,728: 0,819 and per capita GDP - 0,687: 0,749.

The basic dilemma of Poland's rural development is the gap separating rural Poland from its urban counterpart. This is especially significant in the context of integration with the European Union, which is the main challenge for Poland at the moment. Poland's arrears are especially visible against the background of European Union countries, where per capita GDP stood at 16,000 Euros in the 1990s, while the figure for Poland's rural areas was about 6,000 Euros. This huge gap stemmed from major differences in agricultural productivity. In the EU, a handful of people (no more than two in Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands) could generate 100,000 Euros worth of agricultural production, while in Poland as many as 25 agriculture-sector employees were needed to do the same. This calls for improved productivity in Polish agriculture. However, such an improvement is blocked by the relatively small average farm area, at about 8 hectares, compared to the EU's 17 ha. Admittedly, individual EU countries vary considerably in this respect as well. For example, the average farm area in Britain is about 70 ha, compared to Italy's 8 ha. Still, this situation translates into drastic differences in the price of land, which in Poland is from 8 to 15 times cheaper than in the EU, leading to widespread fears among Polish farmers that their land may be taken over by foreigners after Poland joins the EU.

Interestingly, in this context, it is often argued that Poland's agriculture sector accounts for more than 25 percent of the country's total labour force. This figure is a misunderstanding. As Orłowski (2000: 7) notes, "The number is based on a completely fictitious classification of small farm owners among those employed in agriculture, even though these people do not produce anything for the market and do not actively participate in economic life. They often derive an overwhelming portion of their incomes from other sources such as social transfers." These people do not really work in agriculture. They only live on farms and produce food for their own needs. With this correction, the actual number of those working in Polish agriculture (which means supplying produce to the market) is 16 percent of the national labour force (Orłowski, 2000). This may be a far cry from the level noted in Britain (about 2 percent) or the Netherlands (about 4 percent), but not far from Italy (about 8 percent) and Spain (about 10 percent).

Regardless of the objective-and sometimes quite drastic-differences in the farming sector's organisation and effectiveness, rural residents' support for European integration remains a key problem in Poland's bid to join the EU. Sociological research shows that major complications are likely to occur in this area, primarily due to low public awareness and educational barriers in rural areas.

Until the mid-1990s, almost 70 percent of rural residents approved Polish membership of the EU. In urban areas, integration enjoyed the support of 85 percent of those polled. At the end of the '90s, support for accession did not exceed 40 percent among rural residents in general and 30 percent among farmers in particular. The number of those describing EU accession as favourable for Poland's agriculture decreased from 32 percent in 1994 to 18 percent in 1999. The percentage of respondents expecting to derive personal benefits from integration remained stable at about 20 percent in both 1994 and 1999, while the number of rural residents expecting to lose out rather than gain increased from 15 to 27 percent. Notably, openness toward integration among rural residents tends to increase with education and financial status (Nawojczyk, 1995; Roguska, 2000).

The overall background of rural development in Poland is influenced by the fact that the

ongoing adaptation of the country's rural areas and agriculture to market economy standards is accompanied by economic globalisation. This calls for efforts to make the countryside part of the overall framework of global economic development, characterised by a speedy transfer and implementation of modern technology, accompanied by an increased importance of information and intensified trade of goods and services across national, regional and continental borders. Other developments include the loss of economic decision-making freedom in favour of multinational corporations and international capital. These new conditions require profound structural changes in agriculture - not so much changes involving the existing agrarian structure (area of farmland available) or the ownership of land and other means of agricultural production. However, changes in the structure of farms according to their economic strength and economic-and-production status, in addition to an improvement in the professional and educational standards of farm workers and owners. The new conditions also call for greater professional mobility of the rural population, primarily through an improvement in its education. Finally, the new conditions require a rapid and radical increase in the number of new jobs outside agriculture for people living in rural areas. Needs in this area are estimated at 1.5 million new jobs over the next 20 years (Orłowski, 2000: 12). Otherwise, the urban-rural dichotomy featuring a division into developed and underdeveloped parts of the country will deepen, endangering social stabilisation and the development of the entire country.

The transformation period together with the opening up of the economy brought the agricultural sector and rural residents' substantial problems. The profitability of agricultural production decreased radically, and the previously "insatiable foodstuffs market" revealed its limitations. The parity of agricultural income dropped rapidly, decreasing to 50% as early as 1991 (!), and even to 40% in 1999 (Wilkin, 2000). In this situation, improved material circumstances depended mainly on the possibility of leaving agriculture in favour of the non-agricultural part of the economy. This, however, was much harder than in previous years. Migration from rural to urban areas declined, and at a time when finding jobs in the cities was becoming increasingly difficult.

The relatively large percentage of people whose livelihood comes from individual farms and the even greater percentage as well as whose livelihood comes from sources other than paid work, means that the average income of rural residents is lower than that of urban residents. The level of income of rural households in relation to the income of households overall and of urban households is deteriorating constantly. In the first half of the 1990's, the average available income of rural households was about 16% lower than the income of total number of households. At the same time it was about 20% lower than the income of urban households, but in recent years (1998), the figures were 20% and about 30% lower, respectively.

Two fundamental factors were behind the relative deterioration of the rural population's material circumstances in the 1990's. The first was the decrease of real-term income of farmer households. In the late 1980's, the real-term income of households linked to agriculture grew from several to a dozen or so percent annually. In 1990, the average income of farmer households decreased in real terms by about 38%, and in the case of employees running a farm – by about 30%. In the following years, the income of these households either grew slightly or dropped, but from 1997 there has been an annual decrease in the real-term value of farmer incomes. Meanwhile, the real-term income of other socio-economic groups, and mainly the households of employees and the self-employed, has been growing every year since 1994. Currently, the specificity of Polish agriculture, and thus indirectly of Poland's rural areas, consists in the dependence of its development on the business environment, i.e. mainly on the development of technical and social infrastructure, the market, services – mainly financial middlemen, agricultural advisory services, etc. (Woś, 2000).

The second important factor leading to decreased incomes of households linked to agriculture

and, more broadly, incomes of rural residents, were changes in the labour market. In the initial stage of the transformation process (up to 1993), the number of people working in agriculture decreased, due in part to the fact that older farmers took advantage of the possibility of obtaining old-age and disability pensions. However, from 1994 the number of those working in agriculture grew again, due mainly to changes occurring in the labour market outside agriculture, and to a number of institutional solutions on this market. The non-agricultural economy absorbed the surplus labour resources very slowly, and at the same time the rights to unemployment-related benefits were reduced. As a consequence, individual farming became the so-called “storage room” for people who failed to find jobs outside agriculture but did not have unemployed status. This situation has resulted in a relatively large disguised unemployment in the individual farming sector, reaching 800,000 – 900,000 people according to some estimates. At the same time, chiefly as a result of the collapse of State farms, large open unemployment has appeared in rural areas among people without land who are not linked to individual farming.

Poverty in rural areas in the whole decade of the 1990’s was greater than in urban areas. However, rural poverty is different from urban poverty. It is much less a poverty that threatens existence, and it is much more a cultural poverty. It is hard to imagine today that people who have at least a small parcel of land could starve, but at the same time there exists a well-known trend whereby people limit themselves to natural consumption. There is a shortage of cash, and cash is the foundation of mobility and availability of consumption of non-food goods. Poverty in rural areas has been on the increase from 1997 – after a period of stability in 1995-1996. The growing extent of poverty today is also reflected in farmer households. Earlier, poverty was concentrated mainly in the group of former State-farm (PGR) employees.

That poverty is greater in rural areas is confirmed by all the measures of poverty used in Polish studies: the absolute, relative and subjective poverty rate. In 1996-1998, the scope of absolute poverty in its extreme case, where the limit was set at the subsistence minimum level, was about 3% in urban areas (2.8-3.4%). In rural areas, it grew from just under 7% in 1996 to over 9% in 1998. In the same period, the extreme poverty rate among the families of individual private farmers grew from about 6% to over 10%. The growing scope of relative poverty also concerns rural households to a greater degree than urban households. The relative poverty line was defined as 50% of average monthly spending of households. In the fourth quarter of 1998, the relative poverty line stood at 351 zlotys per consumer unit. In 1998, the relative poverty rate was close to 25% in rural areas, and 10% in urban areas.

Studies of subjective poverty are carried out with the help of interviews. These accompany studies of household budgets carried out by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). The method used here is the so-called Leyden Poverty Line. The assumed subjective poverty line roughly corresponds to the income declared by respondents as being barely sufficient. In 1998, about 42% of rural households achieved incomes below the subjective poverty line. Many families were afraid their living conditions would deteriorate. Nearly 20% of rural households felt they were threatened with poverty and did not know how they could deal with this, and another 22% were afraid of poverty though they believed they would deal with it somehow. Only 8% of families were not worried at all about their material circumstances. At the same time over 50% of villages can be counted among the group with low-standard infrastructure, about 40% - as medium-standard, and just below 10% as high-standard (Duczowska-Małysz, 1998).

Another important issue, i.e. access to culture in rural areas was never satisfactory. Indices of the so-called participation in culture worried researchers for years. The situation deteriorated significantly in the transformation period (see: Radkowski 2000). Access to cultural institutions is easier in the city, the supply of culture-related goods is greater, and that is where most of the cultural heritage is gathered. Cultural institutions are more densely situated,

and the distance to them is simply smaller. Despite infrastructure-related barriers, the differences in participation in culture between the urban and rural populations as a result of community traditions, aspirations and hierarchy of needs, amount and planning of free time, or financial capacity, are slowly growing up. In 1999, the share of spending on culture in household spending overall was 3.6%, and in farmer households, similarly to the year before, 2.1%. The average monthly spending on purchases of cultural goods and services per person in households in 1999 reached 19.89 PLN, and the nominal value grew in comparison with the previous year by 32.8%; in rural households, the figures were 8.28 PLN and 8.1%, respectively.

3. Some Concluding Comments

“Two Polands” emerged from the presentation of the composite picture of the condition of rural area. Using the HDI, i.e. urban Poland, which has an HDI of 0.828, placing it well within the group of developed societies, and rural Poland, where the HDI is 0.794, which places it among the poorly developed societies. This rather symbolic breakdown identifies the most important fact reflecting the fundamental problem of transformations in Polish society at the threshold of the 21st century. This problem lies in the need to counteract the emerging division of Poland into the better-developed urban part and the worse developed rural part. The consolidation of such a division can be pointed out as the main factor destabilising Poland’s development and the functioning of democratic institutions in the longer term. Moreover, failure to counteract this trend will disturb the process of Poland’s integration with European Union structures. It should be emphasised that this process is understood as something much broader than just Poland’s EU membership. In fact, it means a complex process of economic, political and cultural integration with European economies, countries and societies, where admission into the group of EU members is only the starting point. Making the effort to specifically effect the development of rural areas will, in a longer perspective, decide about Poland’s place among the EU member states, and consequently also among the broader international community.

The above issue has one more important aspect. The point here is to resolve the dilemma: does the development of rural areas have a separate economic and operational identity, or should the development of rural areas be effected without underlining any specificity, as just another part of the national economy? Today, the developing concept of regionalism, decentralisation of prerogatives and means, and the actual scale of the problem (which is obvious, if only from the above forecast), strengthens the arguments in favour of maintaining the specificity and identity of the category of rural economy. The responsibility for creating such a philosophy of rural development rests with the state, and particularly those of its agencies that are responsible for the development of rural areas. The raw-materials productive capacity of Polish agriculture is currently utilised in 60-80%, and achieving increased production can be a relatively simple matter. Also the food-processing industry, largely located in rural areas, has substantial reserves of production capacity. The food-processing industry’s unutilised processing capacity and the relatively low share of processed agricultural production offer a good chance for the development of rural areas. They can be treated as workplaces not requiring investment and as a possibility of forming integration links between agricultural producers and processing plants.

It is our belief that the problem of multifunctional development of rural areas (cf. Stasiak 2000) and of the development of non-agricultural enterprise in these areas (cf. Hałasiewicz, Kaleta 2000) is chiefly a question of human resources. It is the problem of the qualifications that have to characterise that major part of the rural population, mainly young people, which already today cannot find employment in agriculture or even in its direct environment, and will not be able to do so in future. We need to emphasise strongly that in current Polish

conditions, demographic considerations and – more broadly – human resources are the key factor in the development of rural areas (see also: Baran 2000).

Considerations presented above show an interesting pattern of Polish economic and social history. It seems that the “rural lag” might be its best and the most proper characteristic. The origins of such a situation lie in the peculiar history of Poland, which might be to some extent a similar one to some cases from the region. However, it should be stressed that the survival of peasant agriculture during the communist period (which might be treated as a period of intensive modernisation experienced in Poland in the second half of the 20th century) reinforced the “lagging” character of rural Poland, preserving many characteristics of its backwardness. The triumph of independent peasant farm in the era of forced collectivisation in that part of Europe seems to be now the serious obstacle towards the entrance of Polish rural society and economy into the common economic and social system of modern Europe. In that case one might say that the victory in one period (i.e. preservation of family peasant farm) might be a sign of defeat or, at least, a serious problem in a changing situation of every particular society. Lessons from the experience of rural Poland embedded in its domination of urban part of the society over the rural one seem to be, unfortunately, a good example of such a problem.

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