

Summary

The subject of the dissertation is process of rural gentrification in Poland. In the literature, this process is described as a process of change in rural social structure, which presupposes an increase in proportion of the heterogeneous middle class. This is a broad view of the process without specifying reasons for an increase. Many researchers assume that the consequences of the process are an integral part of its characterization. Rural gentrification, understood in this way, consists of the characteristics of population, socio-economic, spatial, psychosocial and cultural changes. This understanding of the process was adopted in this study because, contrary to the common view in the literature that rural gentrification comes “from city”, in case of Polish rural areas it would not reflect the nature of the phenomenon. The increase in proportion of rural middle class in Poland over past 30 years was determined by two groups of reasons: (a) the education boom after 1989 and (b) external factors, i.e. migration of former urban dwellers to rural areas and migrations of highly educated young people from peripheral areas to metropolitan areas.

The middle class is defined as one that occupies middle space in a hierarchical society. In this analysis, members of the middle class were identified on the basis of occupations requiring adequate education and involving non-physical activities. It included representatives of the first four major economic and social groups according to the ISCO-08 Classification. Their representatives constitute about 30% of rural population and their share in rural socio-professional structure has doubled since the beginning of the 1990s.

The aim of work is to characterize the process of rural gentrification in Poland and its economic, social and cultural consequences. Rural gentrification is seen as a process that changes rural social structure. It is associated with an increase in the share of the middle class, occupying higher positions in the social stratification to which their educational level is entitled, which is associated with relatively high income. This process does not take place uniformly, evenly in all rural areas.

Dissertation is based on the triangulation of methods. It was crucial to identify characteristics of the phenomenon in Poland and to develop statistical indicators. The characteristics were determined on the basis of Polish and foreign case studies using the extended case method, while the basis for analysis of consequences of rural gentrification was a comparative method.