

KRZYSZTOF GORLACH & MARTA KLEKOTKO

Jagiellonian University, Cracow

kgorlach@interia.pl

marta.klekotko@uj.edu.pl

TOGETHER BUT SEPARATELY: AN ATTEMPT AT THE PROCESS OF CLASS DIVERSIFICATION AMONG POLISH PEASANTRY¹

Abstract

The authors try to examine the class diversification hypothesis in the context of recent social and economic changes occurring in the community of family farm owners/operators in Poland. Basing on three consecutive national research conducted respectively in 1994, 1999 and 2007 the processes of diversification have been analyzed. They are observed on the level of changing market positions of farms as well as on the level of class consciousness of the owners/operators, and on the level of strategies preferred by them to defend their interests. The analysis of research results leads to the conclusion that the discrepancy between the group of business-type farms with visible elements of “capitalist consciousness” and the group of rather marginalized ones with lack of “capitalist consciousness” might be observed.

Key words: peasantry, family farms, market position, class consciousness, diversification

¹ The paper has been based on the data collected within research project conducted by Krzysztof Gorlach in 1994, 1999 and 2007. The project has been financed by Ministry of Science (grants: 1 1628 92 03, H02E 007 15, N 116 003 31/0267). We would like to thank Tadeusz Sozanski, PhD and Zbigniew Drag, PhD from the Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University for their help with research and statistical analysis.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As a point of departure, let us point to a tendency that may be observed in current Polish sociological literature on changes in the stratification system. It might be illustrated by recent work published by the leading team of Polish sociologists (see: Domański 2008). Farmers are treated as a homogenous category, a homogenous element of the stratification system. In this conception of social classes, patterned after the international EGP model, farmers are treated as a single social category. Some other stratification models differentiate two categories of peasantry: farmers (considered as owners) and agricultural workers (considered as hired workers). From this perspective though, references to the Marxist division into owners and hired workers are taken into consideration.

What's interesting, even referring to the problem of class interests, which seems to be a perspective favoring the perception of farmers as a diverse category, presenting different cases of class location (which might be contradictory) does not lead to this kind of study. It is worth mentioning that one of the articles included in the aforementioned work, devoted to class consciousness of political interests, treated farmers as a single professional category, opposed en bloc to other elements of social structure, like upper class or workers (Dubrow 2008: 271–292).

This does not mean that we are unaware of the problem of diversification of farmers. They seem to be conscious of that fact, which can be confirmed by the following quotation in which characteristics of different classes of contemporary Polish society are synthesized: “Considering qualifications and wealth [farmers] are a diverse category, but what they have in common is possession of lands and farming. In the socialism era they constituted peasantry class dependent on state in the scope of purchase of equipment and other means of production as well as entering the contracts for food production. The post-communist transformation and international competition forced professionalization of Polish farms so significant part of them represent today a farmer type” (Słomczyński & Tomescu-Dubrow 2008: 95). However, analyses of social mobility have been carried out based on a widely regarded stratification model, in which farmers are treated as a single, homogenous category.

Because of use of this model, an extremely interesting field for analysis of the inner dynamics of the transformation of the peasantry is being omitted. In particular, it makes verification of statements about peasantry polarization impossible. This article attempts at analyzing this aspect of social structure.

FAMILY FARMS IN THE MARKET SOCIETY

When studying the problem of location of peasantry in the social structure, one has a wide range of concepts and theoretical models to choose. Not without reason Theodor Shanin has called peasantry an “awkward” class (Shanin 1972). Positioning peasantry in a social structure or their class location is always determined by the social-economic context. Attempts at searching for universal characteristics of the social situation of peasantry draws attention to two issues: their underdog position in postmodern societies and their specific cultural character. However, even these issues turn out to be problematic when taking into consideration social and economic diversification of peasantry.

Contradictory to predictions formulated by Marx and some of his followers (e.g. Buttel and Newby 1980), neither modernization process nor transition to modern society or market economy has lead to such a polarization of peasantry that would have resulted in the presence of, on the one hand, a relatively small group of owners of large and modern farms, and on the other hand, a much larger group of hired agricultural workers. The situation is complicated by multiple connections between farms (including peasant ones) and markets as well as by the diversity of their various assets. Although one may find many classifications and typologies of these complications, four general situations might be identified (for a more detailed analysis see: Gorlach 2004: 86–90). In the first, the farm takes the form of a large capitalist enterprise, where the owner of the farm employs an appropriate number of employees. Second, a kind of mutation of this situation is the farm on which the owner feels pressure and must employ illegal workers. This kind of situation can be found not only in Latin America or some African and Asian countries, but also in the European Union and the United States where illegal immigrants from African countries, Mexico, or even from European countries that are either new members of the EU or stay outside its structures. Workers on these farms are exploited with low wages and poor living conditions. The third situation occurs when the owner–worker relationship is in the form of a lease. In this case, the owner can dominate over small leaseholders or the workers can gain economic and structural advantage over the owners by accumulating land leased from smaller owners. Finally, there are small family farms that rarely employ seasonal workers and are run by family members.

This last situation is not meant to suggest that there is only one type of family farm. On the contrary, considering the range and level of integration of capitalist relations characteristic in a market economy, one may identify many types of family farms. The position of the owner of a family farm is determined by the

following factors: lease on lands, farm debts, employment of family members who live on the farm or outside the farm, employing nonfamily workers, and the use of contract production. Taking into consideration various combinations of these factors, as well as different effects of interactions between them, many types of family farms can be identified: typical capitalist farms, family farms employing hired workers, typical petty-commodity farms, leased farms, indebted farms, etc (see: Mooney 1988). One may also refer to other factors related to the position of a farm in a market economy. It might be, for example, a level of familization (as we decided to call this process) of the farms. The following factors are relevant to level of familization: connections between the owner and actual user of the land, blood relationships and family connections between members of the team operating in the farm, sources of capital, extent of the family working force, making the farm over within the family and dwelling in the farm house. Depending on various combinations of these characteristics, the farms might be considered more or less family enterprises (see: Errington & Gasson 1993). Another factor differentiating situations of family farms is the style of management, for example, “economic” farmers, “intensive” ones, “farmers-machine or “big farmers” (see: van der Ploeg, 2003).

Aforementioned theoretical proposals – which have been presented here in a very selective and superficial way – may only exemplify the great diversity of situations of family farms as well as the locations of their owners in the class structure. They reflect the multidimensional character of class polarization processes that affect farmers functioning in market economy conditions. Polish farms, dominated by the small family farm type are not free of this process. Therefore, the main hypothesis of this article is that there is an intensifying polarization of the peasantry in Poland.

DIVERSIFICATION PROCESSES AMONG PEASANTRY IN POLAND IN 1994–2007

Empirical analysis of the polarization process should be started with identification of the class location of owners of family farms. According to the assumption accepted here after Weberian classical concepts, the class position of the owner reflects the location or market position of the farm. On the other hand, the market position of a farm is a consequence of economic and cultural capitals which are at the owner’s disposal. Because this is a short article, the procedure of construction of “farm’s market position” variable (that is class position of the

owner) will not be described. The following table presents only the results of this procedure, indicating the existence of three types of farms and three types of class positions of owners.

TABLE 1. Market positions of the farms.

Farms' market position	Number of farms in 1994 (w %)	Number of farms in 1999 (w %)	Number of farms in 2007 (w %)
Negatively privileged	47,9	48,1	36,2
Middle position	34,5	30,7	35,5
Positively privileged	17,6	21,2	28,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: the authors' own research

In one of the studies that dealt with the changes observed from 1994 to 1999, which are presented in the above table, the following conclusion was presented: "Analysis shows that the process of farms' polarization definitely takes place, which can be indicative of disintegration of the peasant class in both extreme communities, meaning farms that have very limited opportunities to adapt themselves to the market situation [negatively privileged market position – K.G. and M.K.] and farms that have great opportunities to adapt themselves to the market situation [positively privileged market position – K.G. and M.K.]

In both these categories we can see an increase in the number of farms, while the number of farms that fell between these two extreme categories was decreasing. This tendency can be treated as a manifestation of the process widely described in the literature as the disappearing middle (taking into consideration a complex profile of farms, not just their sizes) (Gorlach 2001).

Once again it is worth remembering that this generalization was made based on values in the second and third columns of the table above. What changed between 1999–2007? The answer can be found in the fourth column. The obvious change in trends is visible there. The disappearing middle is no longer the case, as can be seen in two tendencies. First, the number of farms that had a negatively privileged market position was reduced. In 1999 these farms made up 48% of the researched community, eight years later, 38 % of them remained. Second, farms occupying a middle market position, which in 1999 made up 31 % of our sample, in 2007 made up 35%, which is comparable to the situation that was observed in the first research edition in 1994. So, what we are dealing with it is not a "disappearing middle" but more likely a "increasing middle", that appears to be the result of a decrease in negatively privileged farms but no decrease in positively privileged

farms. This statement can be additionally supported by tendency observed in the category of farms that are in a positively privileged market position. Their number grew and the growth is more visible now than it was in the previous time period. The thesis should then be formed in the following manner. The results of the newest research show that processes of restructuring farms has lead to polarization not in the form of structure with two extremely different types of family farms but (at least for now) in the form of concentration of capital of the farms that have the best opportunities to adjust to the market economy. Stating this, it should also be remembered that, due to the applied panel method, all the processes were observed within a shrinking community in which farms with the strongest chance of survival – which has been well documented – are those with larger capital at their disposal. It is not surprising then that the ones with at least average privileged market position are the most visible.

Studies on class structure and its dynamics are not limited to presenting objective dimensions of social position. Equally important is the question of whether objective parameters of a position are somehow related to types of identity, value systems, or beliefs and attitudes of people occupying that position. Only then one can talk existing social classes in the sociological sense of this term.

Therefore, another part of the main hypothesis was tested. It addressed the issue of how farm owners think and how they define their role as farm owners, including the opinions they have on various aspects of the relationships between employers and workers, which is treated as an indicator of a type of class identity (Gorlach 2001: 245).

The first important characteristic is how individuals identified their roles. It can be described in some way as a type of social identity that was present in the communities we studied. In analyses of class identity, social identity is considered fundamental (Giddens 1973). The way individuals think about their social-economic role is a basis on which to build various contents of their identities to create successive levels of class identity.

We found that the ways in which individuals understood the situation of the family farm owner fell into three categories: “owner”, “producer” and “marginalized”. The type of identity described as “owner” was related to the fact of owning agricultural land, which is often associated with the peasant tradition; there is certain pride derived from the fact of land ownership. In the type of identity described as “entrepreneur”, respondents made references to a modern way of viewing ownership based on additional activities and creating new values. Finally, the third type of identity described as “marginalized” referred feelings

of powerlessness, treating farm ownership as a burden rather than a chance for active participation in the society and improving their life situation. In some way, this can be considered a peasant tradition, but its emphasis is on injustice and wrongdoings experienced by peasants.

The analysis of the values presented in Table 2 reveals the relation between the type of identity and the class position of respondents. It can be seen that in each case these relations are statistically important, although the data from 2007 are definitely weaker than in the two previous editions of the research.

Table 2. Ways of perceiving the role of farm owner in relation to the class position of studied farmers in 1994, 1999, 2007 (values expressed in %).

Way of defining one's role	Negatively privileged position	Position of average privilege	Positively privileged position
Owner	42.4 36.3 38.3	27.9 30.4 29.5	21.2 21.8 35.8
Entrepreneur	24.7 17.0 45.7	46.4 31.7 57.2	67.4 43.5 58.4
Marginalized	32.9 46.6 16.0	25.7 37.9 13.3	11.6 34.7 5.8

Note: In each field of the table numbers of the left mean values for 1994 ($p < 0.001$); numbers in the middle for year 1999 ($p < 0.001$); and numbers on the right for year 2007 ($p < 0.05$).

Source: the authors' own research

The frequency of various types of identity in the three research categories are worth looking at. I would like to start with a few thoughts on the "owner" type of identity. Among those who were negatively privileged, the percentage of respondents presenting this kind of identity decreased slightly over the period of the investigation, from 42,4% in 1994 to 38,3% in 2007. In the case of farms occupying the middle position, one may observe some stabilization (27,9% in 1994 and 29,5% in 2007). In the category of positively privileged farmers – in contradiction to the tendency observed among the negatively privileged – one may observe growth in the percentage of respondents presenting the "owner" type of identity. The percentage of this type of answers was 21,1% in 1994 and remained stable for next five years (that is until 1999) but the data collected in 2007 shows significant growth – the percentage increased to 35,8% of respondents. What's interesting, is that the percentage of respondents who claimed an "owner" type of identity was significantly different for two extreme groups, that is positively and negatively privileged, in 1994 (in a ratio 42,4% to 21,2%) and turned out to be similar in 2007 (38,3% to 35,8%). It might be interpreted as similar ways of thinking – at least considering presented problem – in these two categories.

Now have a look at the “entrepreneur” identity, which – as we have assumed – reflects modern way of thinking of farmers who are subjected to modernization processes and who run their farms following the rules of a modern company. The situation here seems to be as interesting as it is paradoxical. It turns out that the percentage of respondents presenting this kind of identity has grown significantly among farmers occupying a negatively privileged or a middle position. Among those who were negatively privileged, it grew from 24,7% in 1994 to 45,7% in 2007; among those in the middle position it grew from 46,4% to 57,2%. It might be the result of a selection bias in the sample – particularly the negatively privileged farms. Recall that the percentage of negatively privileged farms decreased significantly, especially in the period 1999–2007. Owners of the farms that held out despite relatively adverse situations, also considered their farms as small businesses facing difficulties that were characteristic for the market economy. It is probably the same for farms occupying middle position.

The opposite situation might be observed among positively privileged farmers. The percentage of farmers presenting “owner” type of identity is smaller in 2007 (58,4%) than thirteen years earlier (67,4%). However, notice that the smallest percentage was observed in 1999 (43,5%). Taking these changes into consideration, one may conclude that among those positively privileged farmers growth in “modern” identities took place in the second part of the period investigated (1999–2007).

It is worth emphasizing that in all categories of owners, the smallest percentages of respondents reporting an “owner” identity were observed in 1999. It might be yet another argument indicating that the 90s were the most traumatic period for Polish farmers, which resulted in their abandoning the businessman identity. The fact, that the percentage of respondents reporting a “marginalized” farmer’s identity was highest in 1999 also supports this thesis.

We hypothesized an interdependence of positively privileged positions of farms and an enterprising identity of their owners. Confirming the hypothesis, in all three rounds of the survey, the largest percentage of respondents reporting an enterprising identity was observed among farmers occupying a positively privileged position (although in 2007 the difference was not so visible). However, even though the percentage of respondents presenting a “businessman” type of identity fell in this category (in comparison to 1994) at the same time there was growth in the percentage of positively privileged owners reporting an “owner” type of identity. Therefore, one may hazard a guess (as additional deepened research would be required in order to answer to this kind of question) that some part of

farms occupying a positively privileged market position refer to at least some elements of the peasant tradition when defining their identity.

Another issue related to the process of reconstruction of class consciousness is the problem of sense of identity toward others. According to the aforementioned Giddens's concept, it is another layer of class consciousness and it is created on the basis of identity. An assumption has been accepted that modernization processes result in the transformation of farms (including family ones) into enterprises. Therefore, a question should be raised regarding whether this is reflected in farmers' consciousness, that is if they identify with a wider category of owners of different companies or enterprises or at least perceive their situations as similar to a business. An answer to this question would allow us to formulate more general statements on farmers' class consciousness in a modern society. Certainly, the strong peasant tradition underlying the collective memory of farmers – particularly in societies like the Polish one – may constitute factor preventing the creation of this kind of identity.

TABLE 3. Perception of resemblances between farmers and owners or other entrepreneurs in relation to the class position of studied farmers in 1994, 1999, 2007 (values expressed in %).

Perception of resemblances	Negatively privileged position	Middle position	Positively privileged position
No resemblance	65,4 72,6 47,4	51,4 57,1 41,6	36,8 50,0 29,2
There is resemblance	34,6 27,4 52,6	48,6 42,9 58,4	63,2 50,0 70,8

Note: In each field of the table numbers of the left mean values for 1994 ($p < 0.001$); numbers in the middle for year 1999 ($p < 0.001$); and numbers on the right for year 2007 ($p < 0.01$).

Source: the authors' own research

The argument that the perception of resemblance instead of difference between the situations of farmers and other entrepreneurs is connected with the modernization process (that is the transition to a family company oriented to profits) is confirmed in this analysis of the perceptions of farmers in different market positions. This phenomenon is illustrated in Table 3. It turns out that percentages of respondents pointing at resemblances between farmers and other entrepreneurs reaches the highest level in the category of owners of positively privileged farms, regardless of the period investigated. Simultaneously, the percentages of respondents who perceived no such resemblance was also the lowest in this category. Negatively privileged farmers reported opposite perceptions.

These data also lead to another conclusion. Changes in the perceptions in both categories of respondents are different in both periods. The percentage of

owners of both positively privileged farms and negatively privileged farms fell in the second period in their perceived similarity to business (1994–1999) and then reported more similarities in the third period (1999–2007). We believe that this is yet another argument supporting our thesis of the particularly difficult character of experiences of Polish farmers in 1990s, which resulted in perceptions that their situations were unique and incomparable to other categories of owners.

TABLE 4. Perception of differences between farmers and owners or other entrepreneurs in relation to the class position of studied farmers in 1994, 1999, 2007 (values expressed in %).

Perception of differences	Negatively privileged position			Middle position			Positively privileged position		
No differences	12,1	6,3	14,9	11,7	6,8	13,9	8,4	2,4	14,6
Specificity of farming	36,0	21,4	41,1	39,1	21,8	47,4	41,0	36,2	50,4
Sense of inferiority	48,5	70,8	41,1	44,1	70,2	37,0	47,3	58,9	31,4
Sense of superiority	3,5	1,3	2,9	5,0	1,2	1,7	3,2	2,4	3,6

Note: In each field of the table numbers of the left mean values for 1994 ($p < 0.05$); numbers in the middle for year 1999 ($p < 0.05$); and numbers on the right for year 2007.

Source: the authors' own research

More can be learned from the way farmers perceive the differences between their positions and positions of owners of other enterprises (see Table 4). It should be noted that correlations between answers to this question and class position are statistically significant only in 1994 and 1999. It might indicate that way of thinking of these farmers becomes similar despite their class position. Is this a fact? It's worth paying attention to other types of answers. The answer "lack of differences" is almost the same frequency in all three categories in 2007. In previous years (1994 and 1999), the percentages were different. It might confirm our conjecture. However, other answers do not support this line of thought. In all rounds of this survey (1994, 1999, 2007), respondents who were characterized as a positively privileged class were more likely to perceive their situation as a specific one. On the other hand, such regularity cannot be observed when considering answers to questions regarding a "sense of inferiority". In 1994, the percentages of this answer were similar in all three categories. The differences appeared five years later when the percentage of a "sense of inferiority" increased in all the categories (which was probably an effect of the "hard" '90s), but not to the same extent. The same was in 2007. Again, the lowest percentage of this answer was observed among respondents who were positively privileged. It must be emphasized that in all categories the fewest farmers responded positively to

a “sense of inferiority” in 1999. Moreover, the decrease was much lower in the categories of negatively and medium privileged than in category of positively privileged. It resulted in relatively small differences in 1999. It suggests – although not statistically significant – that the way of thinking in different categories of farmers is becoming more similar. The last type of answer, named a “sense of superiority” was reported by a small number of respondents (never more than 5%) in all three categories in all rounds of the survey, so it neither supports nor undermines our thesis.

The perception of conflict related to social-economic positions in different social categories constitutes another element of reconstruction of class consciousness among these farmers. The basic question refers to the location of a specific group which is an object of this study. Anthony Giddens – to whom we have already referred in this article – considers awareness of conflict as another layer of class consciousness distinguishing definite social classes. Following his ideas and trying to operationalize them, we used the concept of Erik O. Wright, which treats class consciousness as a bundle of opinions and beliefs referring to different aspects of relationships between owners and hired workers (Wright 1997). This relationship constitutes the essence of the social structure in a capitalist society.

In order to study this problem, we decided to focus on three issues: the remuneration of owners and their workers, the influence of workers on the company strategies, and the eligibility of owners to hire new workers in the case of strike of their employees. Farmers were requested to take a position on these issues.

In our analysis we focused on the opinions that had been measured using arithmetic means and correlations between class positions of respondents instead of giving frequencies of definite types of answers. The typology of class positions – in order to emphasize problem we were investigating – has been limited to two categories: positively and negatively privileged.

Table 5 shows opinions expressed in arithmetic means. It must be emphasized that the most pro-owners opinions (namely those who consent to large differences in remunerations, who employ strike-breakers, and who do not accept influence from workers regarding company strategy of action) have been given mark 1, while the most anti-owners ones – mark 5.

TABLE 5. General opinions of two opposite class categories.

Class category	Arithmetic mean in 1994 (standard deviation)	Arithmetic mean in 1999 (standard deviation)**	Arithmetic mean in 2007 (standard deviation)***
Negatively privileged	2,78 (0,732)	2,91 (0,772)	2,69 (0,664)
Positively privileged	2,62 (0,849)	2,70 (0,764)	2,38 (0,653)

Source: the authors' own research; ** $p < 0,01$; *** $p < 0,001$

It's worth paying attention to types of class consciousness represented by two opposite categories. The data are presented in Table 5. First, one must emphasize that after some increase in percentage of respondents declaring "anti-owners" opinions in 1999 (compared to 1994), entering UE resulted in an increase in the number of "pro-owners" opinions of Polish farmers. Second, the process is more visible – both in the past and in the most recent survey – among respondents occupying the positively privileged class position. Finally, in both categories there was a tendency for opinions to become more homogenous. However, the process of homogenization of opinions within categories is only among positively privileged farmers, whereas among farmers occupying a negatively privileged position opinions remain heterogeneous. Generally speaking, farmers who are positively privileged are more "pro-owners-oriented" and more homogenous considering the type of class consciousness. Consider the differences between means in these two categories. In 1994 the difference amounted to only 0,14, whereas in 1999 – to 0,21 (becoming statistically significant) and in 2007 to 0,31 (being even more statistically significant). One may conclude that polarization of class consciousness among farmers is more visible when it is observed along with class location.

Finally, the last dimension of class consciousness – following Giddens's concept – is the level of revolutionary orientation. Revolutionary character has been understood *sensu largo* and operationalised in terms of identification with specific organizations struggling for the interests of farmers. Moreover, it has been focused on following the life of two main organizations which – as farmers believe – defend their interests, namely: *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* and *Samoobrona*.

TABLE 6. Percentages of respondents pointing at organizations defending farmers' interests.

Category of answer	1994	1999	2007
Pointing at minimum one organization	13,6	41,1	17,5
Pointing at PSL	7,4	9,1	4,5
Pointing at Samoobrona	0,6	27,0	2,7

Source: the authors' own research

The data presented in Table 6 illustrate the dynamic of answers of farmers to the question about the organization defending farmer's interests. Comparison of the numbers in the table leads to the following conclusions. First, they reflect the tumultuous '90s. Intense processes of restructuring of farms, as well as years of farmers protests, are reflected by 40% of respondents indicating at least one organization struggling for farmers' interests. This fact is particularly worth emphasizing, as five years earlier only 14% of farmers in this study could indicate at least one such an organization. It is particularly visible in case of Samoobrona. Less than 1% of respondents pointed to this organization in 1994, five years later it was pointed out by every fourth respondent. In 1999, Samoobrona was considered an organization struggling for farmers' interests by three times more respondents than was PSL.

The comparison of these two categories of answers is equally interesting. First of all, one may observe that PSL supporters constitute a more stable group, although it is never more than 10% of respondents. Currently (that is in 2007) there are even more supporters than in the first round of the survey (1994). The highest percentage was observed in 1999. The popularity of Samoobrona – an organization run by a very distinctive leader, involved in conflicts and protests - among farmers was short-lived. It was popular only during periods conflicts and protests. Starting from political oblivion (0,6%) in 1994, it reached the height of its popularity (27%) in 1999, and lost farmers' support again (2,7%) in 2007. Finally, notice that although both PSL and Samoobrona are currently less frequently perceived by farmers as organizations struggling for their interests, the total percentage of respondents indicating at least one organization is larger in 2007 than in 1994. It might indicate the processes of fragmentation of family farm owners and reflect a diversification of their interests.

The same problem is illustrated in Table 7, but – this time – it is analyzed in connection with the class position of respondents and refers only to years 1999 and 2007. One must warn that correlations presented in the table are not statistically significant.

TABLE 7. Pointing to organizations defending farmer's interests in relation to the class position of studied farmers in 1999 and 2007 (expressed in %).

Category	Negatively privileged	Middle position	Positively privileged
Pointing to a minimum one organization	33,6 12,5	42,4 19,7	56,3 22,5
Pointing to PSL	7,3 5,1	8,1 4,6	14,5 3,6
Pointing to Samoobrona	22,1 2,8	30,0 1,7	33,8 3,6

Source: the authors' own research.

Taking into consideration answers to the question about which organizations defend farmers' interests, one may observe that respondents in a positively privileged position are more likely to indicate such an organization. The same regularity can be observed both on the general level (indicating at least one organization) and in case of PSL and Samoobrona. In both cases one may also observe fundamental differences between frequencies of definite answers in the periods compared. Once again, the tumultuous situation of the '90s is reflected in the data. A specific sense of loneliness in the face of a hard situation is more visible in farms that cannot manage the changing conditions (negatively privileged farmers). On the other hand, positively privileged farmers who are more involved in phenomena and processes that occur in the market and – as such – are more aware of them, are more interested in institutional guaranties that secure their interests.

One may ask whether these differences reflect the general preferences of farmers for specific definite methods of struggle in their interests. This problem is presented in the Table 8.

TABLE 8. Preferences for different forms of struggle for farmers' interests in relation to the class position of studied farmers in 1999 and 2007 (values expressed in %).

Category (in total)	Negatively privileged	Middle position	Positively privileged
Demonstrations, blocks 16,0 7,2	15,2 5,7	12,9 8,7	22,1 7,3
Political lobbying 16,9 15,1	16,1 14,2	20,3 14,5	13,8 16,8
Self-organization of farmers 35,2 48,0	30,0 46,0	35,6 48,3	46,2 50,4
There's no sense to take any action 38,7 29,7	38,7 34,1	31,2 28,5	17,9 25,5

Source: the authors' own research.

Interpreting the data in this table, one may draw two general conclusions. First, the growth tendency is observed only in one category of answers: the one indicating self-organization of farmers as a method of struggle. It was preferred by a bit more than 1/3 of respondents in 1999, and almost half in 2007. Preference for protest (demonstrations, blocks) and political (lobbying) methods of struggle on the one hand and sense of helplessness and alienation (“there is no sense to take any actions”) on the other are becoming less popular among farmers. Self-organization is particularly preferred by positively privileged farmers and less by the ones occupying middle and negatively privileged positions, although – it must be stressed – it was more visible in 1999 (respectively: 46,2% to 35,6% and 30,0%) than in 2007 (respectively: 50,4% to 48,3% and 46,0%). It is possible that negatively privileged farmers and those occupying the middle position are becoming convinced that self-organization is the best method for safeguarding their interests.

Analysis of other three categories of answers leads to interesting generalizations as well. Preferences for confrontation methods are slightly stronger among farmers occupying positively privileged and middle market positions than they are among negatively privileged ones. However, the situation was different in 1999 when respondents presenting preferences for this kind of methods were much more numerous among positively privileged farmers than among the other two categories. It turns out that those farmers who were most involved in the market economy system became much more disappointed in confrontation methods of struggle than any other. It is just the opposite in the case of methods we call “political” ones. We observe an increase in the percentage of preferences for these methods among the positively privileged as compared the other two categories. Does it mean that this method is viewed more effective by the owners because more of them are economically and politically involved? Finally, total – as it seems to be – surprise. Positively privileged farmers are the unique category in which one may observe an increase in percentage of respondents who declared experiencing a sense of helplessness, that is those who declare that “there is no sense to take any action”. Is it because the problems experienced in this group are more serious than the disappointments characteristic of farmers in the other two groups? However, it must be stressed that the percentage of helpless respondents is still smaller among positively privileged farmers than among farmers occupying the middle and negatively privileged positions. Does it mean that one may observe a process of unifying of the way of thinking in this population, which might be – among other things – a result of the elimination of weak farms? The

lack of regularity might also be – we believe - a result of individual experiences of farmers that are unrelated to their class position.

CONCLUSION

The title of this article reflects our interest in conveying the essence of changes experienced by family farms and their owners that are a result of the transformation process in Poland after 1989. Polish farmers have gone through this period of difficult experiences together. Every farm and every farmer has been subjected to them. However, the effects of these experiences are different, they follow different paths, differentiating the positions of the farms as well as the way of thinking of their users.

The general argument which guided these analyses concerned the polarization process of farms as well as farmers' ways of thinking and acting. We aimed at answering the question of whether the processes of polarization, the disappearing middle and the elimination of the middle farms can be observed; on the other hand, we wanted to answer the question of whether new, different peasant classes are emerging - in terms of farmers' identities, their attitudes as well as preferences for strategies of struggle for their interests.

What kind of view do these data and our interpretations bring, though? First of all, the analysis of market positions of these farms does not confirm the thesis of the disappearing middle, which is widely presented in the literature. This process can be observed only in the first of the investigated periods. The data collected in second period shows concentration of farms in the middle and in the positively privileged market positions. Two factors might explain this finding. First, supporters of the thesis on the disappearing middle refer in their analysis to the amount of land as an indicator of the market position of a farm. In our research, multifaceted types of economic and cultural capitals were taken into consideration when constructing an indicator of market position. Moreover, panel method, which does not allow to select new farms in consecutive rounds of survey, is the strongest way to examine the effect of dropping out (and thus of our research) of the farms occupying relatively weak market positions.

However, when considering identity, attitudes and strategies of struggle, our data confirm the hypothesis of class polarization of peasantry. The differences in perceptions of the role of owner are statistically significantly different in all three rounds of the survey. The "businessman" identity is more common among owners of positively privileged farms, whereas negatively privileged farmers

present a more “marginalized” identity. Similarly, those with “businessman” identity are more likely to perceive their situation as similar to that of owners of other types of enterprises. Apparently, they consider themselves entrepreneurs to a larger extent than other categories of farmers do. They also present more “pro-owner” beliefs than the others. Moreover, the difference between them is becoming more and more significant. Finally, it’s worth stressing that the owners of the farms occupying the bestmarket positions are more interested in organization struggling for their interests more than are other categories of farmers, and they are more likely to organize themselves in order to struggle for their interests. Therefore, the latter findings lead to general conclusion that after 20 years of social transformation one may observe strong and class diversification of the peasantry.

LITERATURE

- Buttel, Frederick, H.; Howard Newby (eds), 1980, *The Rural Sociology of the Advanced Societies*, Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld and Osmun
- Domański, Henryk (red.), 2008, *Zmiany stratyfikacji społecznej w Polsce*, Warszawa: IFiS PAN
- Dubrow, Joshua Kjerulf, 2008, “Świadomość klasowa interesów politycznych. Pojęcie i pomiar”, (in:) Henryk Domański (red.) *Zmiany stratyfikacji społecznej w Polsce*, Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 271–292
- Errington, Andrew, Ruth Gasson, *The Family Farm Business*, 1993, Wallingford: CAB International
- Foryś, Grzegorz, 2008, *Dynamika sporu. Protesty rolników w III Rzeczpospolitej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR
- Giddens, Anthony, 1973, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, New York: Harper and Row
- Gorlach, Krzysztof, 2004, *Socjologia obszarów wiejskich. Problemy i perspektyw*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR
- Gorlach, Krzysztof, 2001, *Świat na progu domu. Rodzinne gospodarstwa rolne w Polsce w obliczu globalizacji*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
- Mooney, Patrick, H, 1988, *My Own Boss. Class, Rationality and the Family Farm*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press
- Shanin, Theodor, 1972, *The Awkward Class*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Słomczyński, Kazimierz, M. i Irina Tomescu-Dubrow, 2008 “Systemowe zmiany w strukturze klasowej a ruchliwość społeczna”, In: Henryk Domański (red) *Zmiany stratyfikacji społecznej w Polsce*, Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 75–96
- van der Ploeg, Jan, Douwe, 2003, *The Virtual Farmer. Past, Present, and the Future of the Dutch Peasantry*, Assen: Royal van Gorcum
- Wright, Erik, O, 1997, *Class Counts. Comparative Studies in Class Structure*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press