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Selected Conditioning of Knowledge Transfer in Rural Areas Between “Newcomers” and “Oldtimers” – Results of Empirical Research in Poland’s Countryside

Author: Jerzy Bański

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Selected Conditioning of Knowledge Transfer In Rural Areas Between “Newcomers” And “Oldtimers” – Results of Empirical Research In Poland’s Countryside

Jerzy Bański

Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences
Warsaw, Poland

Institute of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Jan Kochanowski University
Kielce, Poland

jbanski@twarda.pan.pl

Abstract

The core aim of the work presented here is to diagnose and assess the transfer of knowledge and information in rural areas between urban and rural inhabitants. This process, as exemplified across different regions of Poland, was carried out through survey research and complementary in-depth interviewing. Specifically, the work considered both *newcomers* from cities and long-term inhabitants residing more or less side by side in 18 villages across the country. Answers were being sought for three research questions: (1) What types of knowledge and information are being transferred in villages between urban and rural inhabitants? (2) What are the main directions of the transfer of knowledge/information, and at what intensity? and (3) what consequences does this knowledge transfer have for rural-dwellers and the development of rural areas? It emerges that these flows between the two groups studied are of an extremely informational nature, serving to meet the daily needs of both old and new inhabitants. Where there were cases of more profound knowledge or information of a more specialist nature, this mainly related to construction, food production and crop or plant cultivation. Knowledge transfer is seen to be of rather limited intensity, proceeding through sporadic meetings that mainly take place in public places, such as streets, central areas, or shops. The flow is nonetheless of a two-way nature, with interviewing making it clear that *oldtimers* are first and foremost sources of up-to-date, practical information, even as newcomers supply advice and non-material knowledge alongside information.

Keywords: Knowledge transfer, rural-urban relations, countryside, newcomers, Poland

Conditionnement sélectif du transfert de connaissances en milieu rural : entre nouveaux arrivants et habitants de longue date – résultats d’une étude empirique en Pologne rurale

Jerzy Bański

Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences
Warsaw, Poland

Institute of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Jan Kochanowski University
Kielce, Poland

jbanski@twarda.pan.pl

Résumé

L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'analyser et d'évaluer le transfert de connaissances et d'informations en milieu rural entre les populations urbaines et rurales. Ce processus, illustré dans différentes régions de la Pologne, a été étudié au moyen d'enquêtes et d'entretiens approfondis. Plus précisément, l'étude a porté sur les nouveaux arrivants des villes et sur les habitants de longue date résidant plus ou moins côte à côte dans 18 villages du pays. Trois questions de recherche ont été posées : (1) Quels types de connaissances et d'informations sont transférés dans les villages entre les habitants des zones urbaines et rurales ? (2) Quelles sont les orientations principales et l'intensité de ce transfert ? (3) Quelles sont les conséquences de ce transfert de connaissances pour les habitants ruraux et le développement des régions rurales ? Il semble que ces flux entre les deux groupes étudiés sont extrêmement informatifs et répondent aux besoins quotidiens des anciens et des nouveaux habitants. Lorsque des connaissances plus approfondies ou des informations plus spécialisées étaient présentes, elles concernaient principalement la construction, la production alimentaire et la culture des plantes. Le transfert de connaissances semble assez limité et se déroule lors de rencontres sporadiques qui ont lieu surtout dans des lieux publics, comme les rues, les centres-villes ou les commerces. Cet échange est néanmoins bidirectionnel : les entretiens ont clairement montré que les anciens sont avant tout des sources d'informations pratiques et à jour, même si les nouveaux arrivants apportent des conseils et un savoir-faire immatériel en plus des informations.

Mots-clés : transfert de connaissances, relations rurales-urbaines, campagne, nouveaux arrivants, Pologne

1.0 Introduction

People need knowledge and information if they are to pursue and accomplish defined tasks, reach intended goals, and make decisions. It is either our own knowledge or that of others that is put to use, and in the second case, a distinction may be drawn between the categories of: (1) *explicit knowledge*, and (2) *tacit knowledge* (Polanyi, 1966; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). While the first kind is documented, public, structured and universal, the second exists in people's minds, in particular taking the form of intuition, conduct and experience (Bathelt et al., 2004; Storper & Venables, 2004; Hilpert, 2006; Maggioni & Uberti, 2009). Tacit knowledge is linked closely with the individuals working or residing in specific places (and specific features thereof) and is seen to develop in step with shared experience, problem-solving and interaction—which is to say that it is dependent on inter-personal skills. Florida (2004) and Törnqvist (2004) also recognise this as a key element of the institutional environment.

However, by generalising, we may note that knowledge as such arises out of a linkage between the two aforementioned types (Drucker, 1994; Guile, 2001; Howells, 2002; Gertler, 2003). Where the transfer of that information/knowledge is concerned, a distinction may be drawn between two core types, i.e., *know-what?* (definitions, notions, facts, descriptions, etc.) and *know-how?* (unique and specific knowledge, along with practical skills needed if certain defined tasks are to be implemented and decisions taken). This fundamental division is supplemented by two further types, i.e., *know-who?* (which is to say that relational knowledge is involved) and *know-why?*—denoting axiomatic knowledge (Garud, 1997; Hulme, 2014; Nonaka, 1994).

Knowledge and information can be an attribute of the inhabitants of a given region, and is tantamount to the sum of all information/knowledge in the possession of both inhabitants and institutions there—with this also taken to include the skill to actually make use of the knowledge (Becker, 1994; de la Fuente & Ciccone, 2003; Lee et al., 2004). The phenomenon is subject to steady development, *inter alia*, as it grows in profoundness—for example, because it is exchanged among inhabitants of the given area, but also as knowledge is brought in by incoming people, otherwise called newcomers (Stark, 2004; Hudson, 2005; Poot et al., 2008). Arenas for these processes are rural areas, where we are dealing with two groups of individuals between whom transfers of knowledge and information can come about. The first group comprises those long dwelling in a village, and most likely also with “roots” there; while the second encompasses those engaging in periodic in-migration (as where second homes are owned) or else coming in more permanently. In the literature on the subject, the terms oldtimers and newcomers are used for these two groups (Qin, 2016; Ulrich-Schad, 2018).

The newcomers are usually in possession of different life experiences, cultural models and competences—with this, they are therefore in a position to represent a potentially rich source of knowledge for the rural community (Alvarez-Montoya & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2024; Armstrong & Stedman, 2013; Herslund, 2012). At the same time, a village's permanent inhabitants possess distinct information/knowledge and experience arising out of their familiarity with local conditions and habits/customs—to the extent that they can certainly also serve as a significant source of knowledge and information for newcomers. The two groups quite probably differ in terms of levels of formal competence (i.e., manifested in level of education, knowledge of foreign languages, and so on), outlook (religiosity manifested, attachment to tradition, preferences at election time, and so on), level of wealth, experiences, entrepreneurial attitude, skill to avail of higher-order services, and a broad range of other features. But these

differences can be viewed as a unique mix of “knowledge” that provides a kind of added value where relations pertain between newcomers and oldtimers.

Migration into the countryside does intensify in metropolitan regions in particular. However, we may observe city-dwellers choosing (also) to live in places very far away, the goal then being to achieve a second existence truly far from the madding crowd, and any aspect of their (other) urban style of life (Brunori, 2011; Jacob, 1997; Halfacree, 2007; Trauger, 2007; Forsythe, 1980; Wilbur, 2014). In either case, the consequence is a development of *enclaves* or at least small, more dispersed groups within a local community that are markedly different in various ways from those who have hitherto resided in given rural settlements. Sometimes the activity suffices to inspire longer-term inhabitants to pursue certain initiatives, while at times things operate the other way round, with newcomers imbibing knowledge and experience from the older inhabitants of a village as they themselves take on new tasks.

Given contemporary processes shaping rural areas (including globalisation, urbanisation, the development of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and the digital transformation, climate change, the ageing population, and natural as well as migration-induced population change), there is an absolute need to acquire knowledge steadily, so as to curb the more unfavourable socio-economic trends that are being made manifest in peripheral areas in particular. Such areas have to adapt and respond to the emerging challenges, and there is always a need to stress the significance of local needs and conditioning, including as regards the resource that is knowledge. All processes of knowledge transfer taking place in a given local setting should thus be perceived as bringing with them potential chances for rural areas to achieve development.

The primary goal of the work presented here is diagnosing the transfer of knowledge and information in the countryside taking place between city and country dwellers. This is based on the identification of two groups in society and the local community—inhabitants that have come into rural areas from urban ones (newcomers), and long-term inhabitants of a given village (oldtimers). Such people as identified were then made the subjects of survey-based research followed by in-depth/extended interviewing. Results were then set against those of more than a dozen case studies pursued in various rural parts of Poland. Answers were sought for three main research questions: (1) What types of knowledge and information are being transferred in villages between urban and rural inhabitants?; (2) Which are the main directions and intensities to the transfer of information/knowledge?; and (3) What are the consequences of the studied knowledge transfer for rural-dwellers and development of rural areas? The author's attention is focused solely on rural areas.

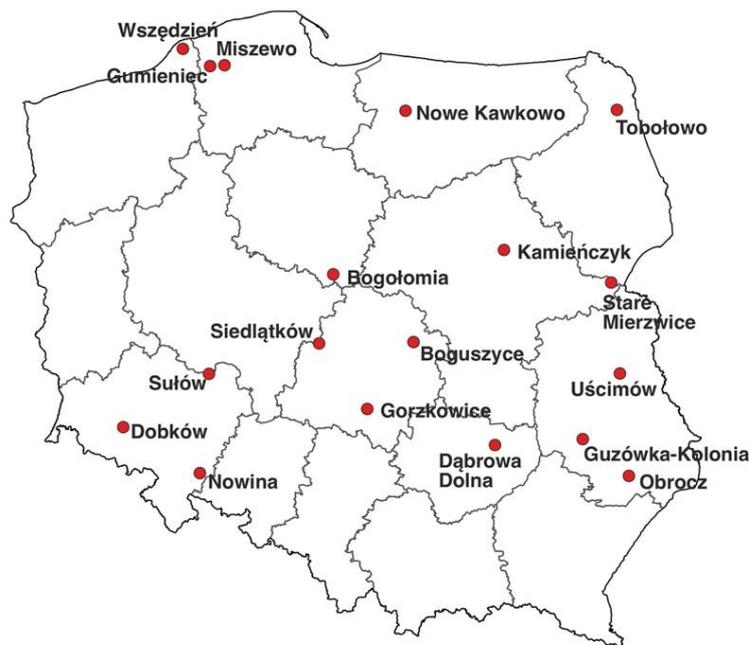
2.0 Research Methodology

The work was done in 2023 (surveys and interviews were conducted from March to September), in 18 villages located in different regions of Poland, given the need for the country's potential social and historical-cultural differences to be taken account of (see Figure 1). Alongside the criterion regarding location, a further assumption was that the villages under study would be located beyond the zones of strong impact of large urban centres, meaning also outside metropolitan areas. This limitation sought to eliminate from further consideration rural areas subject to strong suburbanisation pressure and already displaying a high level of similarity with cities when it comes to social and occupational structuring. A further key factor in the choice of places for the case studies was knowledge and experience on the part of researchers doing the work, who in fact represented five research centres in Poland, i.e. the Institute of

Geography and Spatial Organization PAS, Wrocław University, Lodz University, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, and the Pomeranian University.

A case study was conducted using a uniform scenario. The first stage entailed diagnosing the state of affairs and management in the given unit of administration (inhabitants, socio-economic situation, environment, etc.), by reference to both the subject literature and study visits. This task allowed, *inter alia*, for the identification of the groups of inhabitants needing to be surveyed, as well as potential extended-interview participants. The second stage, in turn, saw that survey-based research was carried out, with its focus being on the deliberate selection of a sample of respondents representing two groups in society, i.e., the oldtimers and the newcomers—as notions applied from the outset, and in the further part of the study. The group of long-term inhabitants was taken to include people residing in the village under study for at least five years. Through discussion within the research team, it came to be assumed that these people would be well rooted in the village in question, and that they would recognise and have knowledge of local conditions well. On the other hand, those present in a given rural area for less than five years (only a few people in total) were joined by those visiting periodically (as owners of second homes) in being recognised as newcomers.

Figure 1: Distribution of the villages selected for in-depth research.



Source: Author.

The survey was conducted in person by researchers from five research centers in the form of individual visits and online using Facebook (a forum for residents of a specific village). This approach enabled us to reach various social groups living in the villages studied. The questionnaire research was standardised and, first and foremost, comprised closed questions. Where most of these were concerned, several or even 10+ possible answers were offered, even as it was also possible for those being questioned to add their own answers arrived at individually. The questionnaire went beyond standard questions regarding gender, age, education

and employment, to, for example, asking about the period of residence, or which stays of a periodic nature have been made. This all made it easier to make a distinction between the two aforementioned groups of inhabitants. Overall, some 554 questionnaires were completed, with the participants including 333 of the long-term village inhabitants, as well as 224 newcomers.

The structuring of respondents into the two groups analysed (oldtimers and newcomers) may point to more significant differences than similarities, to the extent that this may have influenced the results. In the case of gender structuring, both groups showed a prevalence of women (oldtimers 63% and newcomers 63%). Much more marked differences were noted for age structure. Almost half of the newcomers questioned (46%) declared themselves to be in the 40-59 age group, while a further 29% were aged 26-39. In turn, among the oldtimers, alongside the best-represented 40–59 age group (accounting for 37%), as many as 33% of those studied were aged 60+. Older people tend to have more conservative views harking back to traditional cultural conditioning. So it can be accepted that their expectations as regards scope of knowledge, and their assessments as to the influence on their private or public life, are surely different from those present in younger people.

A clear dependent relationship with the ages of respondents related to their employment structure. The newcomers were dominated by hired workers (49%), while among oldtimers, the number of hired workers was similar to that of people living on a pension (30% and 29% respectively). Even more major differences related to the level of education, and especially higher education, which was decidedly more present among newcomers (55%). In contrast, among oldtimers something that stood out as compared with the newcomers was the (33%) share of people with basic and primary education. People with higher education generally have a broader spectrum of knowledge at their disposal than those with basic or primary education, such that their role in the transfer of knowledge may relate to more complex matters than for those with lower levels of education. For the latter, concrete knowledge and ongoing information are very important.

The third stage of the work saw the in-depth/extended interviews run with local leaders (head village representative, councillors and employees in local government, and representatives of civil-society organisations), as well as entrepreneurs and shop-owners, i.e., people representative of a village's long-term inhabitants, plus newcomers mainly represented by owners of second homes. The interviews facilitated and deepened the interpretation of the survey results and expanded the scope of knowledge about the transfer being studied. The interviews, similarly to the survey, asked about the intensity, direction, and form of contacts between newcomers and oldtimers, the range of topics discussed, and their impact on the personal and professional lives of respondents and the development of the entire village. The assessment and role of knowledge and information transfer were presented through specific examples. In the majority of cases, respondents with the status of long-term village inhabitants displayed a high level of community and economic activity, as well as rich knowledge of the village and its inhabitants. Interview scenarios comprised open questions. Overall, 63 interviews were conducted in the 18 villages, with 30 of these dealing with local leaders (representing oldtimers) and 33 on newcomers.

Each survey was preceded by information about the participants and the goals of the research project. While the survey was anonymous, each interviewee was asked for consent to share information about several individual characteristics of the interviewee (e.g., education, professional status, social function, etc.).

3.0 Analysis of Research Results

3.1 Features of the Contacts Between Long-term Inhabitants and Newcomers

The first question in the questionnaire concerned the personal contacts between members of the two groups. The questions asked oldtimers were: “Do you have personal contact (meetings and conversations) with this village’s new residents, or do you periodically meet and talk with the village’s present inhabitants?” and to newcomers: Do you have personal contacts with those from this village who have been resident here for a long time?” A key point of these questions was to determine the size of the group actually participating in the exchange of knowledge and information. A majority of those asked in fact confirmed that such mutual contacts had been taking place. It is nevertheless worth noting differences in the affirmatory responses, given that these were supplied by 87% of the „newcomers, ” as set against 67% of the oldtimers. There would seem to be two key conditioning factors underpinning this kind of difference. First is the aspect or phenomenon gaining confirmation in the extended interviews—that it is simply the case that newcomers seek out contact with long-term residents more frequently, because the former are in the new local conditions and need to orientate. First and foremost, they are in need of practical information concerning everyday life in the village, specifically. This leaves the oldtimers as sources of information regarding services (e.g. how to build, cut down trees, have refuse taken away), useful addresses, and a host of other matters that by definition demand local knowledge, in particular information regarding the sale of food products.

It is also quite common for newcomers to indicate that their contacts with oldtimers arise out of some economic activity they engage in, or else some knowledge they possess that can also prove useful to the oldtimers. Naturally, a statistical justification can also be advanced as conditioning for the more-frequent contacts between newcomers and oldtimers, as opposed to *vice versa*. Almost by definition, newcomers are a small or even tiny part of the rural community—ensuring that the making of contact with long-term inhabitants (far greater in number) is going to happen more easily than the reverse phenomenon.

A further justification for the difference(s) identified, again arising out of the interviews, entails certain (a small group of) oldtimers seeing newcomers—and treating them—as some kind of “foreign bodies” that would tend to be avoided, rather than the subjects of attempts at contact. In turn, newcomers pointing to a lack of contact with oldtimers are mostly in the category of owners of summer homes. These people focus their visits on the spring/summer period, and on R&R, and—in the own words of those asked—there is no real need to make (or relevance in making) contact with “the locals.”

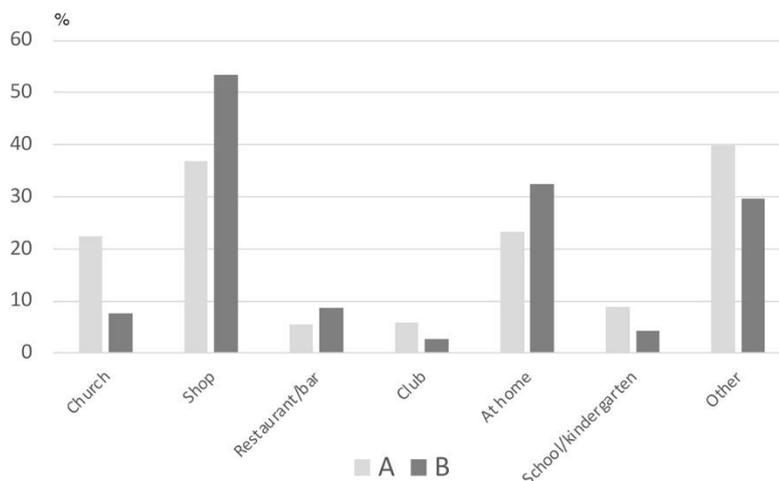
There was a distinct dependent relationship between the structuring of answers to the first question and the answers to the ones that followed, relating directly to the transfer of knowledge and information. The questions posed were worded as follows: “Did it ever happen that you learned something from this village’s new or periodically visiting inhabitants?” (this question was asked to oldtimers). Or the same question ending with the words: “...long-term inhabitants?” (asked to newcomers). In both surveyed groups, a decided majority of respondents answered affirmatively, though among the newcomers there were about 10% more such responses. Overall, it is possible to suggest that the transfer of knowledge and information between two study groups is a widespread phenomenon, as it involves more than 80% of the inhabitants.

An interesting research topic in this context concerns the places in which the two groups meet. In the case of oldtimers, the breakdown of answers was spread more evenly, with those appearing most often being in a shop, at home and at church (see Figure 2). However, the greatest number of answers fell within the “other” category, with which a further condition was for respondents to point to a defined place. A decided majority of respondents answered that the street or other public places were involved (be this the central place, a road, or a bus stop). In the case of newcomers, the places in which long-term inhabitants can be met with are, above all, the village shop, which actually seems to serve as its own unique kind of centre for the exchange of up-to-date information. Such a conclusion was confirmed by local leaders, including shop-owners. Here are several examples of what was said about the role of the village shop as a centre for the transmission of knowledge and information:

The shop is a place where people not resident on a day-to-day basis can learn about local craftspeople and tradespeople—who you can buy something from, who runs which services, and where is there an open workshop or firm (Mierzvice, oldtimers representative, personal communication, September 18, 2023).

My shop has become that kind of tourist information point. Announcements of organised trips, canoeing, etc., are posted here. ... Local people interested in business matters come to me with questions on solar panels, for example, or what to do with refuse, how to get the Internet installed; and so on. I am that kind of contact point ... (Tobołowo, oldtimers representative, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Figure 2: The structuring of answers.



Note: The structuring of answers to the question posed to oldtimers (A): “Where do you most often meet and converse with this village’s new inhabitants, or those staying periodically?” and to the newcomers (B) “Where do you most often meet and converse with the long-term inhabitants of this village?”

Equally, a rather large number of newcomers, as well as oldtimers, point to other places of encounter—above all public places, the street absolutely being in the lead on this list. A markedly less-popular place for meetings are churches—most

likely as a reflection of the religious outlooks of the two groups studied. The long-term inhabitants of rural areas are characterised by a higher degree of religiousness and attachment to tradition, while newcomers from the city only participate in village worship to a very limited extent. In part, this may (also) reflect the way in which the prevailing sub-category of newcomers is of owners of second homes—and hence people who may worship “back home.” It is also worth noting how a large number of respondents meet up at (somebody’s) home, where the subjects of discussion may be both deeper and broader. This form of meeting is mentioned by around 23% of long-term inhabitants, as well as 32% of newcomers.

3.2 The Subject Matter of Transferred Knowledge and Information

The places mentioned for oldtimers and newcomers to meet support the conclusion that these are mainly chance encounters with no intention of seeking information, for it would be hard to anticipate any longer discussions or deeper exchanges of thought arising out of an encounter in a shop or on the street. Rather, the conversations are most likely brief and uncomplicated, with only an exchange of basic information likely to be possible. This was confirmed by other questions included in the survey. Respondents were asked specifically about the subjects of their conversations, albeit in a manner that actually offered them a broad range of possible answer categories, with free choice of these made available. In both groups studied, it is possible to note a marked concentration around just a couple of the most-popular issues. Thus, conversations most of all deal with ways of spending free time (37% of oldtimers and 49% of newcomers), neighbourly help and assistance (30% and 48%, respectively), life within the village community (28% and 46%), celebrations and festivities (27% and 53%), treatment and healthcare (31% and 28%) and crop cultivation (26% and 32%). Some of these subjects referred to are closely linked to information, while other issues involve a core role for specialist knowledge and defined skills (e.g., plant cultivation, livestock rearing, building, the aesthetics of the surroundings, etc.).

Further light was shed on the knowledge transferred by the answers obtained during interviews. For oldtimers and newcomers alike, categories of knowledge that could be said to prevail during contacts were asked about. A few typical examples would be as follows:

Most often these are private matters, like free time, lifestyle, somebody boasting a bit about what they have bought and where. However, it can be the case that people raise building-related issues. So one neighbour is renovating his home now and asks where you can get building materials cheap, or about a joiner to deal with the kitchen (Bogolomia, oldtimers representative, personal communication, September 04, 2023).

Different pieces of information that are a little bit of everything—meaning private life, professional life, and the life of the village and its inhabitants (Boguszyce, oldtimers representative, personal communication, September 08, 2023).

We talk about what to do in the area—how to spend time. I’m also interested in things like hiring building equipment ... and people. The home is under constant renovation, so that knowledge is needed. I

sometimes find out from long-term inhabitants what is going on in the village (Guzówka, newcomers representative, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

The most important category here is private life. From village inhabitants we can learn all the time about what is going on here (who has been born, where people work, where to go in search of mushrooms, etc.). and also discuss with inhabitants (especially the shopkeeper who is also a Councillor) the latest political events or other “public-type” issues (Tobolowo, newcomers representative, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

It results from most of the responses in both groups that conversation between them is mainly concerned with basic information linked with private life, or, more rarely, the profession, and what is going on in the given village. Information of this kind is thus offered in response to simple questions of the *what, where, and when?* type. This is very much connected with the “fleeting” nature of the meetings that take place—as the survey under analysis shows. For it is hard to anticipate that short chats in the shop or on the street will allow for any addressing of subject matter that demands deeper thought or leading to resolving some problem. In only a few cases were answers received suggesting that the transfer process extends beyond pure information in the direction of professional knowledge more generally linked to a respondent’s working life. What might, for example, be involved here are issues of how to build, ways of cultivating particular plants, food-production methods, or knowledge and advice on how to obtain financial support for agriculture from the EU.

3.3 Directions to the Flow of Information and Knowledge and Their Role in the Lives of Inhabitants

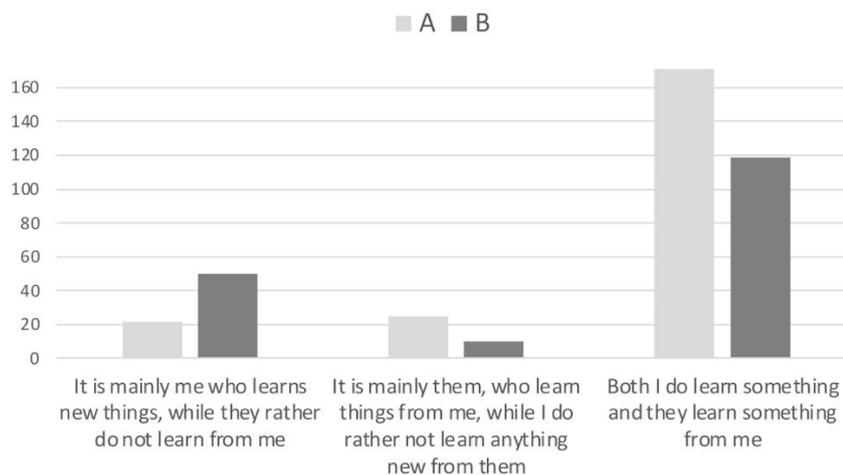
A third aspect of the scope of the questionnaire revolved around the directions taken by the flow of information and knowledge, as well as opinions when it comes to the influence exerted on inhabitants’ private and professional lives, and rural development. Interesting results came out of the question regarding directions to knowledge and information flows (see Figure 3). Those questioned had the chance to choose one of three possible answers: (1) it is mainly the respondent who learns something new, (2) it is mainly the respondent who engages in the transfer of new knowledge, or (3) the flows of information/knowledge proceed in both directions. It is quite clear from the answers received that newcomers are more open to the information/knowledge they might obtain from oldtimers (than *vice versa*). On the other hand, in the view of the latter, the transfer of knowledge and information has been a two-way process first and foremost. This conclusion gained confirmation in the answers from the in-depth interviews. Among newcomers offering a clear definition as to the direction of flow of knowledge and information, the view prevailing was that this happened in both directions. Nineteen respondents were of that opinion. Eight newcomers inclined to the view that it was one-way, with they themselves obtaining new knowledge and information from the oldtimers. Only two people from this group invoked the opposite direction. On the other hand, several of those asked failed to supply an unequivocal answer, typically justifying that via a broader response to the effect that knowledge transferred might go in one

direction or the other depending on the precise nature of it. For example, professional and specialised knowledge mainly flows from newcomers to permanent inhabitants, even as practical knowledge heads the other way. In the cases of local leaders, the answers supplied were more ambiguous, which is to say that many failed to ascribe the transfer of knowledge to one of the three categories proposed, raising similar doubts to those noted for newcomers. Overall, two-way transfer was indicated by 15 of those questioned, one-way (from newcomers to oldtimers) by two respondents, and mainly between oldtimers and newcomers by 4. Here are some sample statements from the interview participants:

It rather tends to be one-direction knowledge – from me to them, because they try to find out as much as they can about farming. They learn about keeping hens, the organic growing of vegetables, and so on. It’s only a matter of me responding to questions ... (Boguszyce, oldtimers representative, personal communication, September 08, 2023).

The flow of information goes in one direction. The newcomers are interested in where they can get hold of different kinds or produce – like eggs, poultry, vegetables, potatoes and milk. But sometimes they ask about people who own some kind of construction equipment, or can offer specialised services... (Guzówka, oldtimers representative, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

Figure 3: Structuring of responses questions posed to oldtimers and newcomers.



Note: Question posed to oldtimers (A): “In your view, how does information and knowledge flow in the context of your contacts with newcomers?” and to newcomers (B): “In your view, how do information and knowledge flow during your contacts with oldtimers?”

Particular attention needs to be paid to transferred knowledge and information as they relate to the influence on inhabitants’ private and professional lives, as well as the development and management of their home locality. Opinions from the two groups questioned seem similar—in that it was most typical for representatives of either long-term inhabitants or newcomers to offer an average

assessment of the influence of mutual contacts (levels of 37% and 43%, respectively). However, there was once again a confirmation of the greater scepticism as regards the long-term inhabitants. The latter presented higher shares of people who felt the influence of the transfer of knowledge and information was either very limited or, at best, limited. The opposite trend characterised newcomers, who, in the main, offered average or even very high assessments (at 64% among the long-term residents and 74% among the newcomers themselves).

A great deal more information was supplied with the results of the in-depth interviews. Local leaders perceive a positive impact of contacts with newcomers, referring to a very broad range of benefits. The greater part of this may not in fact relate directly to the transfer of knowledge and information, being rather the effect of “spying” on newcomers as regards their behaviour and activity. A large number of those asked link the transfer of knowledge and information with different categories of the lives of inhabitants and the village itself. There is recognition that knowledge is needed for activation within a community to improve living conditions and financial circumstances, to enhance surroundings from an aesthetic point of view, to change models of behaviour, and so on. Several examples of utterances are given below:

... newcomers brought in with them a modern style of life and of being; culture; and another way of behaving that started to be imitated by “locals” too (Kamieńczyk, oldtimers representative, personal communication, June 29, 2023).

... newcomers with a good education can motivate inhabitants into joint activity. It is very often the case that such a person from the outside gets people out of the rut they are in, forming some group or other that seeks funding to make something ready for the village. I think these people are in a position to revive community activity, and thus enliven the local economy. However, this process is only a slow one, and this remains (and will for some time remain) the kind of region that does not develop very dynamically as other super-touristy regions might, or areas now being affected by suburbanisation ... (Dobków, oldtimers representative, personal communication, September 25, 2023).

A very common case is for those asked to forge a direct link between the flow of information and raised income among village inhabitants. The process of mutual exchange helps people find permanent or occasional work, sell food products or dispense simple services. Newcomers also confirm this, valuing the information that allows them to find service-providers and suppliers of ongoing labour. However, and interestingly, the utterances of newcomers in this regard are more “restrained,” being confined to the identification of core benefits, as well as statements to the effect that information has helped out, with the person feeling secure as a result, and with relations between people improved in that way, even as the village itself benefits through development, with improved aesthetics, and so on. Here are some examples:

The flow of knowledge and information concerns private life and the development of the village, but these conversations do not affect the development of the village, they are "polite" chats. They are mainly information about what is happening in the village, what are the intentions, investment plans, changes, etc. This information does not have a significant practical dimension for me ... (Uścimów, newcomers representative, personal communication, September 11, 2023).

The information only concerns superficial, unimportant matters. These conversations make my life in the village easier because I found out, for example, who can mow my lawn, from whom I can buy fresh eggs, strawberries. I am also up to date with what happened in the countryside, that they are building sidewalks, a bike path, that they are building a social welfare center, etc. This way I still have contact with the place and people I like. However, this is rather knowledge that I use in my private life to feel better. I do not learn anything specific that I could use in my professional work.... (Siedlątków, personal communication, September 07, 2023).

4.0 Discussion of Results

Migration of population from the city to the countryside means, at the same time, migration of knowledge, first of all, informal and uncodified knowledge (Waters & Leung, 2017). Transferred knowledge and information may bring advantages to both sides. It is possible to indicate three basic scopes to which the transferred knowledge refers—private life, socio-economic development and rural space (see Table 1).

Newcomers from the city, or, more precisely, their active presence in the countryside, constitutes a specific resource, which ought to be made use of for the benefit of the local community and the broadly understood rural development. Urban actors bring into rural areas knowledge and practice, enhancing local capacity of social innovation (Noack & Federwish, 2018). Rye (2011) indicates that the newcomers make accessible external social networks, bring in new knowledge and skills, and fulfil the function of “ambassadors” of rural localities in urban environments. Yet, the level of involvement in knowledge sharing or knowledge acquisition depends to a high degree upon the objective of moving into the village. Some researchers suggest that second home owners often remain closed up in their private sphere (King, 2004), do not enter into interactions with the residents, and do not engage in community building (Gallent, 2014). This was partly confirmed by the here-reported study, carried out in Polish villages. It can be, namely, concluded on the basis of results from this study that many second home owners do not care for contacts and getting acquainted with the local people, and hence conditions do not arise for sharing knowledge in a direct manner. Besides, the seasonal visitors are not always considered full-fledged members of local rural community (Tuulentie & Kietäväinen, 2020).

Table 1. *Benefits From the Transfer of Knowledge and Information in Rural Areas*

Aspects of local development	Benefits for the newcomers from the city	Benefits for permanent rural residents
Private life of inhabitants	Information on local services and people interested in odd jobs, practical knowledge and experience of local residents, information on local products.	Seasonal and odd jobs, possibility of getting additional revenue. Specialized help (legal, medical, technical) and consulting. Sale of local food products.
	Acquisition of practical skills (e.g., gardening, current use of farm buildings and of the plot).	Improvement of professional skills and new technical knowledge. Motivation to increased activity.
Socio-economic development	Facilitation of business conduct (knowledge of local labor market, knowledge of business environment organisms and business entities, local business environment, local labor force). Cognition of village history, local culture and traditions.	Activation of local community. Proposals of new behavior patterns and cultural standards as well as leisure habits. Examples of new business activities to follow.
	Joint action for well-being and life quality, as well as improvement of village esthetics. Improved technical infrastructure.	Improved village esthetics. Promotion of the locality. Preservation of cultural heritage. Improved technical infrastructure. New non-agricultural functions (tourism, other services, trade, crafts).

Source: Author.

According to Gallent (2014, p. 188), though, “second homes in rural areas have a potential social value, increasing the connectivity of communities to new skills and knowledge, and thereby raising their store of social capital.” The study, carried out in Polish villages, has not confirmed this opinion. The potential of the newcomers, disposing of time and know-how (Rye, 2011; Kietäväinen et al., 2016), was being used in a very limited degree. The identified directions of information flow consisted in great majority of cases in the acquisition by the newcomers, upon their initiative and for their needs, of the local information on services, food products and other matters, associated with everyday necessities.

The investigations performed showed that the newcomers brought with them to the countryside different norms in dealing with animals or more care regarding the aesthetics of the surrounding space, which was accepted and adopted by the permanent residents. Another example, reflecting the cultural influence exerted by the newcomers, is the importance assigned to the preservation of rural heritage and image, expressed through the gathering of local knowledge, popularising of the customs, and promotion in the media. In the localities, where the cultural differences between the groups considered were significant, there would occur a division within the local community, into those having a positive attitude towards the newcomers, and the ones perceiving more of their negative qualities. Thus, a kind of cultural clash occurred (Armstrong & Stedman, 2013; Ulrich-Shad &

Quin, 2018). Yet, these were isolated, single cases, from which broader and deeper conclusions can hardly be drawn.

The study also demonstrated that the persons who left the city, irrespective of the length of stay in the countryside, enter into closer, deeper relations first of all among themselves, while the contacts with the permanent inhabitants of the villages, even if frequent, are mostly superficial and have a typical practical character. This confirms the conclusions of Elias and Scotson (1994), that the distance between these categories does not decay with time, but finds justification in the stereotypes and remains a permanent element of the structure of local society.

The newcomers, when organising their lives in the countryside, initiate contact with rural residents to acquire information useful for equipping and maintaining their new estate. This local, informal knowledge has definite value for their functioning in their new place of residence. Newcomers are aware of this and conscious of the fact that this knowledge can be acquired solely through local contacts. The benefit for the local residents is constituted, first of all, by entering into closer acquaintance with the newcomers and finding an additional job. The study showed, for instance, that the newcomers from the city are interested in purchasing local food products and do ask where they can buy them. The subject of transmission of information was observed in the majority of the villages considered. Making use of the healthy rural products obtained from local farmers constitutes an essential element forming the “rural idyll.” The urbanites usually move into the countryside with a well-defined image of what the countryside is meant to be and what it ought to offer (Bell, 2006). The image of idyllic countryside is linked with healthy food (Piša, 2019), and in the case of Poland, this is particularly well pronounced.

An interesting element of the knowledge transmitted between newcomers and permanent residents, constituting a significant potential for local development, is agricultural knowledge. The newcomers considered were active in terms of search for agricultural knowledge, associated primarily with gardening activity, but—which ought to be stressed—they were also the providers of new knowledge on this subject, acquired from various sources. These persons, even if they had no connection whatsoever with farming before, would bring knowledge of new crops and technologies not encountered in the given area. Still, as indicated before in this report, such a kind of knowledge has the character of “potential” or “dormant” knowledge, as it is not being readily absorbed by the permanent rural residents.

The issues of the broadly understood village organisation and development were quite frequently pointed out in the interviews in terms of subjects of exchange of information between the social groups accounted for. There were cases of collaboration and joining of forces on important issues, as well as cases of the use of the knowledge and skills of the newcomers in the enhancement of the aesthetic qualities of public spaces. Hujibens (2012) applied the notion of „lifestyle locals” with respect to the newcomers from the city, who wish to use their knowledge and competences for the benefit of their new, adopted “homeland.”

Migrants from cities are undertaking new social and economic activities in rural areas, including contributing to the development of new economic functions (Chen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). As a result, local spatial organisation is changing. Many interview participants emphasised the benefits for villages through joint initiatives and activities that translate into changes in rural space. Along with new residents, new capital is arriving in the countryside. Newcomers are investing and introducing new architectural and aesthetic solutions that become role models for permanent residents. There are instances of locals and

newcomers joining forces to oppose the location of disruptive investments. However, in several villages, the two groups' differing needs regarding infrastructure and the nature of public spaces were noted, leading to lively local debate and even social tensions.

5.0 Conclusions

The survey research carried out in association with in-depth interviews allowed the achievement of the main objective and the provision of answers to the three detailed questions posed at the outset. Knowledge and information transferred between city-dwellers (be these settled newcomers or people only spending periods of time in the villages studied, given a status as owners of second homes) and long-term inhabitants of a village (oldtimers) is primarily used and of use in those rural areas. This is above all made clear by the interviews, in which newcomers and oldtimers alike assess knowledge and information acquired in terms of its being used in the rural setting.

The knowledge and information that flow as members of the two studied groups make contact are of an overwhelmingly “informational” character. Bearing in mind the basic types of knowledge transfer, we may generalise and suggest that it is information of the *know-what* type that is first and foremost involved, with the knowledge of *know-how* present much more rarely. This is, then, in the main, basic information that helps meet the daily needs of the studied groups of inhabitants. The subject matter this focuses on concerns the search for services, the sale of products, temporary work that might be taken up, and elements of gossip of differing levels of utility and seriousness. More specific topics of conversation were mainly seen to involve ways of spending free time, hobbies, neighbourly assistance, celebrations of different kinds, village life, the cultivation of plants, shopping, and so on. Cases in which more profound knowledge or more specialised information were at stake revolved mainly around construction techniques, food production and plant-growing. This links up with the way that knowledge transfer is mainly a matter of limited intensity, taking place via sporadic and occasional meetings in public places, be they the street, a central place, or shops. These circumstances surely influence the type and quality of knowledge and information exchange that can and do occur. There was a view among some of the country-dwellers questioned that contacts with newcomers (and the potential benefits in terms of knowledge and skills acquired) were decidedly greater in the past than they are now. Today's media and the Internet offer broad-spectrum knowledge and information reducing the need for the two groups of people under study to come into contact with one another.

In the view of a decided majority of those questioned, the flow of information and knowledge is a two-way affair, albeit with oldtimers more inclined to conclude it is mainly they who are imparting information to newcomers, rather than *vice versa*. The interviews made it rather clear that the long-term inhabitants of a village are first and foremost sources of practical information of an ongoing nature that deals with village life as broadly conceived. This is to say that it responds to questions regarding what, where, when and how much. In turn, newcomers might supply knowledge as information, even as they may also impart advice and non-material knowledge. This ensures that there are diverse consequences when what has been transferred is put to use.

Knowledge and information supplied by oldtimers help with everyday life and the meetings of everyday need, even as newcomers transfer in new ways of life and behaviour, as well as shaping greater activity within the village. This conclusion is backed up by something said by one of the newcomers in Kamieńczyk, who claimed that the knowledge he had conveyed to village-

dwellers was “metaphysical” in nature, even as knowledge acquired from oldtimers was of an informational and practical character. That leaves it worth stressing at the end that it is newcomers who offer an evaluation of the benefits of the knowledge and information flowing in that is slightly more positive than the one forthcoming from oldtimers.

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