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Abstract: The research objective of the paper is to diagnose and assess knowledge transfer, taking place within rural areas as a consequence of contacts between rural inhabitants and the newcomers from towns. The survey and in-depth interviews were carried out in 18 villages from various regions of Poland. Answers to three study questions were sought: what kinds of knowledge are being transferred between the inhabitants of villages and towns? what are the main directions and related intensities in this knowledge transfer? and what are the consequences of the transfer? Knowledge transfer takes place during sporadic encounters mainly in public places – streets, central squares, shops. We concluded that permanent rural dwellers are primarily the source of current and practical information, while the newcomers from towns provide, side by side with the informative knowledge, also knowledge of advisory and non-material character. The newcomers from the urban areas value higher the advantages from the knowledge and information transferred to them than the permanent dwellers of the countryside.

Key words: knowledge transfer, rural areas, migration, newcomers, rural-urban relations, Poland

Highlights

- Contacts between newcomers and village inhabitants facilitate knowledge transfer.
- The transferred knowledge is mainly of an informational nature.
- Cases of transfer of deeper knowledge mainly concern construction, food production and plant cultivation.
- Knowledge provided by the permanent residents serve daily life and fulfilment of current needs.
- Knowledge transferred from newcomers concerns new lifestyles and patterns of behaviour

1. Introduction

Knowledge is an attribute of inhabitants of a definite region and is identified with the entirety of information at disposal of the inhabitants and institutions of the region, including the capacity of making use of this information (Becker, 1994; Fuente, Ciccone, 2003; Lee et al., 2004). It is subject to continuous development, being the effect of both deepening and of exchange of knowledge among the inhabitants of the area, as well as the inflow of knowledge along with the arriving new residents (Stark, 2004; Hudson, 2005; Poot et al., 2008). Rural areas offer a good example of these processes. We deal here with two groups of people, between whom transfer of knowledge and information takes place. The first of these groups are the persons having lived for a long time in the countryside, deeply rooted there (*oldtimers*), while the second – the persons migrating temporarily (owners of second homes) or for permanent residence to the countryside (*newcomers*) (Graber, 1974; Qin, 2016; Ulrich-Schad, 2018).

Movement of population from urban to rural areas is concentrated in the zones of influence of the large urban centers, that is – in the areas, which lose the characteristics of the traditional rural areas in functional, social and cultural terms (Bański et al., 2021). It is, however, also noticed that urban dwellers choose the places farther off, in order to escape from the urban noise and lifestyle (Benessaiah, Eakin 2021; Pileva et al., 2023). They seek their countryside idyll, green and pleasant, good countryside, unchanging and safe (Halfacree, 1996, 2012; Ilberry, 1998; Shucksmith 2016). They form then “enclaves” or small social groups, different in various aspects from those having lived permanently in the rural areas to date. This phenomenon has been studied for long and is well represented in world literature. The persons, migrating to the countryside, are being referred to with such terms as *new agrarians*, *neopeasants*, *new pioneers*, *newcomers*, *urban incomers*, *back-to-the-landers*, and so on (Brunori, 2011; Jacob, 1997, 2003; Trauger, 2007; Forsythe, 1980; Wilbur, 2014).

Migration of population from towns to countryside means also migration of knowledge, first of all informal and not coded knowledge (Waters, Leung, 2017; Szekely, 2013). Such knowledge exists in people's minds, especially in their intuition, behavior and experience (Bathelt et al., 2004; Storper, Venables, 2004; Hilpert, 2006; Maggioni, Uberti, 2009). At the same time, it is closely associated with a place and with specific features of a definite area, and develops also in the course of common experiences, problem-solving and interactions, which means that it depends upon the development of interpersonal skills. R. Florida (2002) and G. Törnqvist (2004) considered this to be an essential element of the institutional environment. Although the processes of counterurbanization have been very well studied under many aspects, their significance in the rural-urban transfer of knowledge requires broader recognition. We mean here, in particular, a deeper interpretation of the back-to-land process (Jacob, 1997; Halfacree, 2007; Sandström, 2022; Marjavaara and Lundholm, 2014), and the phenomenon of concentration of second homes – especially their social value for the local communities (Gallent, 2014; Adamiak et al., 2023).

The new rural residents, who came from the towns, or temporarily staying in the countryside as owners of second homes, have as a rule different experience concerning their life, profession and competences (Herslund, 2011), different worldviews and cultural models (Armstrong and Stedman, 2013). Newcomers can play a fundamental role in social activation and in the introduction of new ideas, skills and external collaboration networks (Alvarez-Montoya, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2024). They can constitute a rich source of knowledge for the rural dwellers. At the same time, the latter, who dispose of knowledge on the broadly understood local conditions, may also constitute an essential source of knowledge and information for those coming to the countryside. Both groups can use the knowledge acquired for improving their living conditions, developing new activities, bettering the image of the rural settlement, enhancing the esthetics of the farm, etc. Newcomers can play a fundamental role in social activation and in the introduction of new ideas, skills and external collaboration networks (Depitova 2016; Pawlak 2018).

The literature to date brings only few studies, related to the transfer of knowledge as the consequence of counterurbanization. Poland is, with this respect, a good study object, since one observes nowadays an increasing interest in settling in rural areas, and the number of owners of second homes is also on the increase. Simultaneously, countryside is characterized by high intensity of neighborhood contacts and high level of trust in private sphere (Bednarek-Szczepańska, 2013). At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, some 8% of rural residents in Poland were newcomers from towns, while 4% of urban dwellers declared the wish of moving to the countryside.

The fundamental research objective of the present paper is the diagnosis and the evaluation of knowledge transfer, taking place within the rural areas, due to the counterurbanization processes, including summer house settlement appearance, and especially in effect of contacts between the rural dwellers and the newcomers from towns. This objective is being achieved on the basis of questionnaire-based survey and in-depth interviews, carried out among the members of the two social groups mentioned. The results of the investigations concern close to twenty case studies, performed in the villages from various regions of Poland. Answers were sought to three fundamental study questions: 1) what kinds of knowledge are being transferred between the inhabitants of towns and countryside (newcomers and oldtimers)? 2) what are the main directions and related intensities in this knowledge transfer? and 3) what are the consequences brought about by the knowledge transfer between the inhabitants of towns and countryside? Knowledge is understood here as information, understanding and skills, gained through experience of contacts between the newcomers and the oldtimers.

2. Material and methods

The investigations reported here were carried out in 18 villages from various regions of Poland (Fig. 1). The selection criteria were as follows:

- location in areas differentiated in terms of social and historical-cultural features (see Appendix).
- location outside of the zones of strong influence of large urban centers (outside of the metropolitan areas). This limitation had the purpose of eliminating rural areas subject to

strong suburbanization pressure and displaying high degree of similarity of the respective socio-professional structures with those of towns.

- taking into account the areas of specialization of the academic centers carrying out this study.

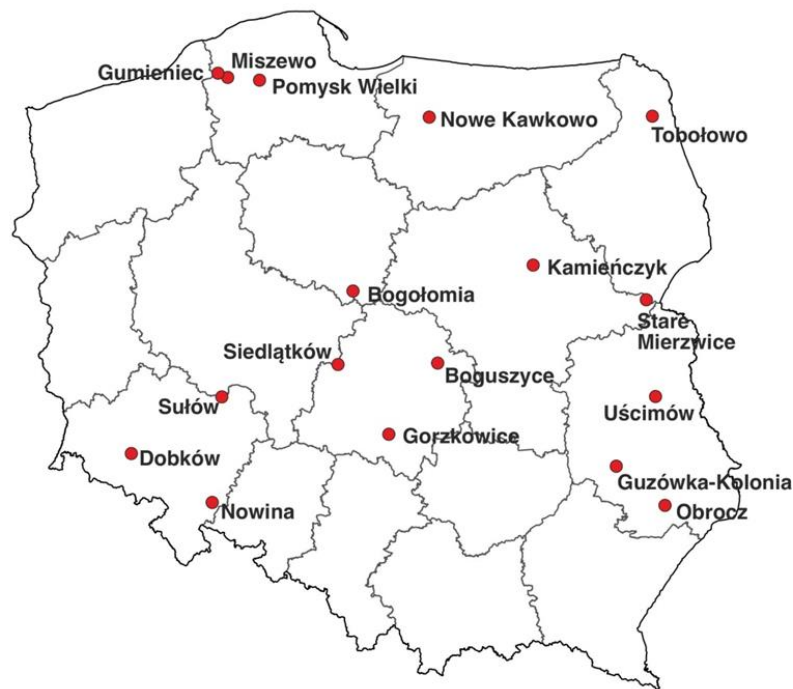


Fig 1. Location of study area. Source: own elaboration

Case studies were carried out according to a unified scenario. Its first stage consisted of the social-spatial diagnosis of a given unit with the use of literature on the subject and the study visits. During the second stage, the questionnaire-based survey was carried out, addressed to the respondents, representing the two social groups, i.e., "newcomers" and "oldtimers". There are no definitions that clearly identify "oldtimers" and "newcomers". As a result of the discussion in the research team, it was assumed that people living in the village for at least five years are sufficiently "rooted", i.e., they already have good recognition and knowledge of local conditions. Ultimately, it was decided that such a period would differentiate the two groups studied. However, it is worth adding that the oldtimers group consisted mostly of people who had been living in the village since birth. The newcomers group consisted mainly of people staying in the village temporarily (they were mainly owners of second homes).

The survey questionnaire consisted of closed and semi-open questions covering the following topics: frequency of personal contact between a respondent and locals/newcomers; where meetings and conversations take place; directions of knowledge exchange; topics of knowledge exchange; and the importance of mutual knowledge exchange for the respondents. Altogether 554 questionnaires were filled out, 333 of them by the oldtimers and 224 by newcomers. In the structure of the respondents, representing the two analysed groups, one can indicate more essential differences (see age, education, employment) than similarities, this fact influencing the results from the study (see Table 1).

Tab 1. Structure of respondents regarding the residential status². Source: own materials

Feature	Gender		Age				Education				Employment				
	Females	Males	Up to 25 years	26-39	40-59	60+	Tertiary	Secondary	Basic trade training	Primary or none	Pupil / student	Employee	Self-employed	Retired / pensioner	Unemployed
OLDTIMERS															
number	208	123	34	67	124	107	98	114	71	34	28	100	87	97	20
%	63	37	10	20	37	33	31	36	22	11	8	30	26	29	7
NEWCOMERS															
number	141	83	13	65	103	43	119	80	16	2	8	110	57	40	8
%	63	37	6	29	46	19	55	37	7	1	3	49	26	19	3

In the third stage of the investigation, the in-depth interviews were carried out with local leaders, representing the permanent residents of the villages (village marshals, council members and employees of the local administration, representatives of social organisations, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers), and with the newcomers. Interviews were conducted during the period 04-09.2023. The purpose of the interviews was to provide in-depth insight into knowledge transfer, its contexts, dimensions and relevance. In the interviews, newcomers were asked to speak about their own contacts with local people (and local people about their contacts with newcomers); they were also asked about other people's contacts. Interviewees commented on the topics of knowledge transfer and which topics they felt were most important. They were asked about the direction of the exchange of information and the importance and effects of this exchange for their lives and local development. Altogether, in 18 villages 63 interviews were carried out. Out of these, 30 interviews were carried out with the local leaders, among whom there were 10 village marshals, 7 representatives of local administration, 2 representatives of the local action groups, 2 shopkeepers, 3 owners of agro-tourist farms, and 6 persons, representing other forms of activity. Then, 33 interviews were carried out with the newcomers, among whom there were 13 owners of second homes, 6 entrepreneurs, conducting businesses associated with tourism, and 14 other residents, considered to be newcomers. In view of the wish to preserve the privacy of the pronouncements, later on in this report, in the part devoted to the results from the interviews, only the distinction between the local residents and the newcomers is specified, along with the name of the respective locality.

The final stage of research consisted in the coding of the interviews, having for purpose identification of the subject categories of knowledge transferred, directions of this transfer, its significance, and, ultimately – identification of the schemes of knowledge transfer. Initially, deductive coding was applied, consisting in the search of the subjects of knowledge transfer according to the keywords, related to the categories, defined a priori in the questionnaire form. The categories included: private life, professional life, socio-cultural life, private space and public space. Thus, responses were sought, corresponding to these categories and the coding was indicated in a table, in which the given subject area appeared in a case study (Table 2). As it was expected that the interviews may also contain other subjects of knowledge transferred, besides those listed in the questionnaire, inductive coding was performed afterwards. All of the responses from the interviewees were read out in a sequence and the new subjects of knowledge transfer were coded and introduced into the coding table. New specific categories of knowledge were therefore identified within the framework of a priori defined general categories, and a new general category was added: the other world. Similarly, as for the deductive coding, the case studies were indicated, in which the given subject matter appeared. Thereafter, individual codes were associated with broader categories of thematic scope.

² Numbers of respondents in particular categories may slightly differ, since they had the possibility of not providing answers, concerning their individual characteristics.

Tab 2. Example of text coding. Source: own elaboration

General category of knowledge transfer (<i>a priori</i>)	Codes	Direction	Specific category of knowledge transfer	Quotes from interviews
Professional life	New crops	N -> O	Cultivation	"I considered starting a lavender crop. Local people did not believe that lavender would grow here" (Nowe Kawkowo) "When it comes to growing plants or taking care of the garden, I think the townspeople have more knowledge than the locals. Sometimes they tell what plants they have planted, such as some unusual ones" (Mierzvice)
	Tending garden	O -> N		„So they often come to me and ask how to develop a plot and grow something healthy for themselves." (Bogotomia)
	Handling farm animals	O -> N	Husbandry	"Local people also taught me how to milk cows" (Nowe Kawkowo)
	Local professionals	O -> N	Construction services	„It is important where there is a good professional, where there is a good electrician who will do inexpensively but reliably or a plumber. These are mainly the topics" (Nowina)

3. Results

3.1 Characterization of the newcomers and their contacts with the oldtimers

The group of newcomers is dominated by the owners of second homes, originating, first of all, from large urban centers. This group is dominated by persons seeking leisure and relaxation in the villages, which offer closeness to forests and waters. Frequently, the newcomers are the representatives of such professions that enable teleworking while being away from the place of employment: artists, software specialists, architects, and so on.

In the villages, which do not possess high nature-related qualities (see Mazur et al. 2021), the number of newcomers is low; usually, only single families settle in them. Among these newcomers, there are persons wishing to change their lifestyle, undertaking new and non-standard business initiatives, linked, first of all, with leisure and food production. For this group of newcomers, perceiving their future as connected with the new place of residence, very important role is played by the elements of local culture and the positive attitude of the permanent residents, as well as of local authorities towards their activity.

One of the questions in the questionnaire concerned personal contacts between the "oldtimers" and the "newcomers". The majority of the respondents confirmed the existence of mutual contacts. Yet, it is worth noticing that the percentage of positive answers was higher among the newcomers than among the permanent residents (87% and 67%, respectively). This difference results from two fundamental conditions. The first of them, confirmed also in the in-depth interviews, is the fact of more frequent search for contacts with the permanent residents from the side of the newcomers, the latter having much poorer knowledge of the local circumstances and requiring, first of all, the practical information on the current life in the village. The second condition, bringing about the more frequent contacts of the newcomers with the permanent residents in the villages is largely the straightforward statistical aspect. Namely, the newcomers constitute, as a rule, a very limited part of the village society and it is easier for them to enter into contact with the permanent residents than the other way around.

Both social groups analysed maintain that mutual contacts are conducive to the exchange of knowledge and information. A vast majority of respondents confirmed that during encounters, they learned

something new from their interlocutors (permanent residents – 72%, newcomers – 85%). Only a couple of percent of respondents stated clearly that mutual contacts do not contribute to acquisition of new knowledge (permanent residents – 6%, newcomers – 3%). The remaining respondents did not have a clear opinion on the subject.

In this context, an interesting study question is constituted by the place, where the contacts occur. In the case of the permanent residents, the distribution of responses was more homogeneous, with the shop being mentioned most often, followed by at home and the church (Fig. 2). Yet, the biggest number of responses indicated the category of “other”, where the respondents could additionally specify a definite place. A distinct majority of respondents answered that this was in the street or in some other public place (like, e.g., the central square, road, or bus stop). In the eyes of the newcomers, the encounters with the oldtimers occur primarily in a shop, constituting a kind of knowledge and information exchange center. This conclusion was also confirmed in the interviews by the local leaders:

... A shop is a point of information exchange. People talk a lot and exchange current news... A shop is a place, where persons not residing here permanently can acquire information on the local specialists, from whom one can buy something, who and where provides definite services, whether a definite workshop or enterprise is open... (Mierzvice)

... My shop became such a point of tourist information exchange. Notices hang here on excursions organised, boat and kayak rafting. Given that for 15 years I have been a council member, persons interested in business matters come to me with questions concerning, e.g., photovoltaics, waste removal, internet installation and so on ... (Tobołowó).

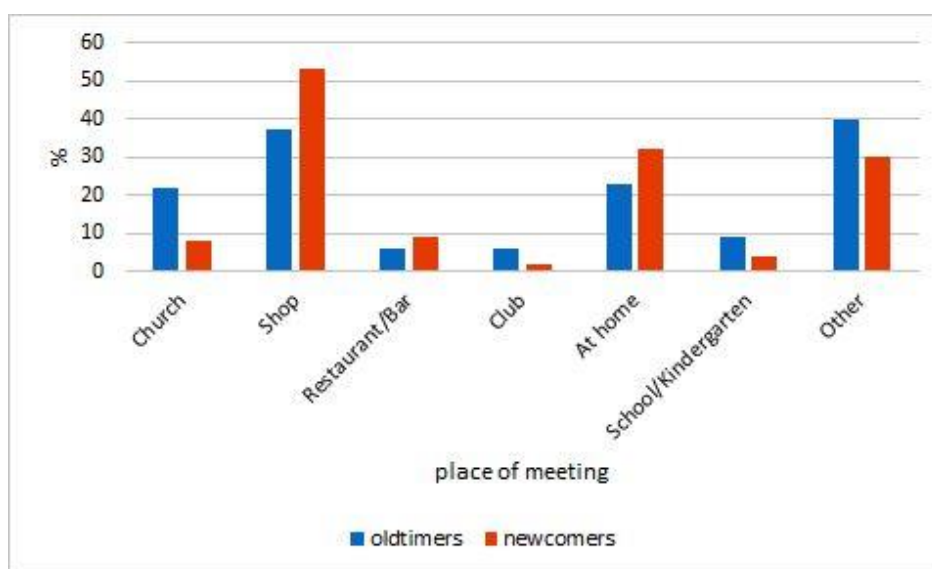


Fig 2. Structure (%) of responses to the questions, addressed at oldtimers (A): Where do you most often meet and talk to the newcomers or temporarily staying visitors to this village? and at the newcomers (B): Where do you most often meet and talk to the residents of this village? Source: own elaboration

The indicated places of encounters between the oldtimers and the newcomers make it possible to conclude that these places are usually random and encounters are instantaneous. It can, namely, hardly be expected that during these encounters, in a shop or in the street, longer conversations could occur along with a deeper exchange of thoughts. These are, most probably, short and simple conversations, during which some basic information is being exchanged.

3.2 Subject matter of knowledge transferred

Interview coding made possible identification and classification of the subjects of knowledge transferred, along with determination of their popularity and of relations between the subjects (Fig. 3).

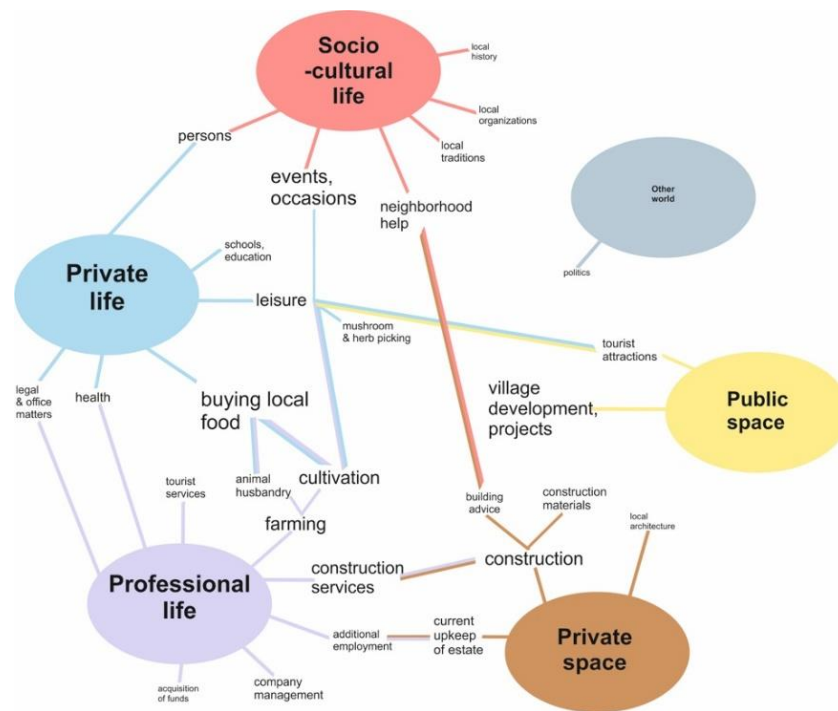


Fig 3. Spheres and thematic categories of knowledge transferred in the contacts between the oldtimers and the newcomers (font magnitude is proportional to the number of case studies, in which a given sphere and category were mentioned). Source: own elaboration

Private life was the sphere mentioned by respondents in all of the case studies and it was indicated many times over that it is the most frequent subject of conversations between the newcomers and the oldtimers. Of highest importance was in this context the purchase of local food and the way leisure is realised. Attention should be paid to the connections between the categories of buying local food and leisure, on the one hand, and the category of farming, which is one of two categories appearing most often in terms of the sphere of professional life. In the majority of the analysed case studies the newcomers sought actively in the local environment the information on the possibility of buying eggs, milk, vegetables, etc. Besides, persons visiting the countryside try to acquire from the rural dwellers knowledge on cultivation, ornamental plants, vegetables, and so on.

... I heard that some of those "from the city" get advice from the locals on how to cultivate their small gardens. They came to the countryside and they would like to have something of their own, ecological, but do not know how. As a rule, they are young people, not having any idea about this, but wishing to get most out of the countryside (Gorzkowice).

Agriculture appeared in the interviews as the subject of knowledge transfer in the majority of localities included. Yet, in none of the case studies was it indicated as the dominating subject. Side by side with the "classical", most common scheme of exchange of agricultural knowledge, the "reverse" scheme was identified, consisting in that it is the newcomers who bring new knowledge, concerning cultivation, to the countryside (see Table 3). Newcomers acquire knowledge from many sources and use the resulting knowledge in practice. They are ready to experiment with new plants and non-standard techniques. Thus, they introduce innovative solutions, which have not yet been used by the rural dwellers to date. Locals are rather passive observers and most often are not interested in such innovations. Hence, this reverse transfer is not relevant for the permanent residents. A case in point occurred in one of the villages considered. A woman, having been previously professionally associated with a corporation in a large city, moved to the countryside, where she established a lavender farm, without any prior experience with the cultivation of the plant. The experiment succeeded, and the lavender plantation, along with a live museum and local production of ecological cosmetics and food, turned out to be a success and became a tourist attraction. Yet, this has not incited interest among the permanent residents.

Tab 3. Characterization of knowledge transfer for selected themes – examples. Source: own elaboration

Farming and gardening – the “classical” scheme	
Nature of contact	direct contact upon the initiative of newcomers or observation of permanent residents
Direction of transfer	from permanent residents to newcomers (vacationers, new residents)
Features	newcomers acquire from the permanent residents information and advice on plant cultivation and gardening in order to carry out their own gardening activity
Nature of knowledge	local, practical
Role of knowledge transfer	used locally by the receivers
Farming and gardening – the “reversed” scheme	
Nature of contact	mainly observation by the permanent residents
Direction of transfer	from the newcomers to the permanent residents
Features	newcomers gain farming and horticultural knowledge from various sources (internet, books, studies, media) and apply it in their activity; they experiment with new plants and technologies, not used earlier in the given locality
Nature of knowledge	from a variety of non-local sources, practical knowledge
Role of knowledge transfer	permanent residents usually do not use this kind of knowledge, they are either passive observers or are not at all interested; weak reception of this kind of knowledge
Local food products	
Nature of contact	direct contact upon the initiative of the newcomers
Direction of transfer	from permanent residents to the newcomers
Features	newcomers are interested in buying local farm products from local producers; they ask for the farmers, who sell them; countryside is commonly associated with healthy and tasty food, and so the subject is often taken up by the newcomers
Nature of knowledge	local, individual
Role of knowledge transfer	used by the receivers locally; generation of additional revenues for the local producers; contributing to the image of countryside as the place of production of healthy food
Cultural behavior patterns and lifestyle	
Nature of contact	observation
Direction of transfer	from the newcomers to permanent residents
Features	newcomers bring to the countryside urban lifestyle, definite behavior patterns, observed by the permanent residents; these patterns gradually permeate and are adapted by at least some members of the local communities
Nature of knowledge	practical
Role of knowledge transfer	cultural transformations of the countryside

Transfer of knowledge in the sphere of professional life was represented in a clear majority of the localities considered and consisted in providing the newcomers with information on services and service outlets, producers and products offered in the village. Persons from the cities, settling down in the countryside, try to acquire knowledge on local specialists, providing construction, electrical, plumbing etc. services. Besides, they offer the local people a possibility of additional employment, this being also linked with the transfer of practical information. In the summer resort localities, the users of second homes also pay the locals for services linked to the current maintenance of the estate during their absence. These are, therefore, the connections between the sphere of professional life of the rural dwellers and the sphere of private space of the newcomers. This is illustrated by the statement of the head of the municipality of Uścimów:

... Vacationers often make use of the local construction companies, villagers are being employed in “servicing” of their homes – they guard the estates, turn off water for winter, mow the grass, and perform a variety of works, also make available the keys to the homes for those renting them (Uścimów).

There were also the cases of knowledge transfer in the professional sphere from the newcomers to the oldtimers and this concerned the elements of specialist knowledge, e.g., legal, medical, psychological, but, as well, technical and naturalist, associated with the professions of the owners of second homes. Such situations, though, were mentioned less frequently and consisted in the free-of-charge advice and assistance for the permanent residents in settling some matters in the city or in the advice, related to the use of new technologies in the household.

It is worth emphasizing that for the persons, who choose countryside as their new place of residence, knowledge of the place, its history and traditions is often of high significance. These persons actively attempt to acquire such knowledge from the permanent residents, building up in this manner their association with the new place of living. Local knowledge is for them a value, which they wish to develop. In the village of Nowe Kawkowo, it was just these persons, who moved in there, and had previously had no connection with the place, that undertook the effort of searching in the local community for the various souvenirs from the past, photographs, etc. and established an exhibition, presenting the history of the locality. Similar situation occurred in Nowina, where it was the newcomers, who created the website of the village, where they would present the history of the village, local information service and photographs. This kind of phenomenon was not reported concerning the owners of second homes in the countryside – for them, the respective villages fulfil primarily the function of leisure and recreation.

In the sphere of social life, the most frequent subject domain of information exchange concerned local events and happenings. In almost all of the case studies, the respondents indicated this as a common subject of conversations between the persons from the two groups. In the summer vacation localities, it was first of all the permanent residents of the respective village who organised the events and transmitted the information on them to the vacationers. For persons spending summer in their second homes, this is an interesting theme – participation in such events is a form of spending leisure time. The situation was different in the localities, where a small, but highly active group of newcomers dominated the social life (Nowina, Nowe Kawkowo). They took over the initiative and became the organisers of the local events. Yet, the undertakings they organised (artistic, cultural, ecological, etc.), in view of their non-standard, innovative character were not very popular among the local people.

The statements of both newcomers and oldtimers frequently contained the subject of neighborhood help. It can be concluded on the basis of the interviews that relations between the representatives of the two groups were good, with the cases of animosity or negative relations concerning single persons and having been mentioned sporadically. The category of neighborhood help was interpreted in a variety of manners by the interviewees. Local residents understood it in terms of advice, providing local information to the newcomers, small services (e.g., feeding a dog, giving a ride), assistance in unexpected situations or – very important – paid service (of more or less specialised character) to the newcomers. On the other hand, the newcomers indicated, as already mentioned before, the assistance from their side, extended towards the oldtimers, in settling matters in the city (e.g., in health care), in finding a job, a school, and also in terms of financial aid to the local poor persons (lending money).

Exchange of knowledge on public space appeared in a vast majority of the cases considered, even though this subject was not so common as for the other spheres, commented upon before. Both the locals and the newcomers declared that they talk on the subject of organizing public spaces, state of infrastructure or the need for new developments. Exchange of knowledge takes place during both casual conversations and during more formalized occasions, such as village meetings.

Of the totality of subjects of knowledge transfer, which were identified in the study, decidedly the lowest significance was assigned to those exceeding the local universe. Sporadically, it was observed that the subject of conversations between the newcomers and the locals was constituted by politics. This subject often separates people of different worldviews, and that is why the representatives of both groups tended to avoid it, so as not to disturb their good relations. A good illustration thereof is provided in the pronouncement from one of the owners of summer houses in Sułów:

... I do not talk with them about politics, for it is known that it might lead to a quarrel, and so I do not touch these themes. No political subjects (Sułów).

The subject matter of the knowledge transferred was also accounted for in the questionnaire-based study. In general terms, the respective results confirm the conclusions from the in-depth interviews. Both groups considered indicated that the most important subjects of knowledge and information exchange include: social life of the locality, events and festivities, forms of leisure and recreation, as well as neighborhood help, these themes being more often mentioned by the newcomers, for whom important subjects of conversations were also purchases of local products, services provided and plant cultivation. On the other hand, for the permanent residents, the persons from the cities were a significant source of information concerning, besides the themes mentioned above – health and medical cures, as well as plant cultivation.

3.3 Role of knowledge transferred

The transfer of knowledge between the two groups is bilateral, but the newcomers seem to be more open to the new knowledge they can acquire from the permanent residents of the village. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the content of the in-depth interviews, with deeper knowledge inferred therefrom.

Local leaders perceive the positive impact of the contacts with the newcomers and list quite a broad spectrum of advantages. An important part of them is not directly associated with the transfer of knowledge and information, but results from the “spying” on the newcomers regarding their active behavior and activities. A high share of the interviewees links the transfer of knowledge and information with various categories of daily life of the residents and the village itself, considering that knowledge is needed for social activation, improvement of living and financial conditions, improvement of the esthetic qualities of the environment, change of the behavior patterns, and so on. We provide here some examples of statements to the point:

... The “newcomers” brought with them the modern style of life and existence, culture and different forms of behavior, which started to be followed by the “locals” (Kamieńczyk);

... People from the outside, educated, when they undertake an activity, not only connected with business, do also motivate the residents to collective action. It is very frequent that a person from the outside overcomes the inertia and undertakes the creation of a group, which looks for the funds, to prepare something for the village ... (Dobków);

... Owing to the knowledge and initiatives undertaken by the newcomers, the inhabitants of the village have either occasional or steady jobs, such as helping in garden cultivation, repair and construction works, tourist services. They dispose of interesting forms of leisure, possibilities of meeting interesting persons, even sometimes well-known personalities. Were it not for this activity of the newcomers, such possibilities would not exist here. It is only owing to the newcomers and their guests that the local shop survived, managed by a family from the village. ... Persons, having come here from towns, changed the village. Without them, the village would die out. There would be nothing here. Owing to these people, the village lives at all. The village gained a lot, old traditions are being maintained, old houses and farm buildings being maintained and reconstructed. Village lives, something is going on here, there is activity, cooperation. All this is due to the newcomers ... (Nowe Kawkowo).

Frequently, the interviewees link the flow of information with the improvement of the revenues of village residents. Mutual transfer helps in finding steady or occasional employment, in the sale of food products, or in the provision of simple services. This is also confirmed by the newcomers, who appreciate the information that enables them to find the providers of services and the executors of other current tasks. Yet, it is interesting that the pronouncements of the newcomers are with this respect more “reserved”, namely they are limited to identification of the basic criteria and the statements like: information makes life easier and I feel safer, owing to this, or – interpersonal relations improve, the village develops, its esthetics gets better, etc.

4. Discussion

The investigations carried out shed new light on the phenomenon of knowledge exchange between the newcomer population and the permanent residents of the countryside. The results of these investigations broaden, therefore, on the example of Poland, the body of social studies on counter-urbanization with the issues, which have not, until now, been given sufficient attention. As these investigations revealed, the newcomers include persons who maintain their professional links with the city (tele-work or commuting), but also those who started their new professional life in the countryside. A significant group is also constituted by those in the retirement age, who seek peace and relaxation. A large group is made up of people arriving seasonally for leisure purposes. According to Benson and O'Reilly (2009), all these different migrations can be considered as a single phenomenon – lifestyle migration. Lifestyle migrants are relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that, for various reasons, signify, for the migrant, a better quality of life (p. 609).

It should be very clearly emphasized that there are usually very distinct differences as to the educational structure of the two groups considered. Among those moving to the countryside, a large group is constituted by persons with university education, possessing, as a rule, a broader spectrum of knowledge than those with basic trade and primary education, accounting for an important share of permanent residents of the villages. Therefore, the contribution of the newcomers to knowledge transfer concerns more complex issues, in distinction from the permanent residents, for whom of higher importance is the concrete knowledge and current information. This conclusion is confirmed by the pronouncement from one of the newcomers to the village of Kamieńczyk, who stated that his knowledge, transmitted to the village inhabitants, has a “metaphysical” character, while knowledge acquired from the permanent residents has an “informative and practical” character. The study 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 N. Elias and J. L. Scotson (1994) or M. Maffesoli (2008), as quoted by Wrona (2018, p.135), namely 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”.

An example of practical knowledge flowing from oldtimers to newcomers is the local knowledge of where to buy food products. This subject appeared in the majority of the villages considered. Use of the healthy local products from the farmers of the village is an essential element, contributing to better quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) and constituting the “rural idyll” (O'Neill, 2024). Townspeople most often come to the countryside with an established idea as to how the villages should look and be like, and what they should offer (Bell, 2006). The image of an idyllic village is associated with healthy food (Píša, 2019), and this is especially well visible in the case of Poland.

One of the most radical form of lifestyle migration is so called back-to-land, the renewed form of rurality, which concerns people not having any prior association with the countryside and farming, moving out of their own will from the metropolitan areas to the countryside, and getting involved in farming activity, taking over the rural style of living (Halfacree, 2007; Sandström, 2022). It is hard to single out ‘back-to-the-land’ from other forms of counter-urban migration and land-based lifestyles (Halfacree 2007). Even if reported here in the investigations, these were only sporadic cases, they are still allowed for the broadening of the cognition of this phenomenon. The “back-to-landers” encountered were active in their search for local farming and gardening knowledge. Yet, one should stress that they also brought to the countryside some agricultural knowledge, acquired from different sources. Such persons, although not having any earlier contact with farming, brought knowledge of the new cultivation plants and technologies, unknown until that time within the given area.

The “back-to-land” phenomenon has been largely associated in the investigations to date with the concept of retrotopia, introduced by Polish sociologist Z. Bauman (Bauman, 2018; Sandström, 2022). The case studies here analysed also indicate that such an association might be identified, transfer of knowledge being one of the expressions thereof. Retrotopia was also perceived in the drive of

the newcomers towards gaining knowledge on local traditions and history, initiation of meetings with the elderly residents, active search for the persons who have any kind of knowledge regarding the place or who possess some unique craftsmanship. Most telling was with this respect the instance of a woman from the village of Nowe Kawkowo, who found through the network of local contacts a stove fitter, knowing how to build clay stoves and learned the trade from him. Another instance is provided by the new inhabitants of Uścimów, who used old architectural patterns in their buildings or by the basketry activities in the village of Nowina.

In the reported studies, the matters of development of infrastructure, public projects, or, more broadly, village development, were quite frequently indicated in the interviews as a subject of information exchange between the newcomers and the permanent residents of the village. Side by side with the here-mentioned conflict-prone subjects, there were also cases of joining of forces on matters important for both groups, as well as cases of taking advantage of the skills of new inhabitants to improve the aesthetics of public spaces. E. H. Hujibens (2012) used the notion of „lifestyle locals” when referring to the active newcomers, who wish to apply their knowledge and skills for the benefit of their new, adopted “homeland”.

The presence of the newcomers from the towns, who invest in the rural areas not only with their money, but also their identity, constitutes a resource, which can be activated by the local society. Urban actors bring into the rural areas their knowledge and their practice, enhancing the local capacity of social innovations (Noack and Federwish, 2018). J. F. Rye (2011) points out the access to the external social networks, provision of new knowledge and skills by the newcomers, fulfilment of the role of “ambassadors” of the rural localities in urban environments. On the other hand, though, some researchers suggest that the owners of second homes often close themselves in their private sphere (King, 2004), do not enter into interactions with inhabitants, and do not get engaged in community building (Gallent, 2014). Still, it was observed that the holidaymakers, who come regularly for many years to the same locality, are more inclined to participate in the local social life (Norris and Winston, 2009; Jennings and Krannich, 2013). Studies, which were conducted in Polish villages, confirm that many owners of second homes, especially those who have owned the second home for a shorter period, are not keen on getting in touch with and getting to know local people, and so conditions do not arise for directly sharing knowledge. It was also observed, though, that in the case of vacationers having visited a given village many times over, local contacts are better developed and integration takes place with the locals and the newcomers, not only through informal meetings and conversations, but also in a more formalized way – through the associations and organizations, linking the members of the two groups. Yet, even in such cases, no significant scale was observed of knowledge transfer from the newcomers to the oldtimers. Both local persons and newcomers declared that it is first of all the former who share with the newcomers practical information. It should be emphasized, however, that the occurrence of transmission from the new residents, having come from the cities, of the specialist knowledge, connected mainly with their profession and education, including, in particular, medical, legal, psychological, or construction engineering knowledge, were reported in at least several of the cases studied. Attention should also be paid to the transmission of cultural patterns, behaviour patterns and lifestyles from the city to the countryside (see Vartiainen, 2000), which appeared in the summer vacation localities (e.g., the urban custom of walking the dogs on the leash started to be practiced in a village – Kamieńczyk).

It appears, therefore, that the potential, resulting from the presence of newcomers, disposing of time and know-how (Rye, 2011; Kietäväinen et al., 2016), was made use of to only a limited degree in the analysed summer vacation villages. As indicated by Gallent (2014, p. 188), “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”. Investigations in Polish villages have not confirmed that the urban-rural contacts in the countryside result in a perceptible manner in increased competences and in the development of the local communities. The identified schemes of information flow consisted, in a clear majority of cases, in the acquisition by the newcomers, upon their initiative and for their purposes, of local information.

Robertsson and Marjavaara (2015) applied the notion of “seasonal buzz” to the phenomenon, taking place in the summer vacation localities, where persons from various environments gather in one place, persons disposing of various knowledge resources, persons who would otherwise not meet at all. Seasonal buzz is an informal, unorganised and unstructured sphere of contacts and face-to-face communication, the condition for its occurrence being geographical proximity. In Polish villages considered, where holidaymaking function is well developed, seasonal buzz takes place as well, although in a variety of degrees – the highest one there, where there exist both the places (a shop, a village hall) and the active leaders of social life, leading to the establishment of conditions for meetings and integration of persons from various environments.

5. Conclusion

Knowledge and information transferred between the newcomers from the cities and the permanent residents is taken advantage of mainly within the countryside. This was confirmed, first of all, by the results of the interviews, in which both newcomers and oldtimers quite unambiguously evaluated knowledge acquired by them in terms of its utility in personal, professional and social life in the countryside. No concrete examples were reported in the pronouncements of the newcomers of the use of knowledge acquired in urban life, but this was not, it must be emphasized, the purpose of the study.

Knowledge transmitted in the contacts between the two groups analysed has a very clearly informative character. It concerns primarily the essential information needed for the fulfillment of the daily needs of the analysed groups of inhabitants. The subject matter of this knowledge concentrates on the search for services, product purchases, occasional jobs and the typical “grapevine”. The subjects of conversations mentioned include mainly: leisure activities, hobbies, neighbourhood help, events and festivities, village life, plant cultivation, shopping, and the likes. The cases of deeper knowledge and more specialised information concern mainly construction, food production and plant cultivation. Knowledge transfer is rather little intensive and takes place during sporadic encounters, primarily in public places – in the streets, central squares, shops. This exerts influence on the kinds and quality of knowledge and information exchange. In the opinion of a part of the responding village inhabitants, the intensity of contacts with the newcomers and the potential advantages from the knowledge and skills acquired were decidedly greater in the past. Contemporary media and the Internet, which offer a broad spectrum of knowledge and information, clearly reduce the need for mutual contacts between the two groups analysed.

The transmission of knowledge and information has, in the opinion of a distinct majority of respondents, a bilateral character, with a bit more of responding permanent residents inclined to conclude that information flows mainly from them to the newcomers. The content of the interviews conducted implies that the permanent residents of the villages are, first of all, the source of practical information, concerning broadly understood village life, providing the answers to the basic questions: what, where, when? On the other hand, the newcomers, side by side with information-type knowledge, also provide knowledge of advisory and non-material character. Hence, the consequences of the use of this knowledge are quite differentiated. Knowledge and information, provided by the permanent residents, serve daily life and fulfillment of current needs, while the newcomers transmit new lifestyles and behaviour patterns, and also contribute to the enhanced social activity in the villages. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the newcomers somewhat more highly evaluate the advantages of the knowledge and information transmitted to them than the permanent residents of the villages.

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APPENDIX 1 – The studied villages

Village	No. of inhabitants (2021)	Dominant type of migration	Historical region
Pomysk Wielki	821	permanent	Western Pomerania
Miszewo	122	permanent	
Gumieniec	170	permanent	
Nowe Kawkowo	240	permanent	Warmia
Tobołów	100	seasonal	Podlasie
Stare Mierzwice	96	seasonal	
Kamieńczyk	667	seasonal	Mazovia
Boguszyce	612	permanent	
Bogołomia	50	seasonal	Kujawy
Siedlętków	154	seasonal	Ziemia Sieradzka
Gorzkowice	3151	seasonal	
Uścimów	360	seasonal	Lesser Poland (Lubelszczyzna)
Guzówka-Kolonia	328	seasonal	
Obrocz	429	seasonal	Lesser Poland (Zamojszczyzna)
Dobków	447	permanent	Lower Silesia
Sułów	1443	seasonal	
Nowina	56	permanent	