

Gentrification in a Post-Socialist Rural Context: The Case of Polish Vineyards

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Abstract

This article aims to present the rarely examined process of rural gentrification in Poland via the example of the vineyard sector, which is a new and dynamically growing segment in the local agriculture. This paper uses quantitative data collected from public statistics, a spatial analysis conducted by GIS, and an authorial survey conducted among vineyard owners. The research findings have revealed that 'vineyard gentrification' does not match the classic rent gap theory; furthermore, being a non-socially severe preliminary rural gentrification performed mostly by high-class representatives, it differs significantly from the traditional pattern in Polish farming.

Keywords

gentrification, rural gentrification, Poland, rural areas, winemaking, wine, vineyard

Introduction

The gentrification phenomenon in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is growing rapidly; however, researchers have yet to pay adequate attention to it. The first gentrification phase in this region occurred later than it had in Western Europe, mainly due to the delayed marketisation of the real estate sector and the subsequent creation of a larger number of economic capital holders interested in investing in the real estate market (Drozda 2019). Consequently, gentrification appeared on a massive scale in CEE not immediately after 1989 (with the small exception of former Eastern Germany, especially Berlin), but only in the twenty-first century. However, thus far, the majority of researchers have focused primarily on concentrated urban areas. This is reflected in various publications on gentrification in Poland (Dudek-Mańkowska and Iwańczak 2018; Górczyńska 2017; Grabkowska 2015; Jakóbczyk-Grzyszkiewicz et al. 2014, 2017). The same phenomenon has been analysed far less often in the context of rural areas, despite similar processes being present in these areas (Drozda, 2017, 2018; Foryś 2013; Hałamska and Stanny 2021; Śpiewak 2016; Wójcik 2013; Zwęglińska-Gałecka 2019, 2021).

According to the classic definition, gentrification is 'the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the *central city* into middle-class residential and/or commercial use' (Lees et al. 2008, p. xv, emphasis mine). According to Lees, the classic definition of this process formulated by Glass (1964) is 'ironic in that it makes fun of the snobbish pretensions of affluent middle-class household who desire a rural, traditional way of life' (Lees 2018, p. 6). However, it does not refer directly to non-urban spatial environments, even though this process can be observed in rural areas as well (Philips 1993, 2005; Philips and Smith 2018). A highly similar periodisation can be distinguished in rural areas, including, for example, the stage of spatial degradation, early gentrification, and its high advancement. Furthermore, rural gentrifiers are often immigrants, with different social profiles and larger resources in terms of various capitals, both economic and non-economic, compared to the locals. In addition to the classic example of the transformation of post-industrial zones, which is typical for the trajectory of urban gentrification, the rural type affects agricultural holdings that are decommissioned or transformed in several different ways.

The relative dearth of interest in the subject of rural gentrification likely results from the fact that urban studies tend to ignore certain phenomena outside the urban core. Keil (2018, ebook) states the following regarding suburbs: such areas '[rebel] against us, urban intellectuals, and our sense of self as we cannot imagine the suburban to be part of our personal lives or worthy of serious investigation: they lack the centrality from where meaningful discourse springs. They are the colony

to the center from where we usually construct our narratives and theorizations'; this remark seems to suit rural areas as well. However, such 'colonies' seem to be a non-marginal phenomenon in the Polish settlement structure. As the United Nations' (UN) (2018) data on prospects show, the proportion of the rural population in the total population of Poland reached 40% in 2020. Not only is this considerably greater than the average of the OECD (19%) or the EU (25%), but it is also higher than the populations of the two largest countries in Europe, namely Russia (25%) and pre-war Ukraine (30%), which are less densely populated and generally less economically developed than Poland.

This article aims to describe rural gentrification in Poland using the example of a phenomenon that follows the classic trajectory of this process – the recent growth of the domestic winemaking sector. While more representative examples (mainly due to their more frequent occurrence) likely exist, the example of vineyards is, to a certain extent, a 'laboratory' for the Polish context¹. In this article, apart from describing the phenomenon of rural gentrification in relation to winemaking in Poland, its causes, actors, and prevailing aspects are indicated with regard to two theoretical perspectives for explaining the phenomenon of gentrification; these are described further below. Polish winemaking, although rather niche, thus becomes an example of a wider phenomenon of post-socialist (Golubchikov 2017; Stanilov 2007) gentrification.

The article consists of seven sections. The introduction is followed by the theoretical part, in which issues related to rural gentrification as well as the conditions of the winemaking industry in Poland are described. In the practical part, data sources are described, and two classic approaches in the field of gentrification studies are used to analyse various conditions involved in the described phenomenon. The article ends with a section containing a discussion and conclusions.

Gentrification of a non-urban nature

A *Dictionary of Human Geography* defines rural gentrification as 'the gentrification of small villages and towns in rural areas, as well as the restoration of individual dwellings'. While gentrification has been traditionally 'considered a highly urban process, particularly relating to large towns and cities', processes such as 'the reinvestment of capital, social upgrading of a locale by incoming higher-income groups, landscape change and upgrading, and displacement of indigenous low-income groups, take place in some rural locations' (Rogers et al. 2013). In turn, according to the most-cited article on this phenomenon, 'the term gentrification within both urban and rural studies has been seen to signify a change in the social composition of an area with members of a middle-class group replacing working-class residents' (1993: 124). Ipso facto, both types of gentrification have various similarities; however, there are important differences between these. For example, the rural type appears to be less costly socially. The displacement of the traditional form of rural productive activity (agriculture) seems to be far more important here than the displacement of the population, which is typical for many examples of the gentrification of urban cores. Its rural counterpart is associated with the process of suburbanisation; however, these processes differ mainly in relation to the demographic differences of these types of extra-urban migrations. In the case of suburbanisation, the class context or the level of education does not play an important role. In the case of rural gentrification, these variables very clearly distinguish inflowing gentrifiers from the primary population (Zwęglińska-Gałecka 2019).

Furthermore, gentrification has different dimensions. For example, Drozda (2017, 2018) distinguishes three processes that do not always occur in parallel but whose presence and scale facilitate the definition of the type and advancement of the process in a specific place. The social dimension refers to changes in the local community, including the possible displacement of its

¹ Vineyards are present in virtually all parts of Poland, making it possible to use them to analyse the phenomenon that is relevant from the perspective of this publication on a nationwide scale, even if the nature of this research is exploratory. This aspect distinguishes the current article from the vast majority of publications on rural gentrification in Poland, which are typically centred on a single case study. Despite the increase in their total number reaching 2,500% (starting from around 20 entities) in the first two decades of the present century (Przybek 2019), vineyards are a relatively marginal part of Polish agriculture. The Polish agricultural sector is one of the largest in the EU and included over 1.4 million farms in 2016 (GUS 2019).

inhabitants, local services, and land use. The economic dimension primarily concerns changes in the real estate market, while the spatial dimension refers mostly to the modification of the built environment – aestheticisation and other building improvements. The analysis of individual cases of areas subject to gentrification differs due to the level of data availability. The data provided by public statistics allow an analysis of migration trends in rural areas in Poland, but these cannot be applied to cities due to the high level of data aggregation by Statistics Poland. The indicators of gentrification need to fit the differences between rural and urban types as well as the individual case studies. Therefore, the assumptions of the current article mean that gentrification is analysed mostly in terms of its social and economic dimensions, as spatial effects require a more precise analysis of specific case studies, including a more advanced application of qualitative methods. In this study, the indicators of changes of a social and economic nature are used. These are based on data corresponding to spatial relations between vineyard locations and areas of particular poverty in rural Poland, as well as the level of local wealth and the dynamics of demographic changes. These variables are used in the section focused on spatial analysis. In the qualitative analysis, the demographic characteristics of the owners of individual vineyards are used to show their geographical and class origins. A detailed description of the indicators and data sources used can be found further below.

There are two classic approaches in gentrification studies. According to Smith's (1979) rent gap theory, one of the best-known theories in this field, the subject of gentrification is not just gentrifiers (people) but economic capital itself. As the key role is played by a factor other than consumer preferences, this perspective is called the supply approach. Gentrification stimulates the increase in disproportion (the title gap) between the present value of the property and its possible counterpart following the potential reinvestment of such a real estate. Smith's assumptions describe gentrification as the result of speculation on real estate prices. A different way of explaining this process is the demand approach (Ley 1986), which centres on consumer preferences – 'voting with feet'. This suggests that the gentrified areas should be taken over by gentrifiers: an immigrant population different from the previous inhabitants. Both of these approaches seem to fit into separate aspects related to the same cases. Therefore, in the analysis of specific case studies, blending the two approaches is most suitable, owing to their complementary nature.

The process of rural gentrification is highly visible in the CEE region. Zwęglińska-Gałecka (2021) presents the entire set of publications based on local case studies from various areas in this part of Europe. According to this author, the process can be noted in nearly every third powiat (the second-level unit of local government in Poland); however, it is occasionally less advanced and somewhat delayed in comparison to Western Europe. Rural gentrification often occurs around larger metropolises as a part of suburbanisation (Kajdanek 2014), but different examples are also available: for instance, both single localities' and even entire regions' transformations seem to suit the gentrification pattern. A good example of the latter is the region of Warmia-Masuria. This region, which is located near the north-eastern national border and is a former economically degraded part of the country, has become one of the most popular internal tourist resorts due to favourable natural conditions. Warmia-Masuria matches the following pattern considerably: 'not only a particular kind of housing stock but also expenditure on 'commodities' such as local 'craft' production, 'country-side' leisure pursuits such as horse riding, and rural tourism within country craft museums, heritage centres and historical market towns' (Philips 1993: 125). All stages of gentrification can be seen here, from the appearance of 'pioneers' (i.e. the first gentrifiers) migrating to this area even before the establishment of the free real estate market, triggering the subsequent migration of increasing numbers of wealthy people, to the emergence of advanced institutional actors such as large hotels, conference centres, golf courses, and other hospitality and leisure industry services. The short-term rental, which is known for its impact on gentrification (Adamiak et al. 2019; Wachsmuth and Weisler 2018), is also present in this region. Calculations based on the database describing the number of active Airbnb rentals (AirDNA 2022) show that the saturation of this type of rental offer is comparable to its largest markets in Poland. In the Giżycko powiat, there are 205 residents per rental offer as compared to 187 in Krakow and 381 in Warsaw. The Olsztyn powiat, which is located in the vicinity of the region's capital, has five and eighteen times more offers per number of

inhabitants than the Białystok and Poznań powiats, respectively, which are organisationally comparable local government units.

Similarly, rural gentrification is present in Poland in various forms, including the preliminary (marginal) as well as the advanced phase. Both the demand (the gradual transformation of degraded areas) and supply (consumer preferences) aspects seem to affect its occurrence. However, the region of Warmia-Masuria does not contain the largest number of business entities that are relevant to the current publication.

The winemaking sector in Poland

According to the rent gap theory (Smith 1979), gentrification occurs due to the degradation (in terms of the level of investment) of a potentially attractive area (landscape, urban structure, location, etc.). This is a simplification to some extent, which undoubtedly fits several cases of neglected regions that have experienced economic regrowth, such as the regions functioning as tourist resorts that have been described in this article. Nevertheless, rural gentrification may also refer to more subtle changes in the prestigious structure and the 'promotion' of certain areas in this respect, such as the distant suburbs of Warsaw described by Zwęglińska-Gałecka (2009). 'Degradation' may mean, for example, a low market valuation of real estate that was previously unusable from the perspective of traders, and not necessarily the poor quality of the inhabited space. In this case, inflowing gentrifiers' motivations, even those more advanced than those of the pioneers, may be more related to consumption preferences (they prefer to live in an attractive environment) than production conditions motivated mostly by real estate speculation. Nevertheless, it is possible to find regions that were depopulated in the past and whose agricultural character underwent various transformations. For instance, some old farms stop serving their productive function and are reshaped into agritourism, congress centres, wedding venues, or 'second homes'. The legacy of rural culture and its nature, while artificially constructed on occasion (Cosgrove 1998), can be commercialised similarly as the practice of cultural resistance (Merrifield 2014) as well as reconstructed 'in the constitution of gentrification' (Philips 2005: 5). A valuable resource from this perspective is food production. Several classic examples of rural gentrification are largely based on the Slow Food movement and related initiatives. For example, high-quality food played an important role in building the attractiveness of regions such as Catalonia, Provence, and Tuscany (Marchant 2009; Miele and Murdoch 2002; Solana-Solana 2010).

In particular, the last two regions are representative of the full path of rural gentrification. Its entire sequence is evident in these examples, which show a trajectory starting from deep economic collapse and depopulation, following which the pioneers appeared. The experiences of Provence and Tuscany later became romanticised and disseminated on a global scale owing to the publication of popular books such as *A Year in Provence* (1989) and *Under the Tuscan Sun* (1996) written by Peter Mayle and Frances Mayes, respectively; these were later adapted into movies and television series as well. At present, both of these regions are places of mature and globalised 'rustic' tourism, and their rich cultural heritage has been transformed according to this pattern. Its hallmark is, among others, wine tastings prepared for foreign tourists.

Wine, which has become a carrier of such gentrification via touristification (Cocola-Gant 2018; Colomb and Novy 2017), could play a similar role in Poland, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, which has attracted new groups of people to the agritourist sector (Biglieri et al. 2020; Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al. 2020). The literature on the geography of wine and alcoholic beverages seems to be abundant and present in various disciplines that comprise both urban and rural studies – for an overview, see, for example, Dougherty (2012), or Unwin (2022). However, the publications on this topic in Poland analyse local winemaking clusters (Jeziorska-Biel et al. 2021; Leszkowicz-Baczyński 2021; Pijet-Migoń and Królikowska 2020; Pink and Ligenzowska 2016) or even wine-making and viticulture (Kunicka-Styczyńska et al. 2016; Pink 2015). Notably, publications focused on enotourism (wine tourism) do not refer to rural gentrification (Lachowicz 2014; Makowski and Miętewska-Brynda 2015; Mazurkiewicz-Pizło 2016; Mazurkiewicz-Pizło and Pizło 2018).

In the local context, wine consumption in Poland takes the form of a class distinction and serves as a measure of cultural capital resources. Statistically, Poles consume alcohol quite often, but

wine is rarely their first choice. Its average consumption per capita is about thirteen times lower than that of Italy, which is the leader in Europe in this regard (Mazurkiewicz-Pizło and Pizło 2018). Polish wine traditions are abundant, dating back to the fourteenth century; however, over time, they collapsed due to the cooling of the climate after 1570, as well as because of political changes and the loss of areas rich in vineyards, which are currently located in Western Ukraine (Makowski and Miętkiewska-Brynda 2015). Historically, Polish viticulture and winemaking have undergone several periods of transformation and multiple attempts at popularisation, but these have never been successful on a mass scale. Moreover, even in the sixteenth century, wine imported from Hungary was recognised as the Polish national drink (Dias-Lewandowska 2022).

The contemporary revival of winemaking began only after the restoration of capitalism after 1989, especially in its more advanced period in the twenty-first century; furthermore, to a large extent, this occurs in places that are completely different geographically. These are typically post-German regions, such as the Recovered Territories in the western and northern parts of the country that were attached to Poland following World War II – for instance, the Lubuskie region described recently by various authors (Jeziorska-Biel et al. 2021; Leszkowicz-Baczyński 2021). While this region currently functions as one of the biggest winemaking clusters in Poland, it is still approximately eight times smaller in terms of productive area compared to the nineteenth century (Jeziorska-Biel et al. 2021). The consumption of wine, a drink perceived as bourgeois and associated with German culture (which was greatly demonised after 1945), created extremely unfavourable conditions for the development of this sector during the communist period in Poland (1945–1989). The official cultural policy of that time was nationalist and centred on ousting old (foreign and German) traditions in areas poorly culturally integrated with the newly established communist state. At present, the consumption of wine in Poland is slowly growing; however, it is still associated with the upper class and is popular among the rich. The high prices of the drink result from the small scale of production. However, the industry is developing dynamically, often with the support of local authorities; furthermore, a number of festivals and Polish wine fairs are held in various places across the country. Various actors are involved in wine-producing projects, ranging from private individuals and companies to religious orders.

Data sources

Data on the total number of Polish vineyards are divergent. According to the National Center for Agricultural Support, in 2019, there were 230 such units in Poland (KOWR 2019). A significantly larger number is provided by the crowdsourcing map 'Winogrodnicy' (Przybek 2019), according to which there are nearly 500 vineyards in the country. However, this statistic also includes very small home-grown units that engage in winemaking or grape cultivation only as a hobby. Furthermore, this list contains information about vineyards that are now defunct.

In the spatial analyses performed using the GIS software, the current study has focused on all 151 vineyards whose surface exceeded 1 hectare that existed in July 2019 or throughout a few preceding years (those described in the 'Winogrodnicy' database). This is an arbitrary limit, but it facilitates the exclusion of very small units that produce wine only figuratively. To all 130 vineyards that actually existed during the time this article was being written, an authorial survey was sent. This was used to gather information on the farms as well as their owners. A total of 37 filled-out questionnaires were thus obtained; this number indicates that approximately 30% of the largest Polish vineyards participated in this part of the survey. This sampling was based on private vineyards, without considering those owned by legal entities such as the local authorities, universities, or the Roman Catholic Church. However, vineyards owned by the church constitute a very small proportion of the total, and it is difficult to perceive the church as a typical rural gentrifier.

I also visited selected vineyards located in different voivodeships (regions) of Poland in 2019 and 2020 (in West Pomeranian – Kojder; in Lubelskie – Mickiewicz, Rzeczyca, and Las Stocki; in Świętokrzyskie – Płochockich, Sandomierska, św. Jakuba, and Terra). Thus, the method of participant observation was used, especially during guided tours when it was possible to freely ask the vineyard owners questions. These study trips were subsidiary and did not take the form of transcribed interviews; nevertheless, they helped refine the questionnaire used.

Vineyard gentrification according to the rent gap theory

According to the rent gap theory, Polish vineyards should be located in the poorest parts of the country. Accordingly, one could observe spatial relations between former State Agricultural Farms (PGR) and present-day vineyards. Prior to the 1990s, such agricultural holdings played a significant role in the Polish farming sector. Compared to the rest of the state socialist bloc countries, the importance of collectivisation in Poland did not seem very prominent because state farms and compulsory farming cooperatives occupied only 22.8% of the entire agricultural area. This was not significant compared to the 90.5% in Romania, 93.9% in Czechoslovakia, and 98.2% in the USSR (though it was more than the 15.7% in Yugoslavia) (Bański 2010, p. 36). However, prior to 1989, this sector employed nearly 0.5 million people and created a socio-economic system comprising up to 2 million people – mainly families of PGR employees. It was the most developed welfare state element in the Polish rural areas of that time (Tarkowska 2000; Zgliński 2003). As a result of the neoliberal shock therapy of economic adjustment in 1990–1996, employment in this sector decreased sharply from 430,000 to 69,000 (Dzun 2015: 65). Areas with a greater concentration of PGRs then became regions of massive unemployment and the symbol of the most extreme poverty in Polish rural regions; in essence, they became degraded areas awaiting potential reinvestment (Biegańska et al. 2019).

State farms were territorially concentrated because the process of compulsory collectivisation was most often applied to properties abandoned by the German population expelled after World War II; the resistance of the former owners of these lands against the policy of collectivisation was of little importance. Thus, while these comprised one-fifth of the agricultural lands on a national scale, in some regions, their proportion reached 56.2% (former Szczecin Voivodeship). These areas, located mainly in the western part of Poland, are known for their relatively mild climate and longer growing season compared to the east.

This raises the question of whether the greatest number of Polish vineyards appeared here, owing to conditions conducive to winemaking and the existence of the rent gap. Figure 1 indicates this was not the case, as the vineyards were not concentrated in the zone of the former PGRs. In areas where state farms played a dominant role, vineyards appeared no more frequently than in other places in Poland. Furthermore, one of the largest winemaking clusters was located in south-eastern Poland, where state-owned entities' role in agriculture was marginal prior to 1989.

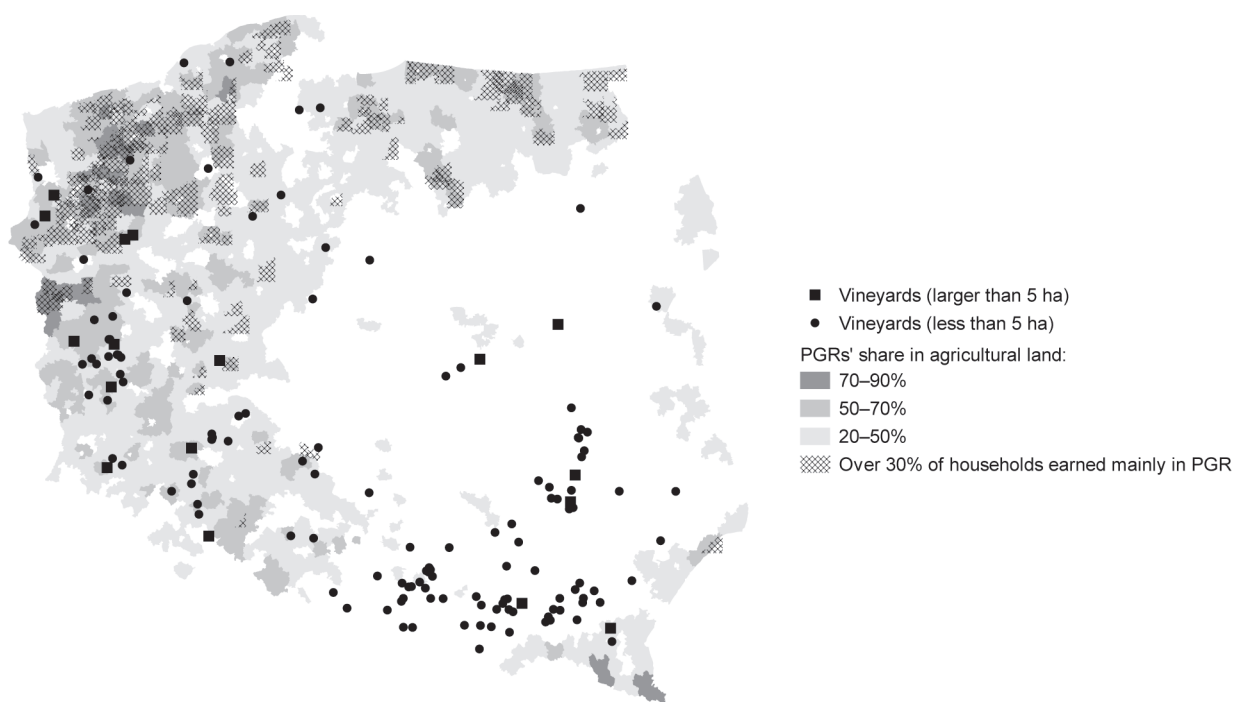


Figure 1. Vineyard locations (2019) in relation to the PGRs' share in the entire agricultural land (1988) in Poland

Source: Own work, Bański (2010: 35), and Frenkel and Rosner (1995: 37).

Checking the level of affluence in various parts of Poland could serve as another useful measure of the gentrification level. However, Statistics Poland does not provide reliable data on the level of income. Therefore, the relevant data were gathered via a price analysis in the real estate market, which comprises an increasing part of the economy (Jordà et. al. 2016). Nevertheless, as Figure 2 indicates, vineyards are not located in areas where prices are low. Furthermore, they often appear in places where prices are the highest, especially in the southern part of Poland.

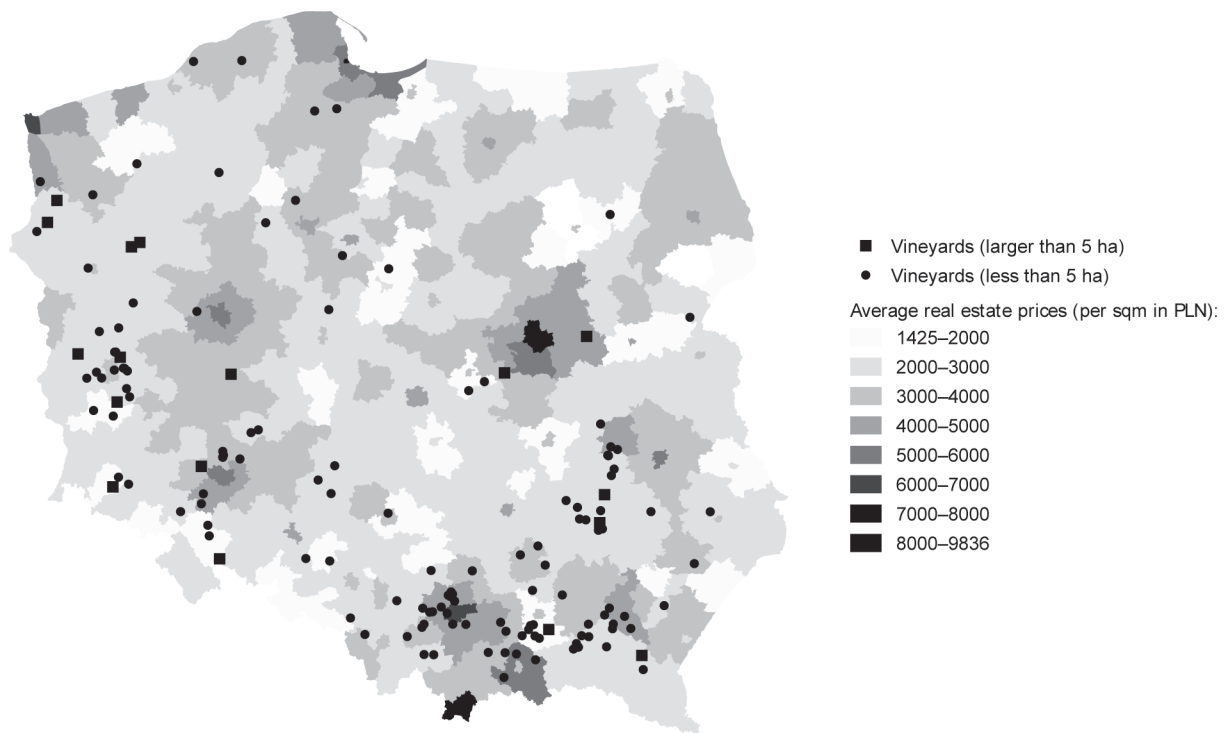


Figure 2. Vineyard locations (2019) in relation to average real estate prices (2017) in Poland

Source: Own work and GUS (2019).

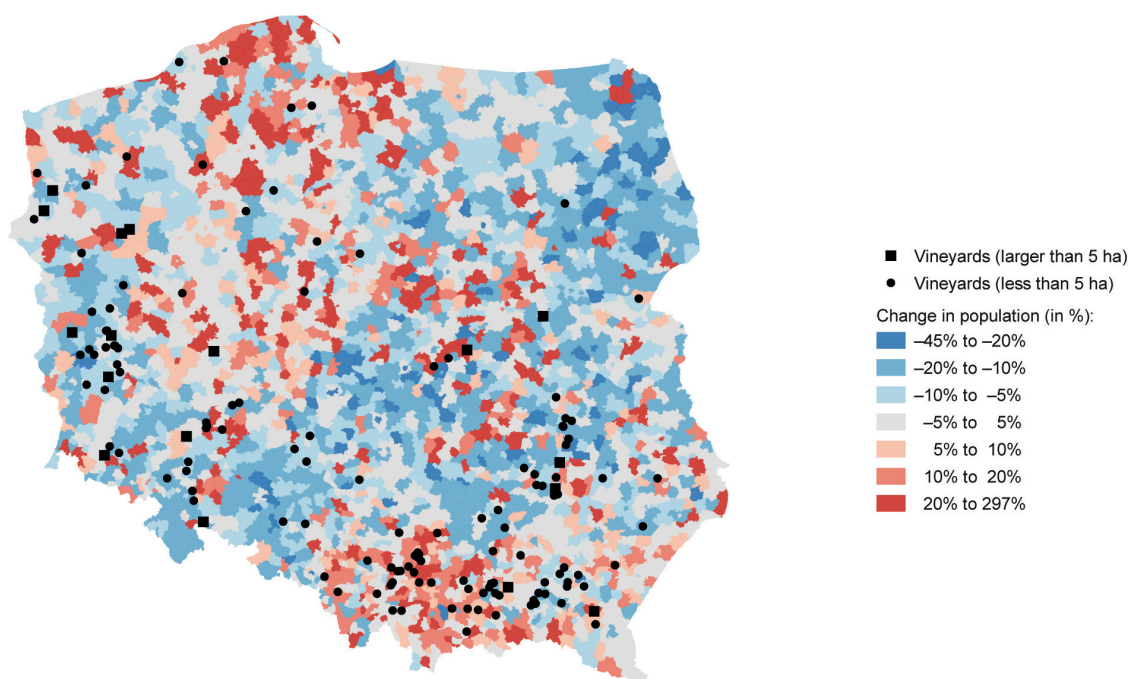


Figure 3. Vineyard locations (2019) in relation to changes in the total population (1995–2018) in Poland

Source: Own work and GUS (2019).

Another useful indirect measure for the economic condition of individual areas is the scale of their depopulation. This can be considered a good gauge because the decrease in the number of inhabitants is an important indicator of a region's economic problems. However, as Figure 3 shows, Polish vineyards are not concentrated in areas where the population has decreased the most. In south-eastern Poland in particular, vineyards are usually located in areas where the number of inhabitants has increased in recent decades.

Vineyard gentrification as 'voting with feet'

The second approach in gentrification studies associates this process with consumer preferences. This engenders the question of whether this is a case of 'voting with feet' conducted by the inflowing population, which is different from the previous inhabitants. The difference between the two groups could potentially occur in the level of the cultural capital resources that are visible, *inter alia*, 'in the form of educational qualifications' (Bourdieu 1986: 243). The survey shows that as many as 87% of vineyards have at least one owner with higher education. The remaining 13% have at least one owner with secondary education. Even this group stands out from the remainder of the farmers in Poland despite the constantly growing level of education of the latter (Janc and Czapiewski 2016).

Moreover, the class analysis performed based on a survey of the previous professions of vineyard owners (see Chart 1) has yielded interesting results. Entrepreneurs previously unrelated to agriculture prevail, and there are many professionals and employees of large corporations; the latter group is especially notable. In the conditions of dependent-market economies (Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009) such as Poland, the professionals working in such companies (usually transnational) have above-average incomes. Hence, a considerable majority of these vineyard owners are entrepreneurs, professionals, and corporate employees – social groups that can be said to belong to the Polish upper class. They manage as much as 78% of Polish vineyards. In contrast, there are very few people who were farmers or worked in other branches related to agriculture before.

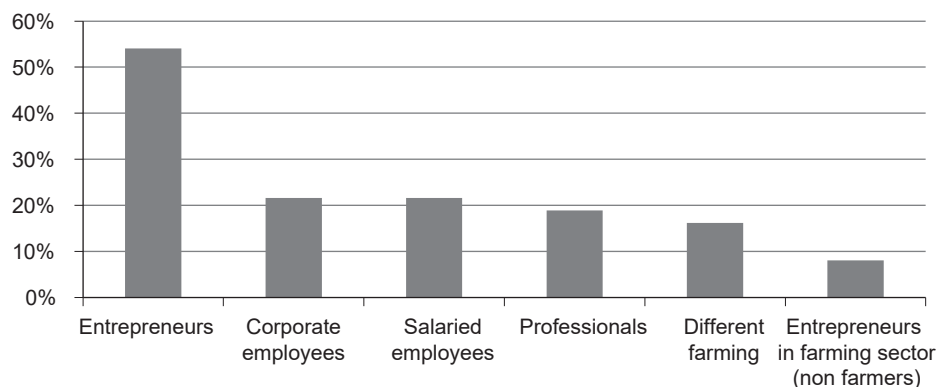


Chart 1: Previous professions of vineyard owners in Poland (2019)

Values do not add up to 100% because each vineyard may have more than one owner.

Source: Own work.

This raises the question of where Polish winemakers come from. The largest group is the inflow population (43%). Its proportion increases to as much as three-quarters of the total after including people from the close vicinity of the vineyard (excluding surrounding large cities) whose agricultural lands had to be bought because they did not inherit these lands (32%). Only one in four Polish vineyards are on agricultural lands inherited by their current owners.

The class structure is also reflected in the fact that half of the Polish vineyards are *de facto* non-profit-oriented enterprises, even if nearly all of them (95%) sell their own wine and two-thirds (68%) are active in the field of enotourism; this means that the majority uses the potential of the vineyard in all three possible areas associated with conducting such a business (Bosak 2013). However,

several vineyard owners have cited the passion and attractiveness of the lifestyle (revealed in this study with the profit-oriented attitude) related to winemaking as their motivation; this response has come not only from the owners of very small vineyards, such as those with an area of 2 hectares or less (58%), but also the owners of larger vineyards (42%) and those who had previously been entrepreneurs outside the agricultural sector (50%). Thus, vineyards often become a form of more active and productive recreation. It is much closer to the idea of a second home in the countryside than to traditionally understood agriculture.

Discussion and conclusions

Vineyards in Poland do not appear in degraded areas, and their origin is difficult to explain on the basis of the rent gap theory. However, their owners (representatives of the intelligentsia, wealthy people, and wealthy immigrants) may be considered gentrifiers. They have far greater resources in terms of both economic and cultural capital than the vast majority of their compatriot farmers. Thus, Polish vineyards seem to perfectly fit the pattern of social changes induced by rural gentrification in CEE described by Zwęglińska-Gałecka (2021).

Nevertheless, rural gentrification based on vineyards does not appear to generate large social costs similar to those associated with the brutal gentrification of some Polish cities in the form of the so-called wild reprivatisation (Kusiak 2019a). At present, this process can be said to be in a very preliminary (marginal) stage despite the involvement of representatives of the highest social classes. Winemaking gentrifiers are primarily enthusiasts operating on a small scale. The stigma of the upper class and elitism around wine seems evident, but the 'gentrification of winemakers' remains a niche at present and resembles organic farming rather than its industrial counterpart. This type of economic activity, owing to EU funding, seems to have great potential in the context of the fragmentation of Polish agriculture, where small farms still prevail. Currently, this industry does not seem to be endangered by the specificity of extensive wine production typical of many other countries, where winemaking is not only far bigger but also considerably less sustainable (Szolnoki 2013; Maicas and Mateo 2020).

Regarding the three potential dimensions of gentrification – a threat to the local community (social dimension), an ambivalent economic dimension, and a positive dimension of changes in a physical space (Drozda 2017, 2018) – it can be pointed out that Polish rural gentrification raised by vineyards may even be beneficial from the perspective of creating a sustainable inhabited space. It does not affect productive functions and is not accompanied by the displacement of locals, a process that could be present in the rural form of gentrification as well (Michels 2017) but does not always occur in the context of such areas (Lorenzen 2021). Neither is it concentrated in places where it could generate high social costs by pitting wealthy, influential gentrifiers against the poorer segments of the existing population. Low-scale production of this type may break some of the typical barriers between consumer groups and more traditional farmers in Poland, which are often based on class divides (Bilewicz 2020).

However, it would be overly simplistic to label winemaking in Poland as an example of rural regeneration at the grassroots level, which is a very hot topic in Poland at present (Ciesiółka 2018; Kusiak 2019b). Even if one disagrees with Smith's (1996) sarcastic remark on the policy of revitalisation, namely that it is only a euphemism for gentrification, Polish winemaking affects non-degraded rural areas. Such areas do not have to await potential 'saviours' from the outside, even though some gentrifiers may perceive themselves in this manner.

However, the exploratory research approach used in this article has certain limitations. The explanation of the mechanisms described herein may benefit from referring to the microscale (specific places) and the application of case-study methods (including in-depth interviews and analysis of local factors). Furthermore, the collective answers of the winemakers are only a certain approximation of the explanation of this type of agricultural activity. Therefore, this aspect should be explored in greater depth in further research on rural gentrification and its connection with local vineyards.

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