

Chronicle

REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE: CIĄGŁOŚĆ I ZMIANA. STO LAT ROZWOJU POLSKIEJ WSI (CONTINUITY AND CHANGE. ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLISH COUNTRYSIDE)

The scientific conference *Continuity and change. One hundred years of development of the Polish countryside*, which took place on 5 and 6 December 2018 in the Staszic Palace, was one of the effects of the interdisciplinary project implemented by the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IRWiR PAN) in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the DIALOG programme. Its goal was to present a synthesis of the scientific evolution of the countryside in Poland, its mechanisms, regularities and effects, analysed over a hundred years of independent Poland. During the meeting, the results of cooperation of scientists from various research centres were presented at three scientific sessions – Culture and politics, Rural society and Rural economy. The conference was an opportunity to present selected research being a part of a monograph devoted to the Polish countryside. The issues raised at it allowed engaging in a discussion on finding solutions to the problems of socio-economic development of the Polish countryside.

Before the scientific sessions began, on behalf of the Institute of Rural Development and Agriculture of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Director of the IRWiR PAN, **Associate Prof. Monika Stanny, PhD**, welcomed the guests and invited them to participate actively in the discussions. The Participants of the inaugural session also included **Prof. Romuald Zabielski, PhD**, corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Dean of Division II of the PAN, **Stanisław Derehajło** – adviser to the Minister of Science and Higher Education, and **Dominik Rozkrut, PhD** – President of Statistics Poland. They pointed out to the need and importance of discussions on rural areas, agriculture and rural population.

The first part of the meeting started with the introductory paper by Prof. Maria Halamka who presented the idea of a monograph summarising one hundred years of the Polish countryside. She pointed out the difficulties faced by the authors and editors of the monograph, including definitional and methodological problems. She noted that the subject of

analyses of changes in the countryside in 1918-2018 was riddled with difficulties in the implementation of research objectives. She emphasised the importance of the monograph which describes how and to what extent agriculture as an economic system as well as the rural social community associated with it have left their mark on the shape of the Second Polish Republic, the Polish People's Republic and the Third Polish Republic. She pointed out that the monograph was aimed at presenting adaptation mechanisms occurring in the countryside in the three historical periods studied, as well as explaining the peculiarities and regularities of the continuity and changes of institutions in the countryside.

The speakers in the second part of this session, which was hosted by **Prof. Joanna Kurczewska, PhD**; were the reviewers of the monograph: UW Prof. **Jerzy Bartkowski, PhD**; **Piotr Fogel, PhD**; **Andrzej Halasiewicz, PhD**; **Prof. Henryk Runowski, PhD**; **Prof. Roman Sobiecki, PhD**; UŁ Prof. **Paweł Starosta, PhD**; and **Prof. Janusz Witkowski, PhD**. Prof. Joanna Kurczewska noted that one hundred years of continuity and changes of the Polish countryside is also a time of one hundred years of social and humanistic research, as well as a time of reflection on changes occurring in the countryside. The reviewers of individual parts of the monograph indicated partial syntheses and their result for the reality of the countryside and for social research. They drew attention to the great importance of research into the rural population and the unusualness of the project, as well as the significance of the cognitive initiative presented. They noticed that although the authors come from various research centres and represent various scientific fields, the monograph is coherent and allows for valuable reflections.

The second part of the conference was spread over two days. It consisted of three scientific sessions: *Culture and politics*, *Rural society* and *Rural economy*. In the first one, four scientific papers were presented: the first speaker was **Prof. Andrzej Mencwel, PhD**, who presented the paper *Kultura chłopska: kres, koniec, próg?* (*Peasant culture: the end, the threshold?*), followed by **Prof. Izabella Ryłska, PhD**, with the subject *Kultura wsi – kontekst lokalny, narodowy, globalny* (*Rural culture – local, national, global context*), **Prof. Stanisław Obirek, PhD** – *Polska wieś wobec katolicyzmu – refleksja antropologiczna* (*Polish village towards Catholicism – anthropological reflection*), and IRWiR PAN **Prof. Arkadiusz Ptak, PhD** – *Wiejska społeczność w procesie kreowania władz lokalnych* (*Rural community in the process of creating local authorities*). This session was hosted by **Prof. Roch Sulima, PhD**.

The second day began with the scientific session *Rural society*. Presentations of their considerations within its framework were made by: **Prof. Andrzej Rosner, PhD**, and IRWiR PAN **Prof. Monika Stanny, PhD**, who presented the paper on *Kształtowanie się wielkości populacji wiejskiej* (*Development of the size of the rural population*); **Prof. Maria Halamska, PhD**, corresponding member of the Académie d'Agriculture de France, *Od wsi chłopskiej do robotniczej* (*From a peasant to working countryside*); **Sylwia Michalska, PhD**, *Rodzina wiejska w genderowej perspektywie czyli o sytuacji kobiet* (*Rural family in a gender perspective, that is, on the situation of women*); **Wojciech Sadłoń, PhD**, *Zwierciadło polskiej wsi. Ciągłość i zmiana wiejskich parafii katolickich* (*Mirror of the Polish countryside. Continuity and change of rural Catholic parishes*); and **Jarosław Domalewski, PhD**, *Szkoła wiejska jako moderator zmian systemowych* (*Rural school as a moderator of systemic changes*). This session was hosted by **Prof. Mirosława Marody, PhD**.

The last scientific session concerned rural economy. The speakers were: **Prof. Jerzy Wilkin, PhD**, who gave a lecture on *Ewolucja funkcji ziemi i jej wpływ na rozwój wiejskiej gospodarki* (*The evolution of the function of the earth and its impact on development of the rural economy*); **Prof. Józef Zegar, PhD** – *Rolnictwo w przestrzeni społeczno-ekonomicznej Polski* (*Agriculture in the socio-economic space of Poland*); **Zbigniew Drąg, PhD** – *Od gospodarstwa chłopskiego do przedsiębiorstwa rodzinnego* (*From a peasant farm to a family enterprise*); UE in Katowice **Prof. Wiesław Koczur, PhD** – *Geneza i rozwój ubezpieczenia społecznego rolników* (*The genesis and development of social insurance of farmers*); and **Prof. Krystian Heffner, PhD** – *Pozarolnicza działalność gospodarcza na obszarach wiejskich* (*Non-agricultural economic activity in rural areas*). This session was hosted by UW Prof. **Łukasz Hardt, PhD**.

At the end, the conference was summarised by **Prof. Jerzy Wilkin, PhD**, and **Monika Stanny, PhD**, who thanked all participants, speakers and moderators for participation in the conference, and encouraged them to read the scientific monograph.

To sum up the two-day meeting, one can notice several common elements in the speeches of the panellists. The most important of them is the praise of interdisciplinarity which allows a broad look at the problems of the countryside and people living there. The second factor connecting the speeches is the emphasis on the continuity and change, which are characteristic of all papers. Showing what is stable in the countryside and what is constantly evolving allows observing trajectories of changes in the Polish countryside and enables intergenerational dialogue. The 100-year project itself can be treated as an interesting form of dialogue – between authors and reviewers, between speakers and conference participants, or between the editors themselves. The slogan connecting the participants of this dialogue is to understand the countryside, which is not easy due to the complexity of the issues of rural development, which was emphasised by Prof. Bartkowski. Understanding the countryside also requires understanding the peasant economy, the peasantry and the peasant himself. The difficulty of understanding these issues was presented by Wiesław Myśliwski who noticed that understanding the peasant would allow explaining who a human being is in general. However, for this understanding to be possible, it is extremely important to observe the life of this group, until recently the largest social and professional group in the world.

The elements connecting both the speeches and individual parts of the monograph are structures and their evolution. In this context, the structures of agricultural holdings, spatial or demographic structures seem to be very interesting. Summarising the debate, Prof. Wilkin asked the question – Is being in the countryside a choice or a fate?, and how much this choice has evolved over time. He also emphasised, as noted by Prof. Obirek, that peasantry, in historical terms, is a kind of moral backbone which allowed generations as well as statehood to survive. Participants of the conference indicated that rooted institutions form a kind of statehood axis, a foundation of society and culture.

During the meeting, Prof. Mencwel also drew attention to the end of peasant culture, indicating the threshold as a symbol allowing to cross it and return or to proceed to the next stage. This speech remained in correspondence with both the statements of Myśliwski and the question of Prof. Rylska regarding the future and what should penetrate into national culture from folk culture? It was indicated that many elements of everyday life are the result of folk culture, for example, the wedding traditions in Ger-

many, Poland or Russia. It was noted that the symbols of culture can be sought both in the high sphere and in the so-called low culture. Prof. Obirek and Sadłoń, PhD, pointed out that folksiness left a mark on the Polish Catholicism, although the adaptation itself had a bilateral direction.

The thread which put both the speeches and chapters of the monograph in order was the question on the extent to which the countryside is an object and a subject of history. In this context, one can notice how many imperceptible factors affect contemporary and old countryside. An illustration of this issue was the observation of the political system analysed by Prof. Ptak who pointed out that at certain times peasants had a large representation and a large influence on political reality, while in others their influence was deliberately limited. An issue raised during deliberations, for instance, by Prof. Halamska, were also the threads of processes dominating in the countryside, such as desagrarisation, depeasantisation and gentrification. The topic of the evolution of the family, the oldest entity, still significant and dominant in the countryside, was also discussed. The importance of school in reducing rural backwardness and creating the position of rural residents was also pointed out. Education allowed “joining the countryside to Poland” and reducing the distance between the countryside and the city. In this context, Prof. Koczur also presented insurance and its impact on the situation of the rural population and a reduction in the distance between the countryside and the city. These elements can be treated as a factor of demarginalisation of the rural population, as well as a reduction in the level of exclusion of this group.

An important topic discussed during the meeting was the issue of the style of narration about the countryside, which was raised by Prof. Podedworna. How we talk about the countryside, what we pay attention to, and what we forget about and what topics we avoid. The scientific narration sometimes uses sentimental and oppressive narration. In the context of the oppressive narration, Prof. Wilkin pointed out that the dark sides of the Polish countryside, including pathologies, dysfunctions and other issues which need to be supplemented, were treated marginally. The shortage of the monograph is development of the Polish countryside from an international point of view, extent to which this development of the Polish countryside was typical on a European scale, and to which peculiar. According to Prof. Wilkin, this thread needs to be supplemented in the future. However, it would be difficult to find such extensive analyses as the monograph published by the IRWiR PAN in other countries. At the same time, he encouraged to write scenarios of development of the Polish countryside, noting that this is an intellectual and research task for the future.

*dr hab. Sławomir Kalinowski prof. IRWiR PAN
prof. dr hab. Jerzy Wilkin*

Accepted for print: 10.06.2019.

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