

Abstracts

The Polish Peasant in Europe and America – Symposium 2018

A Centennial of The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Inspiration of Thomas and Znaniecki's Work for Sociological Scholarship on the Contemporary Globalization Processes

Michael Burawoy
(University of California, Berkeley; USA)

A Century of Ethnography – Celebrating the Global Imagination of The Polish Peasant

A century ago Florian Znaniecki wrote the two-volume classic, *The Polish Peasant* with W.I. Thomas – a global ethnography that followed Polish immigrants to Chicago. Seen as foundational to the Chicago School of sociology, it was followed by successive generations of local studies – a dramatic narrowing of scope and scale. A century ago, another Pole, Bronisław Malinowski, was pioneering the anthropology of isolated communities but his successors advanced from the local to the global, yet often renouncing the virtues of its defining trait - deep ethnography. Having passed each other in the night, moving in opposite directions, it is high time for sociology and anthropology to be reconnected and recombined. This is the endeavor I will attempt through the exploration of 50 years of ethnography of the Zambian copper industry, taking us historically from British colonialism to Chinese expansionism.

Mary Waters
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Thomas and Znaniecki's Continuing Influence on the Study of 21st Century Ethnicity in the US

Beata Halicka
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Written memoirs of settlers in North and West Poland after 1945 as source for historical and cultural research

Written memoirs have a special tradition in Poland regarding competitions first organized in the 1920s by Florian Znaniecki who ordered memoirs for the purpose of academic sociological analysis, Today they are a very interesting source not only for sociologist but also for historical and cultural research. I worked with written memoirs collected in the wake of the political thaw of 1956 when the Western Institute in Poznan came up with the initiative of the first competition regarding the memoirs of settlers of the "Recovered Territories". They allow on the one side to discover an enormous variety of experience of the authors, which include not only the time and place of settlement but also the motives for migration, wartime experiences, political views and much else. On the other side, the memoirs can be seen as an instrument in the formation of new collective identities among the settlers. In my presentation, I want to show, that they were a valuable testament left for subsequent generations and a chance for a reflection on the new homeland. The

scrupulous selection of the memoirs chosen for publication in an anthology in 1963 allowed the editors to create an appropriate image of this region. This meant to facilitate the inhabitants in learning about the modern history of the area, appreciating its specific nature and value, as well as strengthening their identification with it. Memory of these initial post-war years, the difficulty of reconstruction and the creation of a new society allowed the new inhabitants (often after two or three generations) to put down their own roots.

Mary Patrice Erdmans
(Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland; USA)

Locating the narrator as both the subject and object in their life stories

This paper draws from my oral history project, Return Solidarity Refugees, that documents the life stories of Solidarność refugees who returned to Poland post-1991. Members of this migrant cohort have noteworthy biographies that are at the epicenter of social transformations in contemporary Poland. This paper focuses on one narrator, and examines the ascriptive (ethno-national) and achieved (professional) identities that anchor his oral autobiography. He defines the turning points in his life as intentionally driven by his professional identity as an organizational psychologist: his anti-communist attitudes; the reason for his internment; the choice of where to emigrate; and the decision to return to Poland. In this way, he narrates momentous life events as volitional choices; things did not “happen” to him, but instead, he made them happen. Alongside this ‘narrator as subject’ discourse, his life story contains a ‘narrator as object’ discourse with reference to his ethno-national Jewish identity. In these parts of his narrative, things “happen” to him (both good and bad) as a result of an identity that he defines as meaningful to others but not meaningful to him, except in ways meaningful to others. This identity appears early in and throughout his narrative: his parents were communist Jews from Lwow resettled in Wroclaw after WWII; his peers taunted him for being Jewish; his passport was changed by a colleague so that it did not list his nationality as Jewish; and he was helped by Jewish Americans because of his ethnicity. This analysis helps to understand the ways that narrators define themselves as both subject and object in their life stories. As was true in *The Polish Peasant*, the life history approach positions the subjective standpoint at the center of analysis and interprets social action as both agentic and responsive to objective conditions.

Andrzej Przystalski
(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań; Poland)

Florian Znaniecki's Early Philosophical Works and the Polish Peasant

Marcin Grodzki
(Binghamton University, New York; USA)

Beyond The Polish Peasant: Znaniecki's theory of the cultural evolution of human knowledge(s) and the logic behind our scientific division of labor

Contemporary social and cultural sciences are rocked by polarizing, seemingly irreconcilable, controversies over how to divide their scientific labor. In some sense, we have become neglectful of the key achievements of our scientific predecessors who had sought to divide scientific labor in order to create new intellectual space for the emergence of theoretical cultural sciences, divided into disciplines, and clearly differentiated not only from philosophy and from technological and

ideological sciences, but also from natural sciences and psychology. For this to become reality they had to: (a) normatively differentiate their new scientific role from all those much older scientific roles, and (b) solve the thorny problem of the methodology of their new science. Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1985) made significant contribution to both tasks, while also introducing some new problems and ambiguities that Znaniecki sought to tackle, first as philosopher of culture, and later as cultural scientist explorer, starting with *The Polish Peasant* (1918). Znaniecki's chief scientific achievement was that he managed to: (1) differentiate normatively the new scientific role of "scientist explorer" from all those older scientific roles (1940); (2) differentiate methodologically theoretical cultural science from theoretical natural science; and (3) differentiate theoretically "the data of sociology" from all the other cultural scientific data (1934); thus, developing firm justification for the division of cultural scientific labor into theoretical disciplines. In the process, he also developed his own theory of the evolution of the wider world of knowledge, and of the place of cultural science within it, becoming one of "the founding father" of, both, cultural science of knowledge and of sociology of science (Znaniecki 1940; 1952b). My presentation will focus on Znaniecki's theory of the cultural evolution of the world of knowledge, and of the place of cultural sciences within it, with the aim of deriving from it some lessons for the present about how to resolve our contemporary issues and troubles with the division of our scientific labor. I will also indicate why since 1970s scientists have been moving in the direction opposite to the spirit of Znaniecki's work, and why it might be high time to return to Znaniecki's original project, which offers us sounder approach to the study of national and "world culture" societies.

Ryszard Cichocki
(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań; Poland)

Concepts of moral panic as a tool to reinterpret the studies of W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki over the emigration of families of Polish peasants to the USA

"Polish peasant in Europe and America" is a work written in a clearly formulated and consistently maintained by the authors theoretical and methodological perspective. Its framework was precisely outlined in the "Methodological Note", which in part became a kind of sociological altar (in the aspect of the theoretical framework based on the opposition of two complementary theoretical concepts: attitudes and values), and partly a tool of inspiration for contemporary qualitative research (in methodological aspect - techniques for collecting qualitative data and their processing for the needs of social research). However, these clearly formulated theoretical and methodological frameworks should not exclude the reinterpretation of phenomena described in this work from other theoretical perspectives. The main focus will be volume 5 of the work of W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, in which the authors showed side effects accompanying the ineffective processes of adaptation and assimilation of Polish immigrants to the conditions of American society. The aim of this study is an attempt to interpret these side effects of migration processes from the perspective of studying the phenomena of moral panic. At the same time, the study is an attempt to formulate a question about the factors of moral panic around a part of Polish emigration in some European countries.

Anna Sosnowska
(University of Warsaw; Poland)

Polish Greenpoint and New York City. Gentrification, ethno-racial relations and immigrant labor market at the turn of the 21st century

The paper presents results of the study on the role of Polish Greenpoint immigrants in the New York City's changing division of territorial prestige and labor at the turn of the century. The variety of methods has been used in the course of the study conducted between 2005 and 2014: 1) analysis of the image of the neighborhood in local press of various focus and audience: Greenpoint Gazette, Nowy Dziennik and The New York Times in a sample of four decades 2) participant observation of the neighborhood in 2005 and 2006 3) fifty biographical and expert interviews with the community leaders conducted in 2006 and 2010 4) twenty three interviews with Polish immigrant cleaners conducted in 2006 and 2010 5) secondary analysis of the official data generated by the US census, City Department of Urban Planning, Community Board #2 and two Greenpoint ethnic parishes.

The major conclusions of the research are the following. The artists' driven gentrification that took place in the neighborhood in the 21st century was anticipated by The New York Times real estate section as early as in the 1980s but took the leaders of both the working class American community and the Polish community in Greenpoint by surprise. The immigrant community leaders had no sense of agency and as owners of the real estate in the neighborhood benefited from the gentrification without intention and therefore accidentally. In result of the combination of relatively long traditions of Polish immigration in the city, networks of solidarity of the city's white ethnics, recreated Polish-Jewish patterns of exchange, unresolved problems with the authorization of stay in the US, Polish immigrants have acquired the position of the well paid working class 'aristocracy' in the city's construction business and domestic cleaning.

Dorota Prasałowicz
(Jagiellonian University, Kraków; Poland)

Social disorganization or re-organization? Polish communities in Chicago at the beginning of the 20th century

The presentation is based on the immigrants' letters published by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. It is asserted that the pessimistic diagnosis offered by the editors of the letters collection can be easily challenged. Thomas & Znaniecki believed that immigrants faced social disorganization and disorientation in the new place of their settlement. This diagnosis is rooted in the Chicago School pioneer urban studies. Sociologists of the Chicago School were concerned about poverty, and social pathology in the immigrant neighborhoods. They hoped that a rapid assimilation would bring a solution.

However, the letters testify to the fact that immigrants were not helpless, nor hopeless individuals, deprived of any social capital. On the contrary, they successfully reconstructed their social ties, and recreated their communities. Moreover, Polish newcomers managed to keep in touch on a regular basis with their "significant others" who stayed in the Old Country. To use the current terminology, immigrants effectively reconstructed their imagined communities, which made it possible for them to live in a transnational, glocal space. They were self-aware agents who invented their ethnicity, combining elements of the old and new culture.

The discussion with Thomas & Znaniecki is based on a careful content analysis of the immigrants' letters, and on a review of studies on Polish American local communities and their institutional completeness.

Eli Zaretsky
(New School for Social Research, New York; USA)

Martin Bulmer
(University of Surrey, Guildford; UK)

The Polish Peasant after one hundred years

It is one hundred years since the publication of that classic work of American empirical sociology, "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America", by W I Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. The common element in the Chicago School of Sociology, in which "The Polish Peasant..." was the first great monograph, was its commitment to empirical research. W I Thomas was the initiator of the study, but it owed at least as much to his junior Polish collaborator, Florian Znaniecki, who played a major part in writing the book's Methodological Note.

The work had three distinctive features. It focused upon Polish migration, both within Europe, and between Europe and the United States. Between 1890 and 1910, Poland provided one quarter of all immigrants to the United States. Most moved to major cities such as Chicago. The book helped to establish the distinctiveness of the sociological approach by focusing upon ethnicity and international migration, helping to institutionalize sociology as an independent academic discipline. It was based upon the use of personal documents as a means of providing sociological data, particularly the use of a life history and series of letters between Polish immigrants in Chicago and their families in Poland. And it sought to blend theory and data, providing generalisations but grounding these in the empirical data about the Polish immigrant community.

Znaniecki and Thomas each brought complementary and contrasting backgrounds to the study. Znaniecki was trained in philosophy and methodology and had an intimate knowledge of Polish society. Thomas had a background in social psychology and folk psychology and had gathered extensive materials during travels in eastern Europe in 1908-1914. His approach was broadly anthropological. The relative contribution of each may be debated, and Thomas, as the older of the pair, was a larger figure in American sociology both before and after his dismissal from the University of Chicago in 1918. Znaniecki, however, brought first hand knowledge of Polish society, and philosophical interests going back to his studies with Bergson, reflected in his book "Cultural Reality" (1919).

Michał Nowosielski (University of Warsaw; Poland)
Witold Nowak (University of Warsaw; Poland)

How migration policies influence immigrant organizations?

The fundamental work of Thomas and Znaniecki covers variety of problems concerning migration issues. Some of them seems to be better discussed in literature which followed "Polish Peasant" – like issues of integration. Some seem to be a bit neglected or forgotten. In our opinion such ignored subjects are immigrant organizations and policy implications – both present in Thomas and Znaniecki work. We would like to combine them by proposing a paper which aim is to discuss how the host countries' integration policies and sending state diaspora policy influence immigrant organizations. The fieldwork results analysis will be focused on following issues. First, the position of immigrant organizations in integration policies' systems of selected European countries will be presented.

Second, the paper will focus on the assumptions of sending state's diaspora policy and actions undertaken by the institutions engaged in its execution. Third, the effect of the above-mentioned factors on the state of immigrant organizations will be discussed. The comparative aspect applied in the research will make it possible to learn how immigrant organizations operate in various migration regimes.

The paper is based on results of a study conducted on the case of Polish immigrant organizations (PIOs) in selected European countries (Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Italy and Spain). The fieldwork consisted of quantitative approach – an institutional survey among PIOs (N=185) as well as qualitative studies – case studies of PIOs (N=45), interviews with host countries institutions' representatives (N=63), sending state institutions' representatives (N=25) and experts (N=63).

Jakub Isański
(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań; Poland)

A Polish student in Europe and America. On qualitative research of Polish migrants following the Florian Znaniecki's method

Social processes taking place in the 21st century have resulted in an increase in the outmigration of the young from Poland. Political transformation, accession to the European Union and economic development caused mass intra-national and international spatial mobility. At the same time, there were social changes resulting from circular migration and other forms of mobility that eluded previous patterns. As a result, a new framework of social life was created, partly similar to those observed by Florian Znaniecki and his successors who examined Polish migrants in the first half of the 20th century.

In my paper, I intend to focus on showing similarities and differences between Polish migrants and the patterns of their migration years ago and today, with particular emphasis on migration of young people treating migration as a rite de passage, an opportunity to enter adulthood and a way to their economic independence.

Joseph C. Hermanowicz
(University of Georgia, Athens; USA)

Change—Social and Personal: Thomas and Znaniecki's "The Polish Peasant" for the Study of Contemporary Change in Global Higher Education

The sociological study of change—social and personal—owes much of its origin to Thomas and Znaniecki's pioneering work. They offered an approach to the study of society, indicative of the larger Chicago School of Sociology, that located people in their ecologically situated environments. An interactionist perspective informed their theoretic orientation: self and society, individual and institution are created reciprocally by an interplay of macro and micro forces.

The present work represents an extrapolation of Thomas and Znaniecki's study on behalf of the development of sociological theory. The subject consists of careers and institutions in higher education: the curriculum vitae ("the course of a life") serves as the novel human document by which to investigate both social and personal change. Academic careers are studied by virtue of their objective and subjective dimensions. Time and place are theorized as constructs by which social

reality is experientially derived. Objectively, the institution of education is revealed for the shifting expectations that govern work in academia—society’s archetypal profession—in specific historical times (indicated by the cohort in which academics earned their Ph.D.s) and in specific socially bound places (indicated by the type of university in which academics work). Major social change in education likely spells personal change for the way in which people subjectively experience the contemporary academic career. The data come from U.S.-based academics; parallel transformational changes are observable globally. The global change centers on diffusion and institutionalization of the research role. The sources and consequences of this change are problematic. Akin to Thomas and Znaniecki’s larger analytic aims, patterns of change are used inductively to formulate theory: the paper culminates by postulating a theory of the re-organization of higher education in global societies.

Katarzyna Gmaj
(Lazarski University, Warsaw; Poland)

Inspired by Thomas and Znaniecki. Do we observe the formation of “a new Polish-Norwegian society”?

The paper aims to present that concepts introduced in “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” have not lost their validity. They are still inspiring for analysis of contemporary migratory movements. Especially, the premise that “assimilation” of Polish migrants is not an individual but a group phenomenon can shape a scope of analysis of massive post-EU-accession emigration from Poland. The author tests adequacy of classical tools for investigation on Polish migrants in Norway. What is interesting about them is the fast increase in their number after 2004. As a consequence, they are the biggest immigrant group in this country. They have been spreading all over Norway, however more than half of them reside in four counties (Oslo, Akershus, Rogeland, Hordaland). Segmentation of labor market and demand for labor in particular sectors of Norwegian economy are reflected by migrants’ occupational and educational composition. Economic factors, at least partially, explain overrepresentation of males among Polish migrants. Although Poles initially arrived as labor migrants, their stay in Norway turns into a long-term one. Substantial proportion of couples brings children from Poland or establishes families in Norway. Settling in Norway they radically change their ordinary course of life. As the EU citizens they cannot, however, benefit from integration programs for immigrants.

The author refers to findings of project “TRANSFAM – Doing family in a transnational context” (that has received funding from the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014), additional knowledge from observations made during her stays as a visiting researcher at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, and statistics and literature on Polish migrants in Norway.

Paweł Boski
(University SWPS, Warsaw; Poland)

100 Years of Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Document of Historical or also Contemporary Relevance?

A scholarly work of a 100 years of age is very old in social sciences (particularly so for the standards of psychology, which this author represents). When a monograph has reached a centennial anniversary, as is the case of *Polish Peasant*, we may reflect on its relevance for two reasons.

The first is a historical reason which may be split into two problems: (i) Is the monograph still an interesting and valid account of facts and processes which took place at the time of its publication?; (ii) Does this document offer a substantial source of information for a meta-perspective, i.e. writing history of socio-psychology of immigration and acculturation?

My answer to the historical questions is affirmative. The monograph describes the push and full factors which led to massive immigration of Polish peasants to American cities during the U.S. rapid industrialization of 1870-1914. What is more important, it analyzes the psychology of these people, programmed by their primary groups (family collectivism, in current terms) as a determining factor for building an immigrant, Polish-American society. Erosion of this primary group orientation and its controlling power is held responsible for individual and/or family pathology among first and second generation immigrants.

The second issue is of a more universal nature. Assuming that some general mechanisms of immigrant psycho-cultural adaptation exist, does the monograph in question contribute to their discovery or, does it mark a stage in the process of such discoveries?

My answer to the second issue raised on the occasion of this centennial reappraisal is more tentative. The processes illuminated in *The Polish Peasant* were characteristic for the period of late XIX - early XX centuries. Recognizing that the migrations among Poles are not less prevalent now than they used to be before, the socio-economic and cultural-psychological conditions and outcomes have changed dramatically. The reality of a Polish-American society during Znaniecki's time is non-existing now. If anything, it could bear some resemblance to Arab-Muslim districts in contemporary multi-ethnic cities.

The monograph is a pioneering work in its genre of a humanist, qualitative socio-psychology but it also carries the limitations typical for an early stage of empirical research: loose theoretical concepts, no systematic attempts to link constructs with measurements, too much of an impressionistic style of writing.

What we also miss in Znaniecki's opus magnum, is the analysis of positive adaptation and acculturation among Polish families. We knew and we still know very little about success stories among 10 million of Polish – Americans whose ancestors once took a one-way ticket in their transatlantic sea voyage in the search for bread.

Chad Alan Goldberg
(University of Wisconsin, Madison; USA)

The Polish Peasant as a Study of Civil Incorporation and Nation Building

“The Polish Peasant in Europe and America”, a sprawling masterpiece published in five volumes between 1918 and 1921, came to define early American sociology. One of its most important contributions was the influential social disorganization paradigm, which distinguished primary-group organization, social disorganization, and social reorganization or reconstruction. Building on my recently published monograph “Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought”, this paper shows how William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki invoked real or purported differences between Poles and Jews to elucidate the social disorganization paradigm. To support this thesis, the paper contrasts “The Polish Peasant...” to “Old World Traits Transplanted” (1921), a book credited to Robert Park but in fact largely written by William Thomas. “Old World Traits Transplanted” continues to highlight the social disorganization of the Polish peasant following his migration to America, but the Jews—whom Thomas and Znaniecki saw as disorganizers of the Polish peasant in the Old World—are now seen to exemplify the potential for creative reorganization in the New World. Moreover, Jews in the New World are distinguished not only by their progress in social

reorganization, but also by the fact that it was largely their own accomplishment, in contrast, to the Polish peasant, whose reorganization in Poland was mainly led from above and by outsiders, namely, the Polish “upper strata.” Lastly, Thomas and Znaniecki recognized that Jews were excluded in important respects from the wider national community being organized in newly independent Poland, while Thomas viewed the reorganization of Jewish immigrants in America as a way station to their eventual assimilation. The paper concludes with some reflections about the insights of “The Polish Peasant...” into the civil incorporation of ethno-religious minorities in different national contexts.

Krzysztof Brzechczyn
(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań; Poland)

Between essentialism and constructivism in theory of nation. On Florian Znaniecki's concept of national consciousness

The purpose of the paper is to reconstruct and compare Florian Znaniecki's theory of national consciousness with other approaches. The base of reconstruction will be “Modern Nationalities. A Sociological Study of How Nationalities Evolve” (1952). The working hypothesis is that Znaniecki's concept of nation is neither essentialist nor constructivist. According to essentialist approach, a nation is community that existed eternally (or through very long time) and it is possible to determine a set of features independent on human will that decide about his/her belonging to national community. According to constructivist approach, a nation is a artificial construct created in modern capitalist society and belonging to it is a matter of individual decision. In my presentation it will be argued that Znaniecki's concept of nation is based on his theory of culture. Culture is an inter-subjective reality independent on human will and belonging to a national community depend on shared cultural values.

Suava Zbierski-Salameh
(Haverford Institute of Public Sociology, USA-Poland)

The Peasant Issue and reorganization of Polish Society: Then and Now

Nataliia Pohorila
(Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv; Ukraine)

Ethnographic study of interests' conflict about the forests in Ukrainian Carpathian highlands

The project is the ethnographic study of the forest-dependent communities in the Carpathian Mountains, which are plugged with the conflict around the illegal logging. There is no comprehensive field study within the population of forest dependent villages, and literally no study on illegal logging. That is why the advantage of ethnographic study – the observation of local conditions and in-depth interviews on wide range of issues – is applied to sketch the overall picture of conditions and intersection of interest and values of the main stakeholders.

In 1990-2010-s weak state control, economic deterioration and poor ecological culture of local population caused the forests' extermination. State governed programs of the forests' protection failed because of the absence of the dialogue among the main stakeholders: foresters, logging business, local authorities, communities, activists, ecologists and national parks' workers. The project analyses the situation from the angle of the “tragedy of commons”, exploring popular interpretation

of property for forests: as the belonging of all Ukrainian people, property of local communities and property of the individuals. The preliminary result is that the interpretation of “commons” differs in each group of stakeholders. While the respondents acknowledge that the forest is a common resource of all Ukrainian people, their expectation, practices and deep beliefs could depart from the understanding of what is the “common resource” and how it should be used. The interviews and observations are conducted at the regions where local people have the expectations towards the restitution of their property for forests, which allegedly belonged to local habitants’ grandparents before the Soviet rule came. The conflict of interests is exemplified by the community, which is in conflict with the national park on a question of property for forest. The conflict is heated by the corruption, which was observed at all levels from the foresters to the regional officials that allowed illegal logging through all period of Independence.

The finding of the study is that striking discrepancy in values of the main stakeholders explains the conflict of interests in forest-dependent villages and the inefficiency of any central authority’s resolution. Though the forests in Ukraine are defined as national treasure belonging to the people of Ukraine, private interests of the local actors modified the attitudes towards forests and defined their practices to a significant extent. It is true that private interests stipulate the exploitative behavior of all stakeholders. However, values define to which extent every particular social actor considers the woods as belonging to his/her group and what are their justification and values behind that justification. For the foresters their values are nourished by professional ethics, loyalty to the centrally planned strategy of forestry, while these attachments are hurt by corruption of the officials in the independent Ukraine and by the exclusion of their group from a contest for selling the wood. For local population the forests have value of the resource for living unfairly taken from them since centuries. The wood business is interested in fair distribution of the resources for the professionals. Local authorities struggle for the compromise among striving for political capital, public good and egoistic interests. And, finally, ecologists and the green tourism business praise the value of forests as a landscape, national heritage and a trademark of Carpathian region.

By Znaniecki, society is a moral order, in which individuals are tied together by the common image of themselves, sense of belonging as part of that order, and as such society must produce consensus. My study shows that if the values that stand behind interests are too different, then there will be conflict instead of consensus.

Katarzyna Waniek
(University of Łódź; Poland)

Neoliberal values and personal attitudes towards one’s biography – the attitude and values as the key concepts in the Polish Peasant in the context of the post 1989 changes in Poland

The point of departure for my analysis are the words of prof. Marek Czyżewski, who – referring to Michael Foucault – points out that “today we live in culture positioned between panopticism and „governmentality” (Czyżewski, 2009: 95) that through public and media discourses promotes and legitimizes certain social values. They are grounded in expectations of being rational, creative, responsible, available, flexible, competent, resilient, autonomous, etc. There are, however, numerous empirical proofs (modes of experiencing events in one’s life course) showing that this taken-for-granted, “seen but unnoticed” social frame may lead to a biographical trap. If these expected “virtues” or values are defined as real, they may result in:

- moral obligation to act in a certain way and to cope with external (real or imagined) pressures often falsely seen as one’s own „project” (biographical action scheme) organizing individual biography;

- unquestioned (and therefore hardly ever taken into consideration) scheme of reference and hierarchy of values that are aimed at 'formatting' a model of an 'useful' citizen, employee or even family member.

The current perspective on the interplay between social values and individual attitudes will be discussed in reference to two autobiographical narrative interviews (developed by Fritz Schütze but finding its roots in the personal documents methods in studying social problems employed by Chicago sociologists) with young women (an academic and a medical doctor) born in the 80's last century. Their renderings unveil, however, that biographical experiences guided by neo-liberal values that are to create a human being with specific features and competences transform into its opposite and show their fragility and "night side". Consequently, a person cannot control his or her life any longer, become irrational, vulnerable, passive, self-alienated etc. Thus, nowadays we deal with the growing number of autobiographical accounts in which people overwhelmed by expectations created by neo-liberal reality (e.g. taking a form of forced obligation to invest in oneself, develop ones skills, submissively acting in accordance with procedures, crushed with reports allegedly rising concern) experience the trajectory of suffering process. Order change into disorder, rationality into irrationality, agency into apathy, independence into dependence.