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**The International Meeting of Sociologists
in Poznań Celebrating the 100th Anniversary
of *The Polish Peasant in Europe
and America***

One of the vital accents in the international celebrations of the centenary of the famous publication by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki – widely covered also in the previous and the current issue of EEC¹ – was the conference ***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***. Held on 24 and 25 May 2018 in Poznań; it was organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Adam Mickiewicz University², Florian Znaniecki Scientific Foundation and

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¹ The centenary of *The Polish Peasant*, and more specifically the beginnings of humanistic sociology and biographical method inseparably connected with this now classic publication, were celebrated in EEC (2018/24) in a block of the opening articles (A. Kaleta: *A Century of Humanistic Sociology and a Biographical Method*; Ch. Giordano, *Autobiographies or Portraits? Methodological Differences in Qualitative Social Research*; M. Gluszowski, *The Biographical Method in the Study of Dialects and Languages in Contact*). In the current issue (2019/25), the celebrations and timeless values of the work are summarized in an article by Malwina Krajewska (title to be confirmed).

² The city of Poznań and the Institute of Sociology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań were deliberately chosen as the conference venue. Florian Znaniecki settled down in Poznań two years after Poland regained independence (1918) and he headed the Chair of Sociology and Philosophy of Culture at the Poznań University. This is also where he founded the Sociological Institute (1921), soon changed into the Polish Sociological

the Haverford Institute of Public Sociology, under the patronage of the Polish Sociological Association. Over twenty speakers, half of whom were international guests, discussed *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* and its relevance in the 21st century; they considered how its message could be adapted to the needs of sociological analysis of the modern globalised world, with references to contemporary sociological theory.

The conference started with a lecture by Michael Burawoy (University of California, Berkeley). In his speech *A Century of Ethnography – Celebrating the Global Imagination of the Polish Peasant*, he presented Znaniecki's sociological and Bronisław Malinowski's anthropological thought, comparing the development paths of these two social sciences. While anthropology evolved towards postcolonial studies, sociologists tended to focus on a limited territory research, determined – for example – by national borders; this was and still is a risky approach, particularly in the light of supranational phenomena. One of them is migration. Burawoy suggests that it should be analysed from the perspective of both the country of origin (from which a person emigrates) and the host country, which is exactly what Znaniecki and Thomas did. The speaker promoted the synergic use of the achievements of both disciplines and cognitive perspectives, and illustrated his theses on the example of his research conducted in Zambia.

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Although the organisers did not plan thematic blocks, the vast majority of speeches could nevertheless be included in one of the two basic problem groups. The first, larger in number, comprised lecturers who presented their own research, more or less empirical in nature, directly inspired by or referring to the tradition of Znaniecki and Thomas, particularly in their analysis of migration-related phenomena. The second group, represented by a smaller number of speakers, offered more theoretical presentations that aimed to evaluate the impact of *The Polish Peasant* on the development of social sciences, while pondering on its conceptual nuances and possible interpretations.

Institute, and established the first Polish sociological magazine 'Przegląd Socjologiczny' (1930), see J. Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej* [History of Sociological Thought], Warsaw 1983, p. 731).

The first group was dominated by Polish researchers who – by referring primarily to the methodical output (biographical documents) of Znaniński and Thomas – presented a wide thematic spectrum of migration-related issues, including: an analysis of diaries written by people living in the Recovered Territories (Beata Halicka, *Written Memoirs of Settlers in North and West Poland after 1945 as Source for Historical and Cultural Research*); emigration experiences of members of the ‘Solidarity’ movement (Mary Patrice Erdmans, *Locating the Narrator as Both the Subject and Object in their Life Stories*); and contemporary Polish emigrants in Norway (Katarzyna Gmaj, *Inspired by Thomas and Znaniński. Do We Observe the Formation of a ‘New Polish-Norwegian Society’?*) and New York (Anna Sosnowska, *Polish Greenpoint and New York City. Gentrification, Ethno-racial Relations and Immigrant Labor Market at the Turn of the 21st Century*).

As many as three speakers challenged the image of the Polish immigrant proposed by Thomas and Znaniński. According to Ryszard Cichocki (*Concepts of Moral Panic as a Tool to Reinterpret the Studies of W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniński over the Emigration of Families of Polish Peasants to the USA*), another look at migration-related phenomena is necessary through the prism of moral panic, i.e. a dramatic increase in social anxiety caused by change, which is often disproportionate to the actual threat. Dorota Przaszałowicz (*Social Disorganization or Re-organization? Polish Communities in Chicago at the Beginning of the 20th Century*) also proposed a new, more approving look at Znaniński and Thomas’s subject of interest. She proposed a thesis that Poles immigrated to America did not submit to social disorganization, as argued by the authors of *The Polish Peasant*. Neither did they suffer from a deficit of social capital. On the contrary, they proved efficient in reorganizing their lives in a new place, while maintaining relationships with their loved ones who stayed in Poland. They built a new identity, following the logic of glocalisation and composing their native elements with the ones they found in the host country. In turn, Suava Zbierski-Salameh (*The Peasant Issue and Reorganization of Polish Society: Then and Now*) argued that Polish migrants contributed significantly to the industrialization processes in the United States. Moreover, the peasants who had stayed in Poland also played a significant role in the country’s modernisation processes after the war and during the political transformation.

Among the relatively few speeches of international guests or Poles addressing the problems of migrants of other nationalities who reside in the European Union, particularly interesting was the one reporting on the results of ethnographic research conducted among Ukrainian highlanders (Nataliia Pohorila, *Ethnographic Study of Interests' Conflict about the Forests in Ukrainian Carpathian Highlands*). It corresponded to the classic work in its focus on the values that bind a specific social group together and provide a starting point to define the group interests. Another interesting presentation, which made a direct reference to Thomas and Znaniecki's legacy, analysed contemporary changes in higher education (Joseph C. Hermanowicz, *Change – Social and Personal: Thomas and Znaniecki's 'The Polish Peasant' for the Study of Contemporary Change in Global Higher Education*), interpreting the academic 'Curriculum Vitae' of a person as a reflection of both his or her private life and global social processes that govern higher education. By referring to the classic work, the researchers managed to reconstruct the sources of their respondents' identities, turning points in their biographies and social origins.

The speeches that were characteristic of the second group included those referring to Znaniecki's early philosophical works and their traces in *The Polish Peasant* (Andrzej Przystalski, *Florian Znaniecki's Early Philosophical Works and the Polish Peasant*), and their vision of the nation (Krzysztof Brzechczyn, *Between Essentialism and Constructivism in Theory of Nation. On Florian Znaniecki's Concept of National Consciousness*). Several speakers made an attempt to generally evaluate the significance of Thomas and Znaniecki's work for social sciences, particularly its contribution to sociology in terms of methodology (Eli Zaretsky, *The Individual and the Group in the Transition to Market Society: What Do We Learn from The Polish Peasant 100 Years after its Conception*). The role of *The Polish Peasant* in institutionalising sociology as an independent science was also discussed (Martin Bulmer, *The Polish Peasant after One Hundred Years*), along with Znaniecki's contribution to the sociology of science (Marcin Grodzki, *Beyond The Polish Peasant: Znaniecki's Theory of the Cultural Evolution of Human Knowledge(s) and the Logic behind our Scientific Division of Labor*), and ethnic studies popular in the United States (Mary Waters, *Thomas and Znaniecki's Continuing Influence on the Study of 21st Century Ethnicity in the US*).

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Most conference speeches referred to the significance of *The Polish Peasant* in the development of sociology, often proving that reading Thomas and Znaniecki's work nowadays may bring great cognitive effects. The aspect that was particularly emphasised was its timeless methodology which is still applicable, even today, and enables to reflect and analyse attitudes, values and motivations relevant to the study subjects. At the same time one should not ignore new interpretations and criticism of at least some of the assumptions and statements made by both scholars and never challenged due to a somewhat overly 'humble' approach of their readers. At the Poznań meeting, we could hear voices that engaged in a polemic with Thomas and Znaniecki or pointed out new possible interpretations of some theses formulated in *The Polish Peasant*. They specifically included reservations raised with respect to the excessively unflattering image of a Polish emigrant (Dorota Prasałowicz, *Social Disorganization or Re-organization? Polish Communities in Chicago at the Beginning of the 20th Century*) as well as the proposal to use the concept of moral panic to better understand the complexity of migration phenomena – which in times of universal access to information technologies and dramatically effective strategies of their use (e.g. fake news, disinformation through comments and posts published by bots or people employed for this purpose) may turn into significant social problems overnight (Ryszard Cichocki, *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*). These ideas might prove even more valuable in terms of the contemporary migration crisis affecting the EU member states. This topic was clearly underrepresented at the conference, with only a few speeches present but hardly addressing the complexity of the problem. They included presentations about the impact of EU regulations and migration policy on the organisational activity of migrants (Michał Nowosielski and Witold Nowak, *How Migration Policies Influence Immigrant Organizations?*) and research on (mainly past) migration experiences of Poles (Jakub Isański, *A Polish Student in Europe and America. On Qualitative Research of Polish Migrants Following the Florian Znaniecki's Method*; Beata Halicka, *Written Memoirs of Settlers in North and West Poland after 1945 as Source for Historical and Cultural Research*). This rather surprising deficit – at the international conference

dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the work whose theoretical and methodological inquiry is focused on intercontinental migration – gives rise to questions about the real continuity of the message contained in *The Polish Peasant*, not only on the theoretical and methodological level, but also in terms of the subject of this empirical research.