

HOMO FABER

Anna Malewska-Szalygin

Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej

Uniwersytet Warszawski

a.malewska-szalygin@uw.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-5749-4409

***HOMO FABER* – WORK FROM AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE – IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN POLAND**

***Homo faber* – praca w perspektywie antropologicznej – w świetle badań prowadzonych z Polsce**

Abstract. The article informs about the conference *Homo Faber – How Do We Work, How Did We Work?*, which took place at the University of Warsaw in 2023. The text recalls the results of the fieldwork of Anna Zadrożyńska – an ethnologist starting anthropological research on this topic in Poland. Then, it briefly presents research projects carried out in Poland using ethnographic methods, outlining the trajectory of changing approaches. In the conclusion, which is an introduction to the thematic part of the volume, it briefly presents the post-conference articles included in this part.

Keywords: Anthropology of work and labour, work, anthropology, fieldwork, Poland

Streszczenie. Artykuł informuje o konferencji ‘*Homo faber – jak pracujemy, jak pracowaliśmy?*’, która odbyła się na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim w 2023 r. Tekst przypomina wyniki prac badawczych Anny Zadrożyńskiej – etnologki rozpoczynającej antropologiczne badania tej tematyki na gruncie polskim. Następnie prezentuje skrótowo projekty badawcze zrealizowane w Polsce metodami etnograficznymi zarysowując trajektorię zmieniających się ujęć. W zakończeniu, będącym wprowadzeniem do części tematycznej tomu, krótko przedstawia znajdujące się w tej części artykuły pokonferencyjne.

Słowa kluczowe: Antropologia pracy, praca, antropologia, badania etnograficzne, Polska

Work is the knot that connects all dimensions of human activity, weaving together those aspects that researchers have struggled to disentangle and describe. The concept of work as a ‘socio-economic-psychological-cultural node,’ taken from a book by Warsaw ethnologist Anna Zadrożyńska (1983: 48), accompanied the team organising the academic conference *Homo Faber – How Do We Work, How Did We Work?*, held at the University of Warsaw on 22-24 June 2023. The patron of the conference was the late Professor Anna Zadrożyńska – a pioneer of ethnological and anthropological research on the subject, who assumed that work is an excellent channel for research insights into the human experience and the way we see the world. The papers presented at the conference *How Do We Work, How Did We Work?* confirmed the validity of her assumptions.

The conference began with a selection of papers on memories of work during the communist era: Katarzyna Maniak’s *Mówili, że my nie umiemy pracować* [*They Said We Didn’t Know How to Work*] presented the memories of employees of State-owned Farms; Marta Paszko’s *Praca buduje* [*Work Builds*] showed communist Poland’s idea of work as the foundation

of community through the example of Gliwice's Wilcze Gardło; Jakub Busz's *Etnografia minionego szczęścia* [*Ethnography of Past Happiness*] spoke about work in the yeast factory in Maszewo Lęborskie; Tomasz Rakowski's *Teoria pre-solidarności* [*The Theory of Pre-solidarity*] reflected the enthusiasm for work and social action in the experience of late socialism. Other papers dealt with the period of political and economic transition: Konstanty Ramotowski's *Przyzwolenie ograniczone?* [*Limited consent?*] spoke of the role of mining unions in the process of energy transition; Aleksandra Leyk and Piotr Filipkowski's *Kurs Kapitalizm* [*Course: Capitalism*] showed the transformation of work, relations, and identity of industrial workers from a biographical perspective. Olga Załęska's paper on the dependence of the ethnic identity of Podkarpacie farmers on the socio-economic situation in the 1930s was a look back. Subsequent papers explored economic, cultural, and social processes in the 21st century Poland: Amanda Krzyworzeka's paper investigated the current challenges of work in agriculture; Józef Nowosielski's *Matki, ojca i ziemi się nie sprzedaje* [*Mother, father and land are not sold*] researched the cultural determinants of agricultural work in Podhale; Nela Bocheńska presented a paper on women's care work as unpaid and continuous labour; Hubert Wierciński's paper discussed the work of primary health care doctors during the Covid-19 pandemic; and Maciej Zawistowski's paper discussed the individual and institutional missionary nature of work at the Dom Spotkań z Historią [History Meeting House in Warsaw]. Another group of papers reported on research carried out outside Poland: Anna Horolets spoke about working with plants in the city, using a community garden in Ljubljana as an example; Renata Hryciuk's paper *Kulinarna Merytokracja?* [*Culinary meritocracy?*] discussed heritage, gender, and gastro-politics in Oaxaca, southern Mexico; Helena Patzer and Olga Wanicka's paper *Go with the Flow* provided a description of Filipino migrant workers' visions of a 'better life' in Poland. The conference concluded with Izabela Przygocka's paper on brandstanding, describing the generational change and new ways of experiencing and commenting on work by young workers in the third decade of the 21st century. Elizabeth Cullen Dunn's guest lecture, *Violent Separations: Migration, Work, and*

Injury in the American Meatpacking Industry, also presented the results of recent research. Presentations ranging from memories of the communist era to highly topical observations on new forms of work organisation marked a curious trajectory of change that can be seen as a continuation of the conference patron's research intention.

***Homo faber, homo ludens* – a monograph by Anna Zadrożyńska - labour in model terms**

In this part, I will present the results of Anna Zadrożyńska's research, devoting more space to them than to cursory descriptions of the research of her successors. I justify my decision to structure the text in this way by the fact that although *Homo faber, homo ludens*, her book from 1983, is not easily accessible, it presents a comprehensive account of labour transformations, which is an excellent starting point for further anthropological reflection on the subject of work. In presenting this monograph synthetically, I begin to draft an anthropological 'archaeology of knowledge' about work.

Zadrożyńska researched changing forms of work in the 1960s and 1970s. In her book *Homo faber, homo ludens. Etnologiczny szkic o pracy w kulturach tradycyjnej i współczesnej. [Homo Faber, Homo Ludens. An Ethnological Outline of Work in Traditional and Contemporary Cultures]*, she summarised her analysis of ethnographic source material and her conclusions. Chronologically arranged, the monograph shows the changing models: from work on small farms of individual farmers – the 'traditional model', to work on large state-owned agricultural and livestock farms – the 'transitional model', to villagers working in a metropolitan factory – the 'contemporary model' (1983: 358). Today, forty years later, it is appropriate to modify the adjective 'contemporary' with the past-denoting term 'then contemporary'.

The introduction of the model approach immediately suggests the author's theoretical assumptions pertaining to the structural-semiotic approach, which was a prominent theoretical framework in Polish ethnology

during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In this context, the object of research is ‘*a human being always existing in culture, seen through work as through a basic sign which allows one to enter the sphere of other signs*’ (ibid.: 6), and ‘*the basic research question becomes the question of the connections between signs and their rules, forming a basic network which makes choices within culture possible*’ (ibid.: 6). This description of the research project’s objective is consistent with the structural-semiotic explanations of culture, which posits that ‘*individual cultures are structures, i.e. self-steering and homeostatic systems*’ (ibid.: 25). This approach to the problem implies the possibility of the creation of models, whereby ‘*these models must capture signs and signified content in different, but always defined levels of generality.*’ While this theoretical background may suggest a very schematic approach, Anna Zadrożyńska’s reasoning presents the reader with situational descriptions, rich in detail, framed by the book’s rigorous structure.

The monograph is divided into two sections, designated *Homo faber* and *Homo ludens*. The division is based on the opposition axis between ‘work’ and ‘non-work’ (ibid.: 19), with the latter category serving to define the former further. The section entitled *Homo faber* presents three models of work, which are described in sequence: traditional, transitional, and contemporary. Similarly, the *Homo ludens* section replicates this structure. The description of each model (in both parts) adheres to a consistent pattern, comprising the following elements: time, space, people, and dependency scheme (ibid.: 358-359). This schematic approach is limited solely to the structure of the book; its chapters are replete with detailed descriptions of human experience and perceptive interpretations, frequently invoking the symbols and customs of the ancient Greeks, Romans, Celts, and more contemporary tribal peoples. The author’s erudition is further demonstrated by the exploration of symbolic meanings, which also illustrates the influence of the theoretical background not included in the initial declarations at the beginning of the book. This background pertains to the then-alternative fascination with the phenomenological perspective.

Work in the Traditional Model

The author constructs the traditional model based on the findings of ethnographic research conducted in the 1960s in villages of the Podlasie region. Labour in the traditional model is shown to be inextricably linked with the everyday, the mundane, and the transient, set in opposition to the sacred and the non-transient – the eternity. This binary division did not exhaust the traditional valuation of time; even in the passing of time, more favourable and less favourable periods were distinguished, which were more or less suitable for undertaking specific activities such as starting field or farm work, building a house or shearing sheep. In many instances, the occurrence of a favourable omen or the celebration of a patron saint's day was employed as a means of demarcating the optimal time for work. Accordingly, a 'good start' thus defined was supposed to guarantee security and favourable outcomes in one's endeavours. It was also evident that the day was divided into night (a period of rest) and day (a period of work) and that the passing seasons were associated with specific farm work activities that were determined by the vegetation cycle of plants. Thus, as the researcher observed, work in the traditional model was a signifier of life (ibid.: 62), whereas non-work was a signifier of death (ibid.: 64). At night, this was symbolised by sleep, while in winter, it was symbolised by the dormancy of nature and its vital forces.

The space was characterised by a similar set of attributes so that instructions for the appropriate completion of the task included detailed directional recommendations. 'With the sun,' 'upwards,' 'eastwards,' and so forth. These directions were considered to be 'better' or 'worse,' and 'the spheres, both above and below ground, bounded the earthly world of human beings' (ibid.: 69). The safe space within the human world was marked by the presence of signs related to the realm of the sacred, such as crosses or shrines erected at crossroads. Furthermore, the labour performed by people made the space more familiar and, therefore, safer. It is evident that work on one's own farm was regarded as a positive endeavour and distinguished from work done on someone else's land. In addition

to the distinction between working ‘on one’s own’ and ‘on someone else’s land,’ the practice of teamwork was also a prominent feature fostering a sense of community and neighbourly assistance, which ‘became a gift given to another person’ (ibid.: 92). As evidenced by Marcel Mauss’s seminal analysis, the gift has the potential to foster social connections and overcome feelings of estrangement. In examining the category of non-work, the author highlights that traditional societies typically recognise a distinct group of individuals whose non-work status, due to age or illness, is accepted. However, they constitute a distinctive group subject to a distinct system of valuation. The description of the traditional model concludes with a graphic diagram that summarises the interdependencies between work, people, space, and time. In this diagram, work delineates the cohort of individuals designated as ‘one’s own lot,’ defines the space and time considered to be ‘ordinary,’ ‘everyday,’ and, therefore, implying the category ‘life.’ Conversely, non-work is associated with the otherness of people and space, with the extraordinary, sacred time, and in some respects, also with the category of ‘death’ (ibid.: 107).

Work in the Transitional Model

Anna Zadrożyńska developed her description of the transitional model on the basis of field research conducted in the 1970s at the Koszalin State-owned Farm. It was unusual to carry out ethnological research in a socialist, large-scale agricultural and livestock farm, as most ethnologists at the time concentrated on tracing the remnants of folk culture. Opening up to the specific forms of rural modernisation associated with the Eastern European form of socialism required research courage, originality of thought, and an understanding of ethnology that was far ahead of its time.

In reconstructing this model, the author observed that it was not the nature but the management of the State-owned Farm that determined the length of the working day. The working hours in the large barns and pigsties could span both day and night and were less dependent on the seasons than those in animal husbandry on a small individual farm. The

rhythm of work was determined by shifts; the payday, which fell on the tenth day of the month, became a holiday; time off, which was not a religious holiday, emerged; the fruits of labour were not for the use of the farm, but were instead entirely for sale; the relationship between people and the farm was mediated by money, or ‘pay’. Space was not seen as ‘one’s own’. The large-area farm was owned by the state, while the farm buildings were under the control of the management. Even the blocks of flats providing accommodation for the workers were not theirs. The only area that could be considered relatively ‘their own’ was the flat in the workers’ block. In the broader sense, the term ‘space’ in the context of the Koszalin Voivodeship refers to the area of the so-called ‘Recovered Territories.’ Essentially, everyone in this region was a newcomer, displaced from various places, including those that became part of the Soviet Union following the Second World War. The area of Koszalin was perceived as ‘post-German’ and, as a consequence, a ‘foreign’ territory. The village cemetery, which served as the necropolis for the former German inhabitants, predominantly Protestant, did not foster a sense of rootedness or multi-generational ties to the region. In this context, the concept of a ‘community of their own’ was largely confined to the family unit, frequently encompassing extended family members. This was due to the fact that the settlers often arrived in the Recovered Territories in entire clans (Ibid.: 134). Working in an alienated space and time did not produce a lasting community: ‘bonds of rivalry rather than co-participation’ formed instead (ibid.: 137). In this model, the influence of both natural and transcendental forces is lost. Strangeness, which marks a perilous space and time, becomes devoid of transcendence. Life is interpreted solely in the realm of actual existence (ibid.: 142). In the transitional model, a progressive desacralisation of labour is observed.

Work in the Contemporary Model

In her account of the then-contemporary model, Anna Zadrożyńska presented the findings of research conducted in the second half of the 1970s

at the FSO Passenger Car Factory, which manufactured the Polish Fiat 125p and Fiat 126p, very popular and colloquially known as the ‘Maluchy’ cars. The production plant in Warsaw’s Żerań, with a workforce of tens of thousands, employed mostly workers from rural areas, as documented in the annexes attached to the book. The rural origins of the factory’s workforce provided a basis for comparison between work on individual farms in Podlasie, on State-owned Farms in the Koszalin Voivodeship, and at the assembly line in Warsaw. Undertaking research in a metropolitan industrial community represented a novel approach that necessitated the development of new research techniques.

When analysing the relationships in the contemporary model, the researcher observed that the changes previously described in the transitional model had become more pronounced. Any reference to transcendence vanished entirely, as did the impact of the natural environment. The work on the combine was conducted in three shifts, including nighttime, and the seasons were inconsequential. Subsequently, the sacred time ceased to exist, giving way to the emergence of secular free time. The shift system permitted labour on Sundays and holidays, allowing for time off on days that did not have a culturally established celebratory script. In this context, the concept of non-work time became a conceptual challenge. This challenge was addressed by using the free time to help with family farming, renovate the flat, or work on ‘one’s own.’ Such scenarios were also applied to a new category of time: holidays. The author’s observation that the factory was perceived as ‘one’s own,’ a safe space, much like the flat in the block of flats or the house in the countryside to which workers returned after work, is somewhat surprising. The new categorisation of time and space translated into the formation of novel social relations. The nature of factory work precipitated a slow shift in the division of responsibilities between men and women. Children from flats in apartment complexes were sent to daycare centres and kindergartens, as their grandparents, who were responsible for their care, remained in rural areas. The social programmes offered by the factory facilitated the formation of interpersonal connections among workers, which differed from those observed in traditional village settings but were more robust than those

observed in the Koszalin State-owned farms. The (then) contemporary model positioned both work and non-work within a desacralised ‘sphere of the ordinary’ (ibid.: 178); even if an element of the extraordinary occurred during non-work, for example, during holidays, it had a ‘purely human dimension’ (ibid.: 268).

Homo Ludens

The second part of the book, entitled *Homo Ludens*, focuses on non-work and thus completes the picture of the transformations of labour that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. In this section, Anna Zadrożyńska references publications by Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, and Mircea Eliade that are more aligned with the phenomenological approach than the structural-semiotic one. It corroborates the assertion that she drew inspiration from both theoretical frameworks, which were popular in Polish ethnology at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s.

Celebrating in the Traditional Model

In the traditional model, non-work time was regarded as a period of festivity and a time of opening up to transcendent reality. The feast constituted a disruption to the transience of everyday life, providing a brief interval of openness to a non-passing timelessness – to eternity. The festival was characterised by a clearly delineated scenario, which was either defined by myths in some cultures or underpinned by religious and liturgical traditions in others. This scenario most frequently recreated the stages of world creation that occurred at the time of the Primordial. As the author notes, the feast was a form of ‘re-creation’ of the world (ibid.: 213), a re-creation and an ordering of the world that resulted in its rebirth. The festive period saw the transformation of the physical space through the introduction of extraordinary components. It also transformed the community, strengthening the bonds not only by working together but also by celebrating together, and thus ‘creating opportunities for contact between

man and the inhabitants of >the other world<' (ibid.: 261). The author illustrates the reconstruction of the festive re-creation of time and space with ample descriptions of festive rituals drawn from Polish folk culture and tribal cultures, which she summarises by concluding that, in the traditional model, the holiday serves as a 'structural link between the real and the presumed spheres,' acting as a mediator between 'this' and 'the other' world (Ibid.: 263).

Non-work in the Transitional Model

The transitional model in the *homo ludens* aspect demonstrates a comparable process of secularisation to that observed in the *homo faber* aspect. What characterises the non-work time is a decrease in references to transcendence. As a consequence of the processes of secularisation, a category of leisure time that is alien to the tradition of the countryside has been created (ibid.: 273). Days off work and holiday time become problematic for individuals who originate from rural, traditional cultures, as they lack the scenario to navigate this interval effectively. In reference to the festive traditions, they turn to alcohol, which, 'in traditional culture, served as a symbolic reference to the inhabitants of the 'other world.' It was a means of entering their time and space, a ritual gesture that testified to human contact with other entities. For the inhabitants of the estate [this is what the workers called the State Agricultural Farm – AMSZ], it remained merely a solitary gesture in the void of free time' (ibid.: 273). These gestures, devoid of deeper references, were unable to create social bonds characterised by closeness. Consequently, 'the inhabitants of the Koszalin estate were strangers to each other. To cope with specific situations, they formed occasional alliances, attributing an almost omnipotent hostility to other people' (ibid.: 289). In this context, non-work, leisure, and playtime did not fulfil the function that was so important in the traditional model; it did not build community.

Non-work in the (Then) Contemporary Model

In this model, the festive ‘re-creation’ involving transcendental forces is, according to the author, transformed into a secularised ‘recreation’ (ibid.: 341). The non-work time was determined by humans, for instance, the institution of free Saturdays, which became a wholly novel experience, or holidays characterised by a distinct form of labour (‘on one’s own’), or rest in holiday resorts, frequently organised by cultural and educational personnel. Public holidays associated with socialist ideas, such as 1 May and 22 July, appeared. The scenarios for their celebrations were developed by social policy specialists, with reference to the mythicisation of the post-war period, the time of emergence of a new socio-economic and political order (ibid.: 300-307). Holidays associated with religion and ancient traditions, such as Christmas and Easter, are times that ‘have a human dimension, a reference to the mystery of the sacred rarely occurs then. Signs of past re-creation only add variety to the time of recreation’ (ibid.: 312).

Anna Zadrożyńska’s book demonstrates the process of progressive secularisation, the loss of the transcendental dimension, both of the time of work and of celebration, which shifts from a festive re-creation of reality to a recreation devoid of the sacral dimension. The author investigates work employing a cultural-symbolic perspective.

Research into Labour Conducted in Poland Between the 1980s and the Early 2000s Using Ethnographic Methods

Subsequent to Zadrożyńska’s research was the fieldwork of the British anthropologist Chris Hann, author of *A Village without Solidarity. Polish Peasants in the Years of Crisis* (1985), published by Yale University. His research project, conducted in the Bieszczady Mountains in 1978/1979, focused on the nature of social bonds within the local community. The issue of labour was not a primary concern. However, the author did examine the work of both local state agricultural farm workers and individual

farmers. Some of his conclusions were in alignment with Zadrozynska's assertions, particularly those pertaining to the dissolution of social ties within the State Agricultural Farm communities. However, Chris Hann did not delve into the symbolic and cultural transformations of labour; instead, he focused on how social bonds changed in a situation of nationalised agriculture. The difference in academic formation is evident in his approach. Hann's theoretical background was shaped within the framework of British social anthropology. In contrast, Zadrozynska's was shaped by a combination of semiotic and phenomenological inspirations, characteristic of the Warsaw ethnology of the time.

Similarly, another British researcher, Frances Pine, conducted ethnographic research on work in the Polish countryside. Her research, conducted in the late 1970s in the Podhale region, focused on the family unit and clearly addressed the issue of work. The author identified the division of farm duties between men and women as a fundamental aspect of gender relations (Pine, 1996). The issue of work and gender was a significant element of another project conducted by this researcher in Łódź between 1994 and 1995, i.e. already during the transition period. Since the 19th century, Łódź has been the centre of the textile industry, with a predominantly female workforce. The 1990s saw the end of the textile industry's development in this city, resulting in the closure of factories and mass unemployment. The experience of unemployment for the majority of female textile workers in Łódź translated into a lack of income, the necessity to withdraw into the domestic sphere, to feed the family in a situation of poverty, and the constant concern of raising children in a context of deepening deprivation (Pine 2002). Like Hann's, Pine's research on work maintains a social perspective, describing a period of transition combined with a gendered perspective.

The research project by Michał Buchowski, carried out in Dziekanowice, a village in Wielkopolska, in 1994-1995, presented a similar approach to the issue of work. While labour was not the primary focus of this researcher's interests, it was nevertheless closely linked to the class differentiation of the community, as described in his book *Class and Culture in the Period of Transformation* (1996). The author distinguished between

the various groups within the community on the basis of the type of work they performed. These included individual farmers, employees of the liquidated State Agricultural Farm (PGR) and white-collar workers (intelligentsia) employed at the Museum. In his argument, he challenged the thesis of Carole Nagengast (1991), who wrote that the period of socialism had, to some extent, resulted in the hibernation of pre-war class relations. By demonstrating the close link between class relations and modes of labour, Buchowski emphasised that the effects of intra-social migration, facilitated during the communist era, should not be underestimated. His approach was aligned with the British tradition of social anthropology.

Conclusions of Wojciech Pieniążek and Grażyna Jaworska, who, employing ethnographic methods, conducted research commissioned by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics, were closer to Zadrożyńska's perspective. In their study, *Konteksty ekonomicznego myślenia [Contexts of Economic Thinking]* (1995), they emphasised the rural population's moral-ethical attitude to work, their distancing from forms of commodification of human labour and land and the capitalist drive for profit maximisation, writing, 'The model of a good farmer does not encompass the qualities typically associated with a 'good merchant' (...). The market is perceived as an unethical mechanism' (Pieniążek, Jaworska 1995: 37). In their conclusions, they emphasise that farm work at the outset of the 1990s was viewed from the perspective of value rather than profit.

In the early years of the 21st century, American anthropologist Elizabeth Cullen Dunn presented an exhaustive study of the process of economic transformation (2008). In her report on the findings of research conducted at the Alima/Gerber fruit and vegetable processing plant in Rzeszów between 1995 and 1997, Dunn demonstrated how a state-owned enterprise that had been acquired by the American company Gerber was transforming in accordance with the principles of post-Fordist (or post-Taylorist) organisation of production work. The observations and interviews conducted by this researcher indicate that, despite the implementation of contemporary management models, numerous attitudes that reflect a profound emotional commitment linked to a perspective of work that prioritises intrinsic value over market-driven decision-making persisted in

individuals' approaches to their work. Dunn highlighted that the workers at Alima refused to be regarded as mere property. They insisted on being regarded as subjects, albeit in a subordinate capacity, rather than objects of labour. By prioritising interpersonal relations over relations between people and things, they adhered to the teachings of the Polish Pope (John Paul II). The workers emphasised that the purpose of work was to serve the needs of people rather than the other way around. The workers held the view that in the production process, the moral dimension was of greater consequence than the financial one. In alignment with Catholic social teaching, AG workers espoused the view that the dignity of labour and of the human person could exist under both private and social ownership of the means of production. The fundamental considerations are the identity of the worker, the manner of their work, and the beneficiaries of that work. By emphasising their immersion in society, they made it clear that they were producing for others by transferring a part of themselves to them (2008: 199-201). The author underscored the value of the personalist approach and its potential usefulness in the critique of the new capitalist structures of domination. Viewing Dunn's conclusions from the perspective of labour transformations, it can be concluded that despite the ongoing process of secularisation, references to the social teachings of the Catholic Church can still be observed in workers' thinking during the 1990s. It is particularly evident in the perception of labour, which invokes ethical and moral values. The book *Privatising Poland* combines a social approach with a personalistic and axiological approach.

The period of transition was not as constructive in all instances as it was at the Rzeszów factory. Tomasz Rakowski presents more dramatic scenarios and tragic fates. In his book *Hunters, Gatherers, Practitioners of Powerlessness* (2009), he presents the enormity of human resourcefulness activated in response to the experience of job losses and the profound collapse of the agricultural sector in the 1990s. In a situation of almost complete decapitalisation and relegation to the necessity to fight for survival, it becomes evident that the values of thriftiness, industriousness, and prudence, even under extreme conditions, form the foundation of survival (Rakowski 2009: 120-121). These values, developed in a model of

work that, following Zadrożyńska, can be defined as traditional, prove to be the moral-ethical capital that can be drawn upon in liminal situations, such as the collective experience of mass unemployment and radical shifts in state agricultural policy. Rakowski's conclusions resonate with the personalist-axiological statements put forth by Dunn.

Amanda Krzyworzeka (PhD student of Prof. Anna Zadrożyńska), who conducted research in the village of Zanowo, near Zambrów, between 2005 and 2007, also addresses the issue of values. In summarising her book *Agricultural Strategies of Work and Survival* (2014), she employs the wordplay proposed by David Graebner and concludes: 'The axiological link between economic value and moral values helps to elucidate why people are not – and cannot be – guided in their actions by economic considerations alone. It is evident that the values they profess inform their decision-making processes, and economic profit maximisation may represent only one of them' (Krzyworzeka, 2014: 292). As mentioned by the author, the values of honesty, independence, and fairness allude to the work ethics of the traditional farm. In the context of rapid and profound changes in the forms of agricultural activity at the beginning of the 21st century, the axiological background is characterised by a relatively high degree of stability and permanence.

From this concise and necessarily selective overview of anthropological research on labour conducted in Poland, a trajectory of evolving approaches to this problem can be delineated. These approaches range from cultural-symbolic perspectives, through those focusing on the social dimension, to those emphasising the axiological aspects of work. The most recent perspectives on the issue of work are presented in the conference papers in 2023 and in the articles presented in the following section.

Anthropological Research on Labour (Today and in the Past) at the Beginning of the Third Decade of the 21st Century – Selected Examples

In her article *Farming Is a Grind. The Górale's Perspective on Labour as a Local Heritage*, Maria Małanicz-Przybylska provides an insightful description of inhabitants of Podhale, who very deftly navigate the American and European labour market, at the same time referring to traditional values, including religious ones, and invoking the strongly rooted work ethos, declared by them as one of the most fundamental values. Presenting the results of the 2021-2023 study, the author of the text comments on the Górale's valuation of work by referring to the categories of bottom-up heritage and heritage in action.

In his paper *Górale i rolnictwo – to idzie w parze. Praca na roli jako część kulturowego dziedzictwa Podhala* [Górale and Farming – It Goes Hand in Hand. Agricultural Work as Part of the Cultural Heritage of Podhale], Józef Nowosielski presents the findings of ethnographic research conducted in villages of Podhale between 2021 and 2022. The author provides a description of the activities and narrations of Podhale farmers within the context of the broader image of the Podhale region. He argues that agricultural work, which in the challenging mountainous environment has never generated significant profits, is nevertheless of great importance to the identity project of the Highlanders and is crucial for understanding the cultural heritage of Podhale.

In her article *Effort, Effect and Judging Bodies. Representations of Work in State-owned Farms*, Katarzyna Maniak argues that patterns of manorial relations play an important role in representations of work in the State Agricultural Farms and that the dialectic of the notions of effort and its effects proves useful in descriptions of work in such enterprises, which is an important element in evaluating working bodies. The author analyses the autobiographical testimonies sent to the competition *'Pamiętniki Nowego Pokolenia Chłopów Polskich'* [Memoirs of the New Generation of Polish Peasants] in 1994, complementing them with analyses of Joanna Warecha's motion pictures.

In his paper *Ethnography of Past Happiness. Work in the Yeast Factory in Maszewo Łęborskie*, Jakub Busz presents narratives recalling the memory of working in the yeast factory in Maszewo Łęborskie. These narratives were collected between 2021 and 2022. The experience of working in the yeast factory had a strong integrating and consolidating effect on the inhabitants of Maszewo, based on the community of work and, subsequently, on the community of memory.

The worker's lifestyle, shaped by their work in the yeast factory and transformed into the sphere of memories following the factory's closure, laid the primary foundation on which the local community of Maszewo was formed.

In her article entitled *Women's Caregiving Activity as Unpaid and Continuous Labour*, Nela Bocheńska puts forth the argument that women's caregiving work, which is often overlooked and undervalued by the state, plays a pivotal role in the functioning of late-capitalist, neoliberal society.

The findings of a research project on the dietary habits of retired women, conducted in Warsaw between 2021 and 2022, serve as the basis for the argument presented here.

The field of anthropological reflection on labour processes encompasses a vast array of thematic, temporal, and spatial domains, many of which are not addressed in the overview mentioned above. In light of the diversity of topics currently investigated and the variety of approaches adopted, it can be stated with optimism that the anthropological research on labour initiated in Poland by Professor Anna Zadrożyńska is developing dynamically, keeping up with the fast-changing reality.

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