

*Sylwia Michalska\**

**Commemorative conference for the Golden Jubilee  
of the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development  
of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IRWiR PAN)**

A conference commemorating 50 years of existence of the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IRWiR PAN) was held on 29 June 2022 in the Hall of Mirrors at the Staszic Palace in Warsaw. On 29 June 1971, the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences passed a resolution establishing the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, and on 8 October 1971, the Council of Ministers gave its approval. The institute became operational on 1 November 1971. Its core task was defined as “conducting research on the processes involved in transforming agriculture and rural society towards forms typical of industrialised societies organised based on socialist relations of production”. Since the institute was built on the then-existing Industrialised Regions Research Unit, it was within this structure, headed by Prof. Dyzma Gałąj, the institute’s first director, that the idea was born to conduct multidisciplinary research on the transformation of rural areas and peasant farming, due to Poland’s industrialisation. The research area was later expanded, but the idea itself was sound; over the past 50 years, Poland has transformed from a pre-industrial country to a post-industrial

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one, and agriculture and rural areas have a different place in each of these realities.<sup>1</sup>

The conference was inaugurated by the Institute's Director, Prof. Monika Stanny. The numerous guests included the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Prof. Jerzy Duszyński, and its Vice-presidents Prof. Stanisław Filipowicz and Prof. Romuald Zabielski. Also present were Prof. Andrzej Buko, Dean of Division I Humanities and Social Sciences at PAS, as well as the directors of other PAS institutes: Law Studies, Philosophy and Sociology, Economics, Slavic Studies, Geography and Spatial Organisation, and Literary Research. University-level school authorities at the event represented the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, the Warsaw School of Economics, and John Paul II University of Applied Sciences in Biała Podlaska. Other distinguished attendees included the representatives of National Research Institutes like the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics and the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, as well as the chairman of the PAS Research Institutes Alliance (PIN PAN).<sup>2</sup> We also welcomed deans of faculties and directors of institutes from the following universities: University of Warsaw, Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Poznań University of Life Sciences, University of Agriculture in Kraków, University of Łódź, University of Zielona Góra, Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, University of Rzeszów and Koszalin University of Technology. Other guests included representatives of the following foundations that collaborate with the institute: Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture, Rural Development Foundation, European Fund for the Development of Polish Villages Foundation, and the presidents of publishing houses cooperating with the institute, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar and Polskie Wydawnictwo Rolnicze.

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed outline of the history of IRWiR PAN and the evolution of the research conducted there can be found in Maria Halamska's text in this issue of EEC.

<sup>2</sup> The PAS Research Institutes Alliance (PIN PAN) was formed in 2017. It is intended as an independent forum for exchanging opinions and experiences between institutes, and also for supporting the liminal terms of their functioning: autonomy, self-government, legal personality, and direct financing from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The signatories at present are 28 PAS institutes, while seven more have observer status.

We were also honoured to welcome presidential representatives Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski, Chairman of the Presidential Council for Agriculture and Rural Areas, and Dr. Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, advisor to the Polish President. Also present were members of parliament of the 9<sup>th</sup> term, a Deputy Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the President of Statistics Poland, and many high-ranking representatives of agricultural and rural administration and community structures. At the end of the first part of the conference, IRWiR staff members were presented with distinctions and medals granted by the Polish President, the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Minister of Agriculture.

The next part of the conference was devoted to the history of the institute and its achievements, and plans for the future. The “institute’s people” were described by the oldest – in age and tenure – IRWiR PAN staff member, Prof. Marek Kłodziński. He emphasised that he had chosen people whom he had held dear and who had also had a significant impact on the institute. The person for whom the institute was the greatest achievement of his life was Dyzma Gałaj, who came up with the idea and founded the institute during a politically favourable time when he was the Speaker of the Sejm. As a sociologist and researcher, Gałaj is credited with a significant contribution to the analysis of part-time farming in Poland and the propagation of the idea of multifunctional rural development. Tadeusz Hunek was a researcher recognised not only in Poland but also internationally; he was the long-time Head of the Department of Agricultural Policy, and Kłodziński recalled him as a great economist, peerless debater, and a very cheerful, witty and kind person. The next outstanding IRWiR professor was Mikołaj Kozakiewicz, founder of the Research Station in Toruń. He persuaded a group of people to work on the Toruń-based education research team: Zbigniew Kwieciński, Włodzimierz Winclawski, Ryszard Borowicz and Jerzy Materna, who were later joined by Krystyna Szafranec. Augustyn Woś and Marian Brzóska, two Deputy Directors of the Institute from its initial years (1972-1974), were also mentioned, as was Izasław Frenkel, an indisputable authority – not just at IRWiR PAN – on demography. His works in this area will live forever in the annals of the social sciences in Poland. He was an invaluable consultant for everyone working at the institute, as far as population processes in agriculture and rural areas were concerned. Frenkel worked closely with Andrzej Rosner for many years. Next, Kłodziński spoke about some colourful economists who had also found

fulfilment beyond research: Marek Ignar – poet, musician and journalist, and Marek Muszyński – rally driver, *bon vivant* and gardener, as well as an extremely gifted scientist, who died a tragic death. In 1972, the Institute's group of sociologists expanded with Maria Halamska joining the team, forming, together with Grażyna Kaczor-Pańków and Aleksander Lutyk, a significant and respected group of sociologists. Halamska has long been recognised as an outstanding sociologist in Poland and abroad (especially in France).

Among the successes of his term as head of IRWiR PAN (1997–2008), Kłodziński mentioned hiring Jerzy Wilkin, whose opinions were and continue to be considered by successive directors of the institute. His academic interests, such as the analysis of the political transformation in Poland and the European integration process, his works on multifunctional agriculture, and his concepts regarding the development of rural Poland, have had and still have a substantial effect on the way IRWiR PAN is perceived. Kłodziński also underlined the great role that the Institute's current director plays in its development: Stanny has done a great job, achieving financial stability for the institute, restructuring employment, infusing new blood by hiring younger researchers, and leading the institute to obtain the A category, the highest on the education ministry scale. Kłodziński also pointed out that there would be no IRWiR history without Teresa Romańska, who has headed the institute's front office during the terms of all the Directors since 1978.

Prof. Maria Halamska presented an analysis of the institute's changing research area under the title "May You Live in Interesting Times", referring to the well-known Chinese curse.<sup>3</sup> She incorporated her outline of the IRWiR PAN research area into a calendar of the "interesting times" in which the Institute has operated, defined by various events, political, civilisational and paradigmatic. Halamska organised her thoughts around three keywords: development, agriculture and countryside. "Development" has been studied at the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development throughout its existence, but this does not mean the same things were investigated all the time since the goals and paradigms of development changed. In the initial research programmes, development was defined through the processes of "industrial-

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<sup>3</sup> This presentation is only briefly outlined, as its extensive passages are included in the paper *Fifty Years of Rural and Agricultural Research. The Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development at the Polish Academy of Sciences (1971–2022)* featured in this issue.

isation” and “urbanisation”, then “multifunctional development” emerged in the 1980s, followed by “rural development”. The development under consideration was also meant to be sustainable, i.e. lasting and well-balanced. The entity whose development was being studied – “rural areas and agriculture” – also changed over time. The most general analyses focused on the (changing) role of agriculture in the structure of the national, rural, or European economy. The main object of analysis was “individual”/peasant/family/private farming, while significant studies on nationalised agriculture appeared only when it underwent privatisation. As for rural areas, Halamska divided the research topics into two types: “uncovering” important social problems and diagnosing the changing structure of rural Poland. To illustrate the former group, i.e., social problems, Halamska chose and characterised three, in whose uncovering IRWiR had demonstrated courage and sensitivity, giving expression to its social mission, viz., rural education and schools, the financial and welfare standing of the farmer population, and the situation of rural women. To illustrate the diagnoses developed by the institute, she cited analyses of the rural part-time farmer population (part farmers, part waged workers) as well as analyses of changing demographic structures: the sex and age structures, migration, and birth rates. Analyses of the social and occupational structure were conducted in demographic studies that distinguished between the “peasant” and “non-peasant” populations, studies on the size and wealth diversity of peasant or family farms, the division of rural households into farmer households and part-time farmer households, and studies on the development of the rural educated class. The latest research, focusing on the rapid and very significant changes after 1989, has brought studies on changes occurring in recent years (depeasantisation, proletarianisation and gentrification) as well as showing the current social and occupational structure of rural areas (in which waged workers comprise over half the residents) and their spatial diversity.

A jubilee lecture indicating the institute’s future research directions was delivered by Prof. Jerzy Wilkin, titled “The Axiology of Rural Development Policy”. This is an extremely important topic that has yet to be adequately studied and described. It is the focus of the research agenda of IRWiR PAN. Axiology in economics enables us not only to learn about the world’s development, but also to consider ways of changing it in a desirable direction. Considering the complexity of rural development as a phenomenon, a diagnosis and then working on shaping the right policy require an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary

approach. The speaker observed that Poland did not have a rural development policy in place. All we have is some uncoordinated and incohesive “bits” of such a policy. Rural development depends on many policies, especially agricultural, regional, environmental, spatial planning, infrastructural, social, and education policies, to mention just some. Particular policies are pursued by regional and local authorities as well as national and the European Union governing bodies. Wilkin tried to answer the question of why a rural development policy was necessary and what axiology it should be based on.

In policy implementation, axiology precedes a vision, which in turn precedes a strategy. Without a clear demonstration of the axiology, strategies and policies are suspended in a vacuum that is both semantic and praxiological. The speaker pointed to the harmonisation of the value and vision of development at various levels of the organisation of society as one of the most difficult conceptual and praxiological tasks. This process requires the following questions to be answered: how to build and agree upon a vision of the development of a given village or local community (e.g. municipality), how to create a vision for a region’s development, and what values to follow, what the vision for rural development on the national scale should be, and how it might be built. The axiology of rural development policies should thus consider a wide range of values and goals pursued by rural residents as well as the whole society.

Another issue that the speaker highlighted was the marginalisation of rural issues in the government’s policies for science, which is reflected in the situation of the research community studying the problems of the countryside and rural areas. This marginalisation is primarily the effect of a lack of knowledge of the importance and complexity of rural and agricultural development issues and of relying mainly on simple statistical indicators. The social researchers employed at IRWiR PAN as well as their collaborators have been trying for half a century to demonstrate the complexity of the processes taking place in rural Poland, with the help of a wide variety of research methods, mainly developed in the social sciences but also philosophy and the natural sciences. Wilkin underlined that rural areas deserved much greater support from research than they had received so far, and then they would be easier to understand, describe and like.

We celebrated the Institute’s jubilee throughout the 2021/2022 academic year, holding ‘Five Debates for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IRWiR PAN’ on selected

aspects of the contribution of rural areas and agriculture to the contemporary image of Poland. The first was “In Search of Sources of the Present”, and the participants were the authors of recently published books on how the historical experiences of the peasant majority of Polish society influenced the present shape of the sociocultural reality: Prof. Maria Halamska, author of ‘Wieś Polska 1918–2018. W poszukiwaniu źródeł terażniejszości’ [Rural Poland 1918–2018: In Search of Sources of the Present], Prof. Kacper Pobłocki, author of ‘Chamstwo’ [The Rabble], and Prof. Adam Leszczyński, author of ‘Ludowa historia Polski’ [A Peasant History of Poland]. The debate was chaired by Prof. Stanisław Obirek, who highlighted the innovative character of the books, whose authors take an in-depth look at subordinate groups.

The second debate was held in a completely different geopolitical reality, four days after Russia attacked Ukraine. The topic of the discussion was ‘Changes in the Quality of Government in Poland’. The participants at the round table were Prof. Jerzy Hausner, Prof. Andrzej Rychard and Dorota Zmarzłak, the head of a municipality near Warsaw. Prof. Jerzy Wilkin fulfilled a dual role: panellist and chairman. The argument in favour of holding such a debate was the noticeable worsening of the quality of government in Poland, which has also been noted by respected international institutions. This is a threat to our country’s development, including to rural residents. Wilkin noted that Poland found itself on a path of ‘regressive institutional transformation’, meaning the deterioration in the functioning of the institutional foundations of the country. Hausner mentioned such structural weaknesses of government in Poland as state intervention in market mechanisms leading to economic statism, undermining the country’s economic credibility, and subordinating public institutions to political parties, including the judiciary and public media. Zmarzłak pointed to the necessity to strive for a state that follows the principles of good governance.

The participants in the third debate, focusing on the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy and titled ‘CAP 2030: What’s in Store for Polish Agriculture?’, were Prof. Walenty Poczta, Dr. Jerzy Plewa,<sup>4</sup> Rafał Mładanowicz and Grzegorz Brodziak,<sup>5</sup> with Dr. Mirosław Drygas as the moderator. The

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<sup>4</sup> Former Deputy Minister of agriculture and Director-General in the European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

<sup>5</sup> The former chairs the Council of Young Farmers affiliated with the National Council

context for this exchange of views was the national CAP Strategic Plan, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and the guidelines of the European Green Deal. The participants discussed the challenges for agriculture and agricultural policy connected with Russia's attack on Ukraine, rising produce prices, and the resultant looming global food crisis. The question that the debaters had to consider was the future shape of the CAP and this policy's possibilities for ensuring for farmers proper conditions to function in hard times. The representatives of farmers pointed out, as usual, several flaws in the EU policy guidelines, while Plewa expressed surprise that the latest version of Poland's strategic plan was not very ambitious: not ensuring proper targeting of support, being incompatible with EU policy in some places, providing for little funding for renewable energy and animal welfare, ignoring the green deal guidelines, and assuming ineffective instruments for pursuing the goals it set down. The Team Europe representative also pointed out that the discussion on this strategy, particularly in Poland, was filled with negative bias and not quite true argumentation, which caused noticeable reluctance towards being involved in the European Green Deal. Had the Green Deal been implemented, the current challenges connected with energy, food and the climate would have been much smaller.

The fourth debate, "Energy in Rural Areas: Transformation or Revolution?", brought together former Polish Prime Minister Prof. Jerzy Buzek (European Energy Forum of the European Parliament), and Piotr Gradziuk, PhD Hab. (IRWiR PAN), Grzegorz Wiśniewski (EC BREC Institute for Renewable Energy), and Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart (Strefa Zieleni Foundation). The debate was chaired by Edwin Bendyk (Batory Foundation). The following issues were discussed: How will energy transformation affect rural development and the quality of life of rural residents? Is this transformation an opportunity or a threat? In what technological, organisational and social model should it be carried out? Can the goals of transformation in Poland be harmonised with those of the EU's climate and energy policies?

The speakers noted that despite rural areas' capacity for generating energy and contributing to increased national and local energy security, symmetry is

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of Agricultural Chambers and is the plenipotentiary of the Minister of Agriculture and rural development for developing cooperation with Ukraine. The latter is the Managing Director of Goodvalley Poland.

lacking between the functions of agriculture and rural areas on the one hand and the functioning of the energy sector on the other. They underlined that Poland lacked active and consistent implementation of EU energy sector development strategies in recent years, including in renewable energy. Appropriate emphasis has not been placed on rapid transformation; instead, accumulating savings was chosen, with the aim of introducing changes later. This approach has made the Polish economy more vulnerable to price fluctuations and unstable energy supplies.

The participants in the final debate, “Rural Poland 2044: Vision of Development”, were Justyna Duriasz-Bułhak, Prof. Witold Orłowski, Prof. Henryk Runowski and Prof. Barbara Wieliczko. The debate was chaired by Prof. Monika Stanny. The 40-year timeline adopted for the discussion was based on Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004. We are currently halfway along, which enables us to use our knowledge and imagination to judge how things are and how they will be, and also how they should be. The discussion opened with the question of where rural Poland was headed upon accession to the EU, and where it is, almost 20 years down the line. The point of reference was the 2005 book ‘Polska wieś 2025. Wizja rozwoju’ [Rural Poland 2025: Vision of Development], which includes some statements from the debate’s participants Professors Orłowski and Runowski. In 2005, the following three factors were considered of key importance for rural and agricultural development: 1) demographic change, especially the ageing of society; 2) the decreased importance of agriculture to the economy, and 3) agricultural policy. Today, we know that the most accurate predictions were those related to demographic changes, while those about the decreasing role of agriculture and the role of agricultural policy were accurate, though events progressed more slowly than anticipated. Factors missing from the visions of 2005 that are important today include social conflicts in rural areas, the role of rural women, and climate change. According to the panellists, rural areas will see the further polarisation of development, with some villages developing vigorously while others become depopulated and see a decline in services and community life. Digital technologies bring strong hope. Rural areas will turn into smart villages, i.e. having ideas for their own development and how to achieve it. Popular culture will play a key role in unifying the population’s behaviour patterns. Orłowski observed that ‘visions seldom come true, which doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be created’. A vision reflects the aspirations of residents with the support of experts and

their specialist knowledge. Creating visions brings added value *per se*, because it serves to build community and create a platform of communication for different stakeholders.

The conference also included a presentation of the IRWiR PAN Jubilee Book prepared specially for the occasion, as well as a documentary combining archival footage with contemporary images from the Institute's half a century of existence. In the evening, in a less formal ambience, the guests and staff sat down to dinner, reminiscing about their former colleagues, quoting anecdotes from the life of the institute, and talking (a little) about plans for the future.