



The Graduate School for Social Research
in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
of the Polish Academy of Sciences
is organising a conference
to inaugurate the new academic year:

**Pivotal Ideas of the Last 30 Years:
Democracy, Society and Markets at the Turn of the Century**
October 19th-20th, 2018

This conference reflects the belief that initially political, economic, and social changes in Poland and other countries of the region after 1989 were driven by the leading ideas and visions of the time. There was at first a relatively strong consensus among the political and intellectual elites concerning the kind of political and economic systems that had to be built on the ruins of state socialism. Over the next 30 years a different configuration of ideas influencing people's aims and actions has emerged and challenged the original hegemony. This change has its origin in evaluations of performance over the last quarter century, but is also connected to significantly wider changes in Europe and the world.

The point of departure for the conference is the discourse in Europe and beyond influencing the formation of political, economic, and social institutions in the 1990s. We pose the following question: what ideas were we equipped with while embarking on the path of constructing democracy, and what ideas define us now? What were our assumptions when we started building market economies and how do we regard them now? Was the imitation model effective and if so, to what extent? What challenges do we face now that its usefulness seems to be exhausted? How do we evaluate the political economic and social changes of the last quarter century in Poland, in Europe, and in the wider world? How and why do our evaluations differ? How has the context of intellectual reflection changed, and how have ideas evolved? What internal and external factors have influenced the changes in the way we think about democracy and the economy?

We would like to begin by re-creating the intellectual map dominant thirty years ago - the prevailing view of democracy, market economy and social change - and then examine today's ideological disputes, their origins, and their main features. We also want to discuss the cultural changes that have taken place since 1989. Was there a consensus among the intellectual elite, and if so to what extent? What was the relation between the elites and society? How has it evolved and what key events have driven this change? In what way has the system given voice to societal concerns and what has worked (or has not worked) in the democratic mechanisms? What are the causes of the growth of populist movements? Does the rise of populism provide an explanation or is it rather a symptom of a crisis and an upcoming critical juncture in the political development of Poland and the region? What is the relation between the reigning contemporary ideas - ways of defining major problems - in Poland, other countries of the region, and in the Western world broadly understood?