

THE OLD AND THE NEW IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERN OF THE POLISH TRANSITION

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Abstract

The process of transition which started in Poland (and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe) after the breakdown of the communist system in 1989 has many dimensions. One of them is a spatial dimension. Gradually new 'regional geographies' are being shaped, and there emerge regions which can be called the winners and the losers.

The aim of this paper is to identify, analyse and make generalisations about the following issues:

1. main factors influencing the process of transition,
2. regional differences in the pattern of this process,
3. some mechanisms determining the process, and
4. future challenges.

Changes in the sectoral and spatial structures of the Polish economy have been the result of the domestic systemic transformation overlapping with the transformation of the world economic system. In the early 1990s the former process was of primary significance, whereas today - owing to the opening of the country's economy, its inclusion in the European Union, migrations, and the activity of transnational corporations - the other process is gaining prevalence.

The process of transformation of the socio-economic system has not only petrified the old differences in Polish space, but also created favourable conditions for forces leading to an increase in inter-regional disparities. They are best discernible in two dimensions:

- (a) western vs. eastern regions, and
- (b) metropolitan vs. rural areas.

The discrepancies are supposed to be diminished by regional policy modified after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. However, it is too early yet to assess its results fully.

The general pattern of transformation of Poland's spatial structure in the first years of the 21st century has confirmed the importance of metropolitan areas as 'growth engines' and of chief infrastructural axes as channels of the spatial diffusion of innovations. Where the assumptions adopted at the start of the transition have proved not quite right is the role of the western borderland as a potential area of accelerated growth (thanks to easier contacts with the economically stronger partner). So far, however, this accelerated growth has only been observed in selected enclaves, e.g. round border crossings or major roads. This shows that the future regional policy should put more emphasis on the conceptions of endogenous development.

Key words: Poland, transition, dynamics of geographical pattern, accession to EU, spatial differences, regional policy

INTRODUCTION

The close of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries marked a pronounced change in the political and economic position of the Central and Eastern European states (including Poland) in the global arena. There were three processes responsible for the change:

1. a world-wide evolutionary process of structural transformation of the economies and societies;
2. a systemic transition started in 1989, i.e. the passing from a command system to a market-oriented and democratic one; and
3. European Union's enlargement.

Each of those processes is multi-dimensional, with a spatial dimension being one of them. Gradually, new 'regional geographies' are being shaped, and there emerge regions that can be seen as winners or losers of the processes. Their identification and classification have recently been the topics of many studies in Poland. Noteworthy among them are those by Szlachta (1994), Czyż (1994, 1999, 2002), Korcelli (1995), Gorzelak (1998, 2000, 2002), Gilowska (2000), Pietrzyk (2000), Pyszkowski (2000), Chmielewski (2002), Grosse (2002a, b), Grzeszczak (2004), Adamczyk and Borkowski (2005), Churski (2005), Churski and Stryjakiewicz (2006), several publications by the Committee for Space Economy and Regional Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences [KPZK PAN], the European Institute for Regional and Local Development of Warsaw University (edited by Kukliński, Jałowiecki and Gorzelak), as well as the Research Centre for Economic and Statistical Studies [RECESS] of the Central Statistical Office and the Polish Academy of Sciences. These studies open the way for the

formulation of new tasks for regional policy, which has become one of key issues after EU enlargement.

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the diversification of the Polish space that started at the close of the 20th century under the impact of the combined results of the above-mentioned processes. In particular, attention will be focused on the effects of the socio-economic transition and EU building on the regional geography of Poland and Polish regional policy. The article has a synthesising character and refers to recent Polish regional studies.

DIVERSIFICATION OF POLISH SPACE AND THE PROCESS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Poland has traditionally displayed marked regional contrasts which go back to the period of the country's partition (1795-1918) among three different political, social and economic systems (Russia, Prussia and Austria). The systemic transition initiated in 1989 has not only petrified the old spatial disparities, but also opened the way to very strong forces leading to new regional inequalities. As a result, there has been a growing polarisation of the regional system, especially along two dimensions:

- (1) poorly developed eastern regions versus western ones with more advanced economic potential, and
- (2) rural versus urban (in particular metropolitan) areas.

In terms of the structural change of the economy, in the initial period of the transformation Polish regions responded to the so-called 'shock therapy' in two ways (for details see Stryjakiewicz 2000):

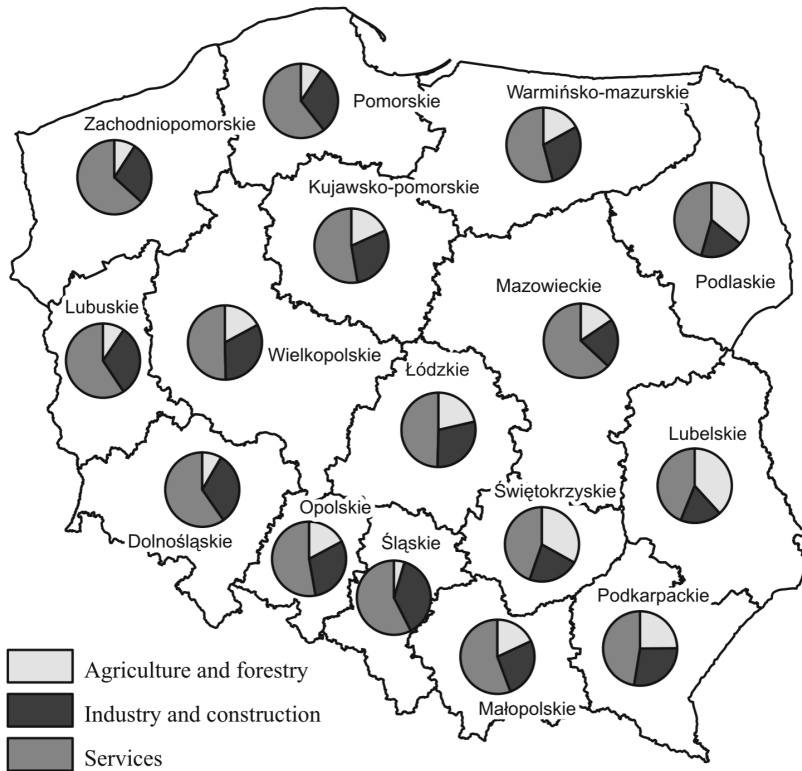


Figure 1 Employment structure in Poland by sectors and regions (voivodeships), 2007.

Source: own compilation based on Regional Data Bank, Central Statistical Office.

- (a) service orientation of the regional economies (following the general worldwide trend) in the west of the country: a decline in industrial employment was accompanied by a relative increase in service employment; and
- (b) agricultural reorientation of the regional economies (hence their structural retrogression) in the eastern part: here the decline in industrial employment was accompanied by an increase in agricultural employment, which was connected with the return of discharged peasant-workers to their tiny farms after the collapse of many industrial enterprises.

The current spatial differences in employment by main economic sectors are presented in Figure 1. It shows, among other things, that in some regions (voivodeships¹) the proportion of agricultural employment is close to the 'old-Union' average (e.g. in Silesia, at 4.7%), while in others it is considerably higher (Lublin 38.2%, Podlasie 36.0%).

The east-west split in the Polish space can be readily observed along many dimensions and characterised by many indicators concerning

¹ The Polish territorial-administrative system is a three-tier one and embraces: provinces (called voivodeships) corresponding to the NUTS 2 level, districts (poviats) – NUTS 4, and towns and communes – NUTS 5.

not only technical and social infrastructure and economic phenomena (such as per capita regional GDP or an inflow of foreign investment), but also entrepreneurial culture, the diffusion of innovations, attitudes towards the transformation process, 'external openness' of regions and localities, and election results.

Among the areas where beneficial effects of the systemic transition are the most readily visible are a few metropolitan regions, such as Warsaw, Poznań, Cracow, Wrocław, and the Tri-City of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot. The regions leading the way in transformation (the 'winners') are characterised by:

- (a) relatively diversified economic structures,
- (b) well-developed services (including academic centres) and good infrastructure,
- (c) a highly skilled and diversified labour force,
- (d) regional and local communities displaying a high level of entrepreneurial activity,
- (e) a concentration of intellectual and professional potential resulting in above-average management efficiency and capacity for efficient operations, and
- (f) extensive external links (cf. Szlachta 1994, Gorzelak 1998, 2002).

The crisis-breeding regional structures have none of the above features.

The process of transition also reveals other spatial regularities which can be summarised as follows:

1. The preservation and reinforcement of the overly dominant role of the state's capital city in the regional structure inherited from the communist system. It is related, on the one hand, to Warsaw's better infrastructure (e.g. the

concentration of air connections there), and on the other, to continuing excessive dependence between the economic sphere and power centres, and hence the role of lobbying or a rapid flow of information between them. This bears out the statement by Enyedi (1990) that the new formation of regional development schemes appears in a reversed way compared with the West European experience. In the latter the regional policies developed as the government intervened into the local development. In East European countries local communities work at reducing the traditional impact of central authority. It should be emphasised, however, that this statement refers primarily to the most dynamic local and regional communities.

2. New regional growth centres are emerging (Poznań, Wrocław, Gdańsk) unconnected with the old industrial districts. Those latter, in turn, employ the influence of the traditional lobbies of the mining, power and metallurgical industries as well as of trade unions to maintain their privileged position. The Upper Silesian Industrial District, in spite of the ongoing, partly successful, process of its restructuring (with the help of both the central government and the EU), is still one of the most troublesome problem areas not only in Poland, but also at the European scale.

3. Other problem areas are the typically agricultural voivodeships of the so-called eastern wall as well as some of those of northern and western Poland where state-owned farms used to predominate during the communist period. The low profitability of agricultural production and the deeply ingrained employed-worker mentality discourage people from buying the land that

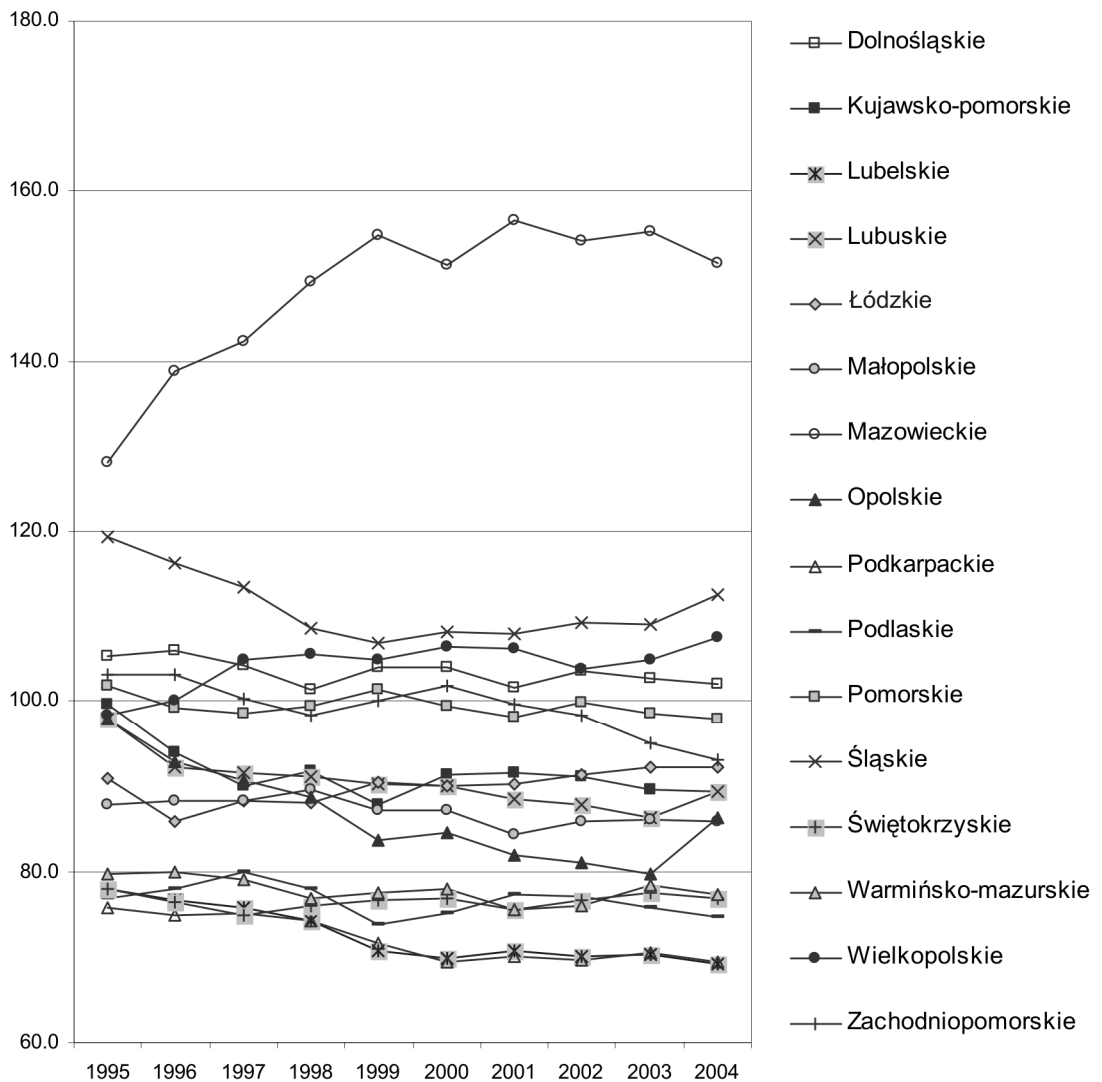


Figure 2 Dynamics per capita GDP by regions (voivodeships) in 1995-2004 (Poland 100).

Source: own calculations based on Regional Data Bank, Central Statistical Office.

used to belong to those farms and a large proportion of agricultural land lies fallow. These are also depopulated areas with high unemployment rates. There are still considerable regional differences in the efficiency of agricultural production.

The best way to give a synthetic assessment of the effect the transformation has had on the

advancement of the Polish regions is to present the GDP dynamics (in spite of all the reservations concerning this indicator).

Figure 2 shows the unquestioned leader to be Mazovia, or more precisely the Warsaw metropolitan area within it. This corroborates the global tendency towards the rise in importance of metropolitan regions, but on the

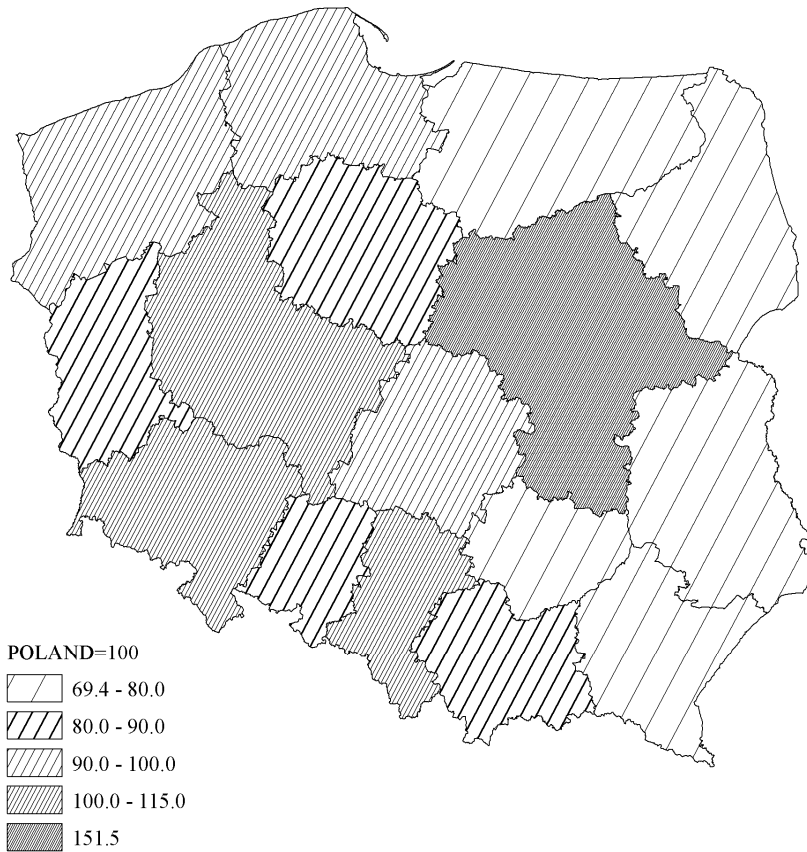


Figure 3 GDP per capita in 2004 by voivodeship.

Source: Central Statistical Office 2005.

other hand also the old centralisation tendency going back to the communist period. Apart from Mazovia, only a few other voivodeships, also including metropolitan areas, show a narrowing of the gap separating them from the EU average. The peripheries (mainly the eastern voivodeships) do not tend to close the distance. This also refers to Opole, a specific voivodeship with a substantial proportion of people holding a double Polish-German citizenship. The opening of the boundaries in the early 1990s offered them an opportunity to earn money in Germany and thus contributed to a serious population outflow. Unfortunately,

the money earned abroad was only minimally invested in the region, and thus it did not contribute to its growth. As Figure 2 shows, it was only Poland's accession to the EU (2004) that reversed this tendency, but it is too early yet to assess whether or not it is permanent.

The spatial distribution of per capita GDP by voivodeship is presented in Figure 3. In the expanded European Union the Polish voivodeships, especially the eastern and some central ones, are among the poorest regions. The strongest voivodeship, Mazovia (in 2004 its per capita GDP amounted to 78.6% of the EU-

27 average), corresponds roughly to the poorest regions of southern Italy or the former East Germany (Brandenburg-Nordost, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). The other relatively well-developed Polish regions, such as Silesia, Lower Silesia and Wielkopolska (52-57% of the EU-27 average), have per capita GDP figures at the level of the poorest regions of the old EU-15, such as Dytiki Ellada and Anatoliki Makedonia Thraki in Greece. The 'eastern wall' voivodeships: Lublin, Podkarpacie, Podlasie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmia-Mazuria, are among the poorest regions of both, old and new member states of the EU. Their GDP amounted to 35-40% of the EU-27 average. It should be emphasised that per capita GDP in those voivodeships is lower than it was in the poorest regions of Greece, Portugal and Spain on their accession to the EU. Even poorer (24-28% of the EU-27 average) are only some regions of Bulgaria and Romania.

The above-presented diversification and steady increase in the inter-regional differences in Poland during the transition period (as in most of the other post-communist countries) have made it necessary to work out a new regional policy, especially after the accession to the EU.

POLISH SPACE AND THE PROCESS OF EU BUILDING

Poland's way to the European Union

Poland's way to the European Union was long and hard. In the years 1945-1989 the country was a satellite of the Soviet Union and helped to set up the two East European alliances in opposition to the Western world: military (the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991) and economic (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, 1949-

1991). The situation changed after the 1989 events, that is, after the collapse of the Communist bloc and the restoration of full sovereignty. Since that time Poland's priority among its development targets has been a political and economic integration with the West European states.

Poland's membership of the European Union was preceded by a long pre-accession period spent on adjusting the country's legal system and economic rules to the EU standards. Like the other candidate countries, Poland had to meet three basic criteria: to develop democracy and stable rule of law; to build the foundations of an efficient market economy; and to be able to fulfil the duties implied by the membership. The Polish way to the European Union spanned a period of 15 years, from the expression of the will to integrate to the final signature put on the accession treaty. The crucial stages of this way are presented in Table 1.

Signing the accession treaty was preceded by a national referendum. With a turnout of 59%, 78% of the voters said 'yes' to Poland's EU membership (as against 92% in Slovakia, 91% in Lithuania, 84% in Hungary, and 77% in the Czech Republic). However, the level of support varied with the region, as discussed in the next section.

The integration with the 'old' Union is not full yet, as evidenced by the various transition periods still in force. They are intended, among other things, to protect land and other fixed assets against buy-out by foreigners, a gradual attainment of the EU standards (e.g. ecological or sanitary), and employment limits in some West European states (afraid of a massive

Table 1 Stages of Poland's accession to the European Union

Date and place	Event
19 September 1989, Warsaw	Signing treaty concerning trade and economic co-operation between Poland and European Communities
16 December 1991, Brussels	Signing European Treaty, agreement of association of Poland with European Communities
8 April 1994, Brussels	Submitting official application for Poland's EU membership to European Council
8 August 1996, Warsaw	Setting up European Integration Committee, chief EU integration organ of Polish Republic
31 March 1998, Warsaw	Start of negotiations for conditions of Poland's admittance to EU
13 December 2002, Copenhagen	End of negotiation process
16 April 2003, Athens	Signing accession treaty by Poland
7-8 June 2003, Poland	National referendum on Poland's EU membership
1 May 2004, Dublin	Official admittance of Poland to EU

Source: based on Kaczmarek and Parysek (2005).

inflow of workers in the face of their own high domestic unemployment). The ever greater economic stability of the East-Central European countries (falling inflation, budget deficit and indebtedness) should soon make them ready to join the monetary union and replace domestic currencies with the euro. In turn, the sealing of the Union's outer limits (including Poland's eastern boundary) is a condition for their joining the Schengen Treaty, which has done away with border control within the Union.

Whatever the difficulties hindering the integration process, it should be emphasised that the enlargement of the European Union has offered Poland an opportunity to overcome the detrimental effects of the division of Europe after the Second World War, and that it has placed the country in a totally new position in the international political, social and economic

space. However, the present paper is not concerned with the international consequences of the Polish accession to the EU, but with its domestic effects. Their spatial dimension is closely connected with the process of post-communist socio-economic transition, whose significance has been predominant. Unfortunately, Poland's EU membership is too recent to allow the formulation of far-reaching conclusions and generalisations.

Geography of support for European integration and some of its determinants

The disparities in the level of socio-economic development are reflected in differences in the 'external openness' of Polish regions and localities.

An excellent illustration is the map of citizen support for Poland's membership of the

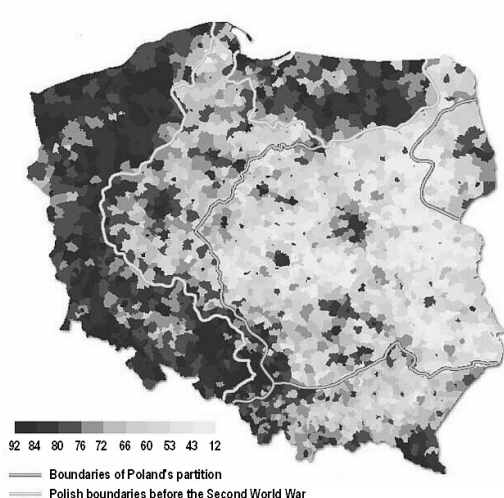


Figure 4 Citizen support for Poland's EU membership. Source: KBW PKW Warsaw (referendum results); Imagis.

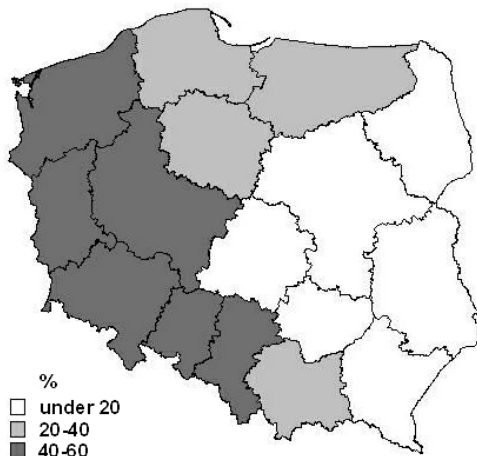


Figure 5 Share of communes engaged in foreign partnerships. Source: Kaczmarek 2004:160.

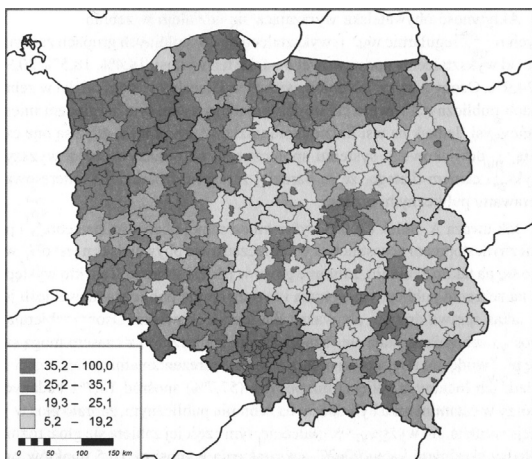


Figure 6 Percentage of councillors with higher education, 2005. Source: Wendt 2007:115.

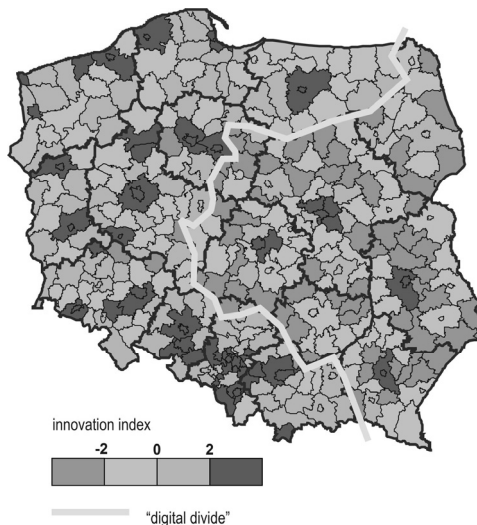


Figure 7 Innovation index. Source: Guzik 2004:34.

European Union expressed in a referendum (Figure 4). Another indicator of 'external openness' can be international partnership agreements signed by the communes (Figure 5). An analysis of both maps leads to the conclusion that geography does matter. The

idea of European integration was backed primarily by the western part of the country and the urban population. The principal factor involved is the 'proximity effect'. The population and authorities of areas located close to the western border, with easier access to the

EU countries and more opportunities for direct contacts, are more pro-European and open to the integration process (and the same holds for the metropolitan areas).

The east-west divide between the Polish regions concerning their 'external openness' and attitudes towards the integration process has also other determinants. One can list here:

- (a) cultural heritage (the culture of 'isolationism' is still visible in the areas of the former Russian partition);
- (b) demographic and social structures (a younger and mixed population in the western regions versus an older, homogeneous and firmly rooted one in the eastern and southern voivodeships);
- (c) degree of ruralisation (higher in the east, cf. Figure 1);
- (d) level of education of the local leaders (the pronounced inter-regional differences in it are shown in Figure 6); and
- (e) level of innovativeness (it has been defined recently by Guzik (2004) with the help of several indicators; a synthesis is presented in Figure 7).

Naturally, the relationship between the level of support for the European integration and its determinants (especially in a regional approach) requires deeper investigations.

Impact of EU enlargement on the transformation of Polish space

The identification of the impact of EU enlargement on the spatial transformation of post-communist countries is a very difficult task. In Poland the impact could be felt already in the pre-accession period and, in my opinion, manifested itself in three basic spheres:

- (1) reorientation of foreign links;
- (2) emergence of cross-border territorial structures and new forms of co-operation; and
- (3) regional policy.

After 1989 Poland radically reversed its **foreign links** from the East to the West. This Western orientation intensified after 1991, that is, after Poland had signed an Interim Association Agreement with European Communities. Today the proportion of EU states in Polish trade connections is predominant; in many voivodeships, especially western ones (Lower Silesia, Opole), it often exceeds 90%.

This West-East asymmetry (i.e. the Western bias) is plainly visible in Figure 8. Exports to the EU countries have grown substantially since Poland was granted full membership in 2004 and become one of the key factors not only of the economic growth of the Polish state as a whole, but also of an emergence of export regions (largely located in the west of the country, near the existing and planned motorways, cf. Figure 8). This increase in West-oriented export is highly advantageous since it contributes to an increase in the GDP and a fall in unemployment, but on the other hand it reinforces regional disparities and the marginalisation of the eastern regions.

The advancing economic integration with the countries of the 'old' European Union has become a source of growth impulses and innovation diffusion, thus defining the basic directions of change in Poland's spatial structure at the start of the 21st century. The general outline of this transformation is presented in Figure 9. As Węćławowicz et al. (2006) note, the country's regions have achieved

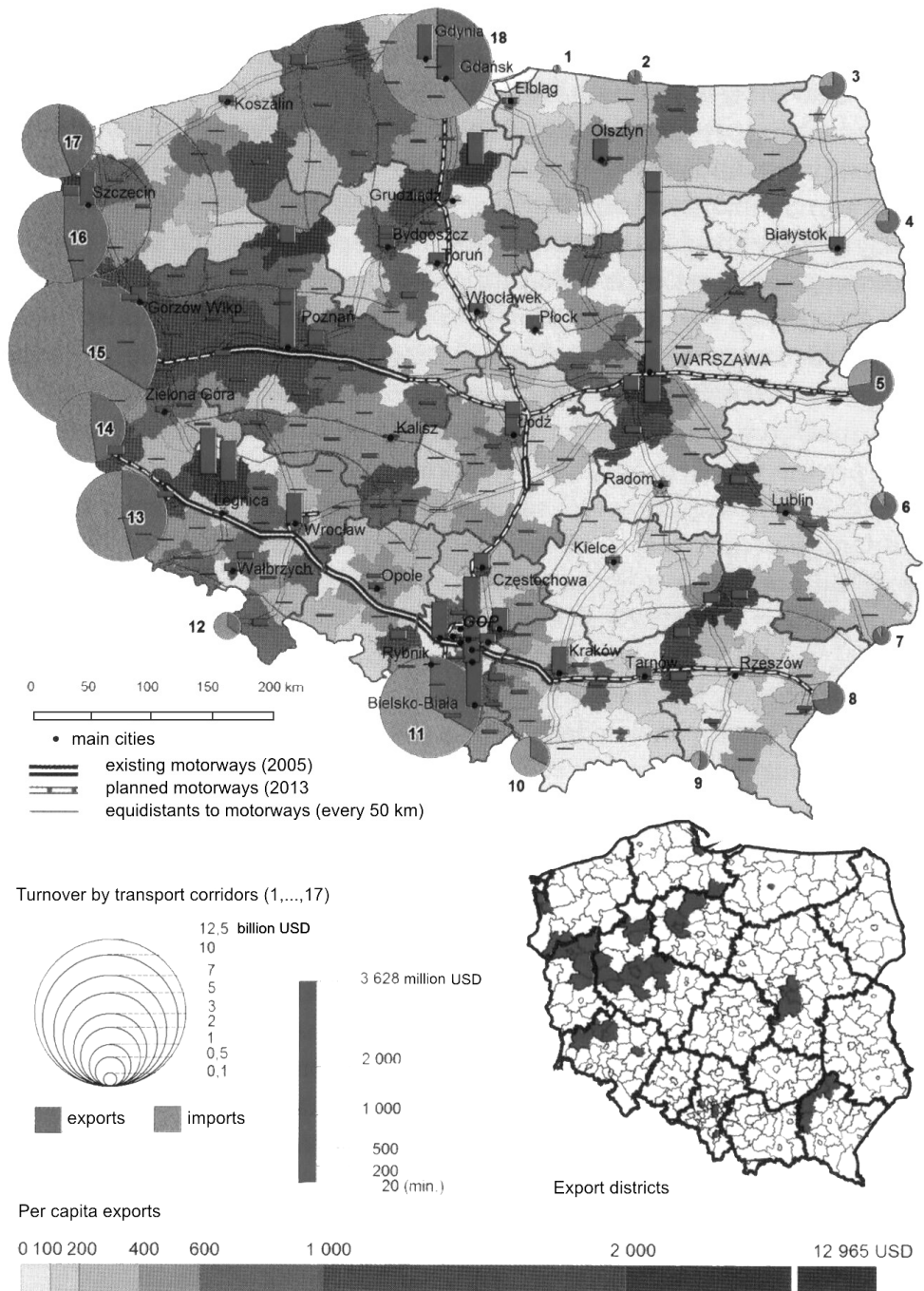


Figure 8 Spatial pattern of export areas.

Source: Komornicki 2004, based on data of Foreign Trade Information Centre.

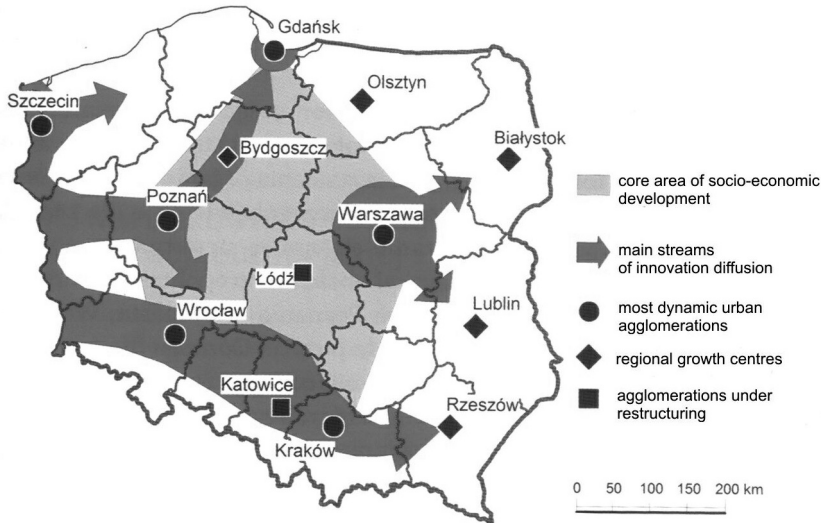


Figure 9 General tendencies of change in the spatial structure of Poland at the beginning of the 21st century. Source: Aktualizacja Raportu..., 2003; Węclawowicz et al., 2006:19.

mixed success in joining the system of socio-economic links at the European scale. For some, integration with the European Union "has been limited to the absorption of imported goods and (...) means from the Structural Funds and agricultural subsidies" (2006:22). The best-integrated areas are multi-functional metropolitan regions, some regional centres (especially those with EU foreign direct investment or tourist resorts), and the western border areas.

The role of border areas has changed radically in the process of EU building. In particular, the Polish-German borderland has become a kind of laboratory for integration processes on the eastern EU fringe since the early 1990s. The formation of new transborder relationships took place on two planes:

- (a) spontaneous individual initiatives of various actors (such as business people, schools, churches, towns and communes), and

- (b) attempts at an institutionalisation of cross-border co-operation and the emergence of cross-border territorial structures.

Thanks to the impulses and financial help from the European Union, there have appeared such structures as Euroregions, whose maps (Figure 10) have already made it to geography handbooks and atlases.

Euroregions are the most popular and advanced institutional form of cross-border co-operation involving a variety of local, regional, national and international actors. Polish experiences show how the situations of particular Euroregions differ depending on the involvement of the above actors, and on other determinants of co-operation, such as: natural conditions, demographic potential, similarity of the languages, ethnic relations, historical continuity of the neighbourhood, the degree of disproportion in economic development and complementarity of the economies, and others.

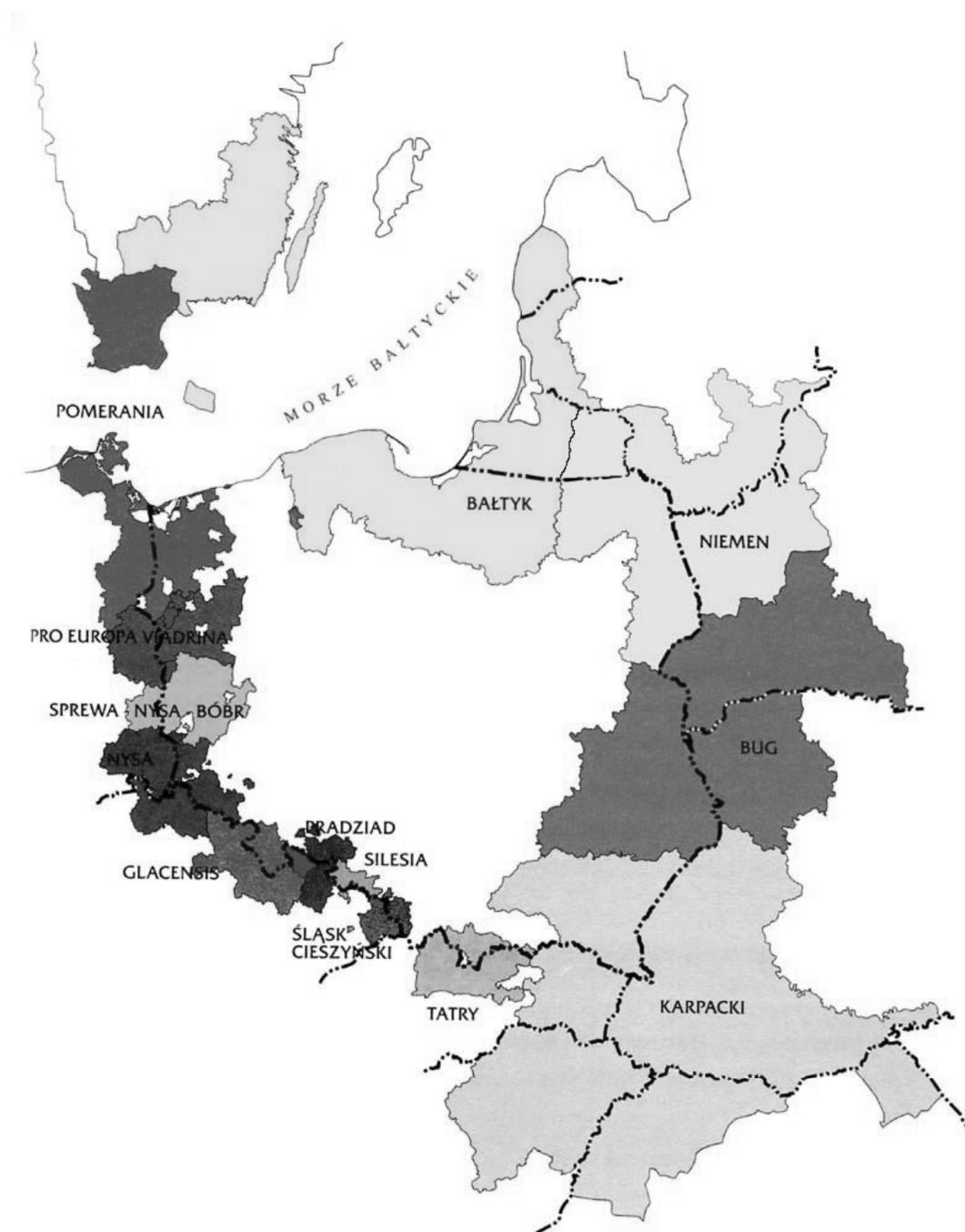


Figure 10 Euroregions with Polish participation

The Euroregions that seem to be the most privileged are those in the German-Polish borderland where efforts of local and regional authorities have been backed up (especially on the German side) by government and EU means since their very establishment. On the other hand, however, the disparity in the economic development on both sides of the border, the incompatibility of the legal systems, the linguistic barrier, the heritage of the past, and negative social stereotypes can hinder quick and true integration. In this respect, the situation on the Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak borders is easier. In this area one can recently notice many grass-roots initiatives.

The situation along Poland's eastern border is highly diversified, and the development of transborder co-operation (with the exception of private trade) is either limited by the scarcity of financial means and legal deficiencies (Ukraine), or by political factors and lack of Euroregional awareness (Belarus). The experience of the extensive Carpathian Euroregion (embracing parts of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Ukraine) shows that the creation of Euroregions 'from above', when there are no conditions for the formation of functional links (and merely to follow West European models), ends with a failure, that is, the Euroregion leads only a paper existence.

Apart from Euroregions, there are also other examples of transborder institutional co-operation, such as partnership agreements between towns and communes (e.g. Słubice-Frankfurt/O., Racibórz-Opava) and mixed chambers of industry and commerce (e.g. the Polish-Lithuanian one). Most of these new institutions are being created in the Polish-

German borderland. Especially noteworthy is the European University Viadrina located on both sides of the border in Frankfurt upon Oder and Słubice.

The greatest impact of the EU on the transformation of Polish space can be seen in the domain of **regional policy**. In the communist period, regional policy in Poland was of minor importance; it was reduced primarily to measures conforming to the ideological and political priorities currently in force. During the economic recession of the 1980s and the unsuccessful attempts at reforming the socialist economy, regional policy was even abandoned altogether (cf. Węclawowicz 2002).

With the start of the transformation process, there appeared dilemmas as to its pace and spatial dimension which were summed up by Kukliński (1992) in the form of two questions:

1. is the pace of regional diversification not too fast, and is it not quickly assuming too large dimensions? and
2. what regions should be supported: strong ones, capable of becoming efficient, internationally competitive engines of structural change, or, because of social reasons, weak ones, which will perpetuate the old structural patterns?

Hence, a fundamental problem of that period of the transformation was how to combine a strategic (long-term) reorientation with tactical (short-term) needs. Initially, the latter won, with an atrophy of regional policy in Poland as a consequence. Regional policy and its instruments were practically reduced to attempts at alleviating the effects of the spatial

concentrations of unemployment². It was only on 17 October 1992 that Parliament (Sejm) adopted the *Socio-Economic Policy Guidelines*, one full chapter of which was dedicated to regional policy. The later course of the transformation in the 1990s proved the measures undertaken to be insufficient and ineffective.

As has been mentioned before, the transformation of the socio-economic system widened regional differences. Of special importance was a high concentration of adverse effects of socio-economic changes in poorly developed regions, which manifested itself primarily in a rise in unemployment. This fact forced the government to undertake work on a new model of regional policy. The other factor intensifying the progress and scope of the work was the advancing process of integration with the European Union. Poland's application for membership in 1994 and the start of accession negotiations in 1998 made it necessary for the country to introduce the rules and mechanisms compatible with EU regional policy.

The implementation of the new model of regional policy in Poland can be divided into two periods:

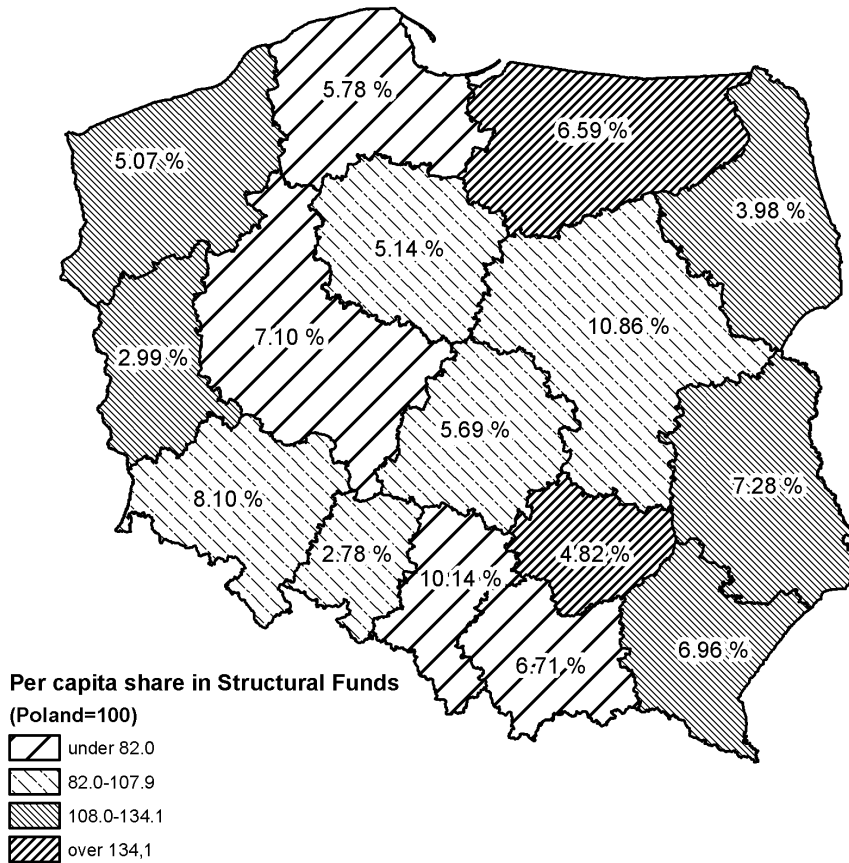
- (1) 2000-2003, the pre-accession period. It was the consequence of the territorial-administrative reform introduced in 1999 and the need to put Polish regional policy in order during accession talks with the European Union. The document setting the directions and scope of changes

introduced at that time was the *Principles of Regional Development Support Act*, which came into force on 12 May 2000 and defined the new model of regional policy programming and implementation.

- (2) 2004 onwards, Poland's first years as a member of the European Union. It is the consequence of Poland's joining the EU and therefore having, first, to draw up further strategic documents, such as the *National Development Plan (NDP)* providing a basis for negotiating a *Community Support Framework (CSF)* with the European Commission, and secondly, to fully adjust its regional policy to EU standards in order to gain access to the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

It is not the aim of the present paper to give a detailed presentation of the new model of Polish regional policy (this has been done recently by, e.g., Churski and Stryjakiewicz 2006), and it is too early yet to appraise its effects. It should only be noted that, paradoxically enough, it is those regions that were against Poland joining the European Union that received the largest per capita support from EU means in the years 2004-2006 (see Figure 11) and will receive it again in 2007-2013. However, the experiences of the 'old' European Union states and of East Germany show that even substantial assistance means fail to ensure growth in regions with a low endogenous potential. The transformation process in Poland has corroborated this regularity so far. As Gorzelak (2002:69) observes, "apart from several large agglomerations, a few areas of tourist attraction, and a part of the western borderland, Polish regions are threatened with peripheralisation in the integrating European space, and this danger is

² An example of such policy was tax exemption for foreign investments located in high-unemployment regions. This tool proved to be of little effect, largely due to infrastructural deficiencies in those regions.



10.86% - share of voivodeships in Structural Fund means

Figure 11 Division of means from the Structural Funds among the voivodeships.
Source: Integrated Operational Programme for Regional Development, 2004-2006.

especially pronounced in the case of eastern Poland."

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Changes in the sectoral and spatial structures of the Polish economy have been the result of the domestic systemic transformation overlapping with the transformation of the world economic system. In the early 1990s the former process was of primary significance, whereas today –

owing to the opening of the country's economy, its inclusion in the European Union structures, migrations, and the activity of transnational corporations – the other process is gaining prevalence.

The general pattern of transformation of Poland's spatial structure in the first years of the 21st century has confirmed the importance of metropolitan areas as 'growth engines' and of chief infrastructural axes as channels of the spatial diffusion of innovations. Where the

assumptions adopted at the start of the transition have proved not quite right is the role of the western borderland as a potential area of accelerated growth (thanks to easier contacts with the economically stronger partner). So far, however, this accelerated growth has only been observed in selected enclaves, e.g. round border crossings or major roads. This shows that the future regional policy should put more emphasis on the conceptions of endogenous development.

The most serious challenges facing the Polish regions and regional policy include:

1. narrowing the years-long gap in the level of transport infrastructure,
2. improving human and social capital,
3. improving the innovativeness of the economy, creating regional innovation networks,
4. multi-functional development of rural areas, and
5. decentralisation, especially of public finance.

The new model of regional policy in Poland as reflected in the *Project of the National Strategy of Regional Development for the years 2007-2013* makes the country closer to the EU standards. The proper functioning of this model requires both, an increase in the financial means earmarked in the state budget for regional development and, urgently, an increase in the financial independence of voivodeship self-governments through an increase in their own income. These changes are indispensable if Poland is to be able to make efficient use of the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. Besides, the effectiveness of the regional policy will also depend on whether it is going to be

mostly 'social', relying on long-term external subsidies for regional economies and leading to an atrophy of local potentials, or largely growth-oriented and leading to permanent reinforcement of endogenous competitive advantages of the regions. The question "Is the new regional geography of Poland after EU enlargement going to remain in its basic pattern the old one?" is still open.

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Résumé

Staré a nové v geografických vzorech polské transformace

Transformace sociálně-ekonomického systému v zemích střední a východní Evropy po roce 1989 je procesem, který se projevuje ve vícero dimenzích. Jednou z nich je dimenze prostorová. V polském prostoru lze sledovat jak procesy odrážející jeho dřívější diferenciaci, tak postupně se formující nové regionální vazby. V důsledku vystupují oblasti, které můžeme označit za vítěze, případně poražené v tomto procesu proměn. Jejich identifikace a klasifikace, jak rovněž formulace nových úkolů pro regionální politiku je v poslední době předmětem mnoha publikací a zpráv.

Předkládaný článek analyzuje několik důležitých problémů spojených s transformací polského prostoru v kontextu regionálního rozvoje. Patří mezi ně:

- a) podmínky transformačního procesu;
- b) regionální diferenciaci transformace prostorově-ekonomických struktur a disproporce rozvoje regionů;
- c) mechanismy determinující proces transformace (v tom ve spojitosti s členstvím v Evropské unii);
- d) budoucí výzvy.

Transformace odvětvové a prostorové struktury polského hospodářství je výsledkem interference procesů systémové transformace, jak rovněž transformace světového hospodářského systému. Na začátku 90. let dvacátého století převládal význam procesů prvního typu, v současnosti – díky otevření ekonomiky, integraci země do struktur Evropské unie, migracím a také aktivitám nadnárodních korporací – stále silněji se projevuje působení procesů druhého typu.

Proces transformace sociálně-ekonomického systému nejenže odrážel dřívější diferenciaci polského prostoru, ale vytvořil také podmínky pro působení nových sil vedoucích k růstu meziregionálních disproporcí. Z hlediska dimenzí těchto disproporcí jsou patrné především tyto dvě:

- a) západní oblasti – východní oblasti země a
- b) metropolitní oblasti – venkovské oblasti.

Několik příkladů diferenciaci sociálně-ekonomického prostoru Polska a také diferenciaci dynamiky regionálního rozvoje představují přiložené obrázky. Jestliže některé rozdíly (např. ve vztahu ke struktuře zaměstnaných nebo HDP) je možno vysvětlovat dědictvím minulosti sahající až do období dělení Polska, pak většina obrázků ilustruje rozdíly v „otevřenosti“ regionů ve vztahu

k současným proměnám, a to jak politickým (např. podpora obyvatelstva členství Polska v Evropské unii, aktivity v navazování partnerských kontaktů se zahraničím přes teritoriální samosprávy), tak i hospodářským (např. oblasti exportu). Obecné schéma transformace prostorové struktury Polska v prvních letech 21. století představuje obr. 9. Potvrzuje význam metropolitních oblastí jakožto „lokomotiv rozvoje“ a hlavních infrastrukturních os coby kanálů prostorové difúze inovací. Naproti tomu nebyly zcela potvrzeny vstupní předpoklady, jež byly formulovány na začátku transformačního procesu a které vyzdvihovaly roli západních příhraničních oblastí jakožto potenciálních regionů urychleného rozvoje

(vlivem jednodušších kontaktů s hospodářsky silnějším partnerem). Doposud byl onen dynamičtější rozvoj spatřen jedině v případě některých „enkláv“, např. v blízkosti hraničních přechodů, případně důležitějších komunikací, což dokazuje, že při vytváření budoucí regionální politiky je třeba klást větší důraz na koncepci endogenního rozvoje.

Samostatná pozornost v příspěvků je věnována vlivu rozšíření Evropské unie (v tom unijní regionální politiky) na změny polského prostoru. Je ale stále ještě brzy na to hodnotit výsledky tohoto procesu.