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**Poland and Regions –
The Perspective of Development in the XXI Century
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An Overview of the Conference Proceedings**

Introduction

The October 2008 Warsaw Conference, dedicated to the perspective of development of Poland and regions in an European and global context, was organized jointly by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development, the Club of Rome and the Polish Economic Society. It constituted a next step on the road to revive strategic thinking in the field of socio-economic development and design of policies to trigger and/or reinforce long-term growth tendencies at the national and regional level in the framework of the European Union. However, the Conference aimed also explicitly at expanding the scope of its objectives and issues covered to reach beyond immediate and short-term structuring conditions anchored in the national and European status quo. The unavoidable reverberations of the recent global financial crisis added momentum to the efforts by the Organizers to take into account global frameworks as a directly pertinent developmental factor, generating shocks, both positive and negative stimuli across nations and regions.

To achieve these aims, apart from introducing a set of evaluative, problem-oriented panel sessions, three crucial inputs were provided for the Conference participants. These inputs included 1) an extensive presentation of preliminary diagnosis of key opportunities and challenges faced by Poland in the time horizon of 2030 – prepared by the Team of Strategic Advisors to the Prime Minister of the Polish Republic, headed by Minister Michał Boni and 2) a presentation of assumptions, objectives and the structure of the new global research programme “A New Path for World Development” extended to the horizon of 2050 – formulated by the Club of Rome headed by its new Secretary General Martin Lees. The third of the crucial inputs was delivered by a panel session focused on the case of three most persistently underdeveloped macro-regions in Europe, that is Southern Italy (Mezzogiorno), Eastern Germany, and Eastern Poland – each of which have been designated as an object of prolonged and large scale public intervention to trigger growth. The region-oriented session

adopted a long view approach to its problematique complemented with insights coming from theories of globalization, public management, knowledge management, and social economy. Several concrete research and policy proposals to drive an innovative approach to “backward” regions also emerged both from the panel discussions and several Conference papers related to the panel problematic.

The Warsaw Conference gathered panelists, discussants and audience representing four strategic communities – the political community, the academic community, the business community, and the civil society community, coming from many parts of the world. In addition, catering for a strategic – “one generation plus” – orientation, the Conference Organizers invited a numerous representation of the younger generation to take part in the proceedings outlining challenges, scenarios and visions pertaining to the world 20 and 40 years ahead of the present moment. Many efforts were undertaken to involve the community of mass media in the Conference as well – the role of this community was widely recognized as being of key importance for the urgent task of raising the awareness and interest of the public in strategic thinking and generating the public’s support for strategic actions to follow.

The Conference proceedings were held in six sessions followed by discussant interventions and general discussions. The introductory session outlined the general aims of the Conference and raised expectations related to its proceedings. It also envisaged the need to design a set of follow-up activities. The 1st panel session was dedicated to the presentation of the Club of Rome’s “New Path for World Development” global research programme. The 2nd panel session was devoted to an evaluation of the XX century, interpreted through the conceptual lenses of the Gordian Knots and Alexandrian Solutions methodology. The 3rd panel session carried on this approach, focusing on the reality and visions of the XXI century. The 4th panel session applied the methodological approach to a discussion of the experiences of the European regions, looking at developmental trends and modes of policy intervention in Southern Italy, Eastern Germany and Eastern Poland. The 5th session was concentrated on the presentation of Polish strategic dilemmas subsumed under the question “Polonia Quo Vadis?”. The 6th session aimed at summarizing and closing the two-day Conference proceedings, indicating also some of the follow-up activities immediately resulting from the proceedings.

An Overview of the Conference Proceedings

The present overview focuses on the identification of a few key, cross-cutting issues raised during the Conference proceedings, region-oriented research and policy proposals, and conclusions indicating the course of immediate follow-up activities. Therefore, apart from the Introductory and Concluding sessions, it only briefly summarizes the rich contents of the remaining sessions. A full presentation of the Conference proceedings as well as more long-term oriented proposals pertinent to the Regio Futures Programme (RFP), Triple Mezzogiorno Programme (TMP) and Polonia Quo Vadis Programme (PQVP) stemming from them, will be presented in a post-conference volume, expected to be published in the first quarter of 2009.

Introductory Session

The Introductory Session was chaired by the Polish Minister of Regional Development, Elżbieta Bieńkowska. The panelists included: Michał Boni (Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Chief of the Group of the Strategic Advisors to the Prime Minister Donald Tusk); Jan Olbrycht (Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development, European Parliament); Barrie Stevens (Director of the International Futures Programme OECD); and Elżbieta Mączyńska (President of the Polish Economic Society). Following the Conference opening addresses, the panelists outlined general aims of the Conference and raised expectations related to its proceedings and activities to follow.

Minister Elżbieta Bieńkowska welcomed the Conference as a next step on the road to formulating a new, long-term strategy of development for Poland and its regions. The need to mount efforts leading to the preparation of such a strategy had been recognized by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development already at the beginning of its current term. This has, inter alia, been manifest in the integration of the Regio Futures Programme in the operation of the Ministry. As a result the Ministry continues to support collaborative initiatives exploring innovative theoretical and practical approaches to development, focusing especially on interplays between path dependency and path construction at the regional level and ideas pertinent to a new formula of European cohesion policy.

Drawing on the earlier initiatives, the Ministry favours, however, a strategic approach to regional development which is tuned not only to the current and envisaged European structural funds frameworks but also draws on interdisciplinary analyses of global trends as those might have a strong impact on developmental trajectories of Poland and the regions.

This is why the Conference was planned to accommodate three major streams of diagnostic and prospective thinking – Polonia Quo Vadis (national) stream embodied in the presentation by Minister Michał Boni, the New Path for World Development (global) stream embodied in the presentation by the Secretary General of the Club of Rome Martin Lees, and the Triple Mezzogiorno (regional) stream embodied in the presentations by eminent Italian, German and Polish regional development experts. The three streams were embedded within a broader discussion frame oriented towards strategic lessons that could be drawn from the experiences of the XX and early XXI century in view of the challenge to formulate a long-term – 2030 and possibly 2050 – strategy of development for Poland and the regions.

Minister Michał Boni stressed that the Conference was essentially an exercise in achieving a difficult aim of building a strategic orientation in thinking about the future. He offered to base this orientation on four core principles to be inculcated not only in the decision-making circles but also in the general public whose support for strategic action is essential. The four principles entail:

- 1) the primacy of freedom over subordination;
- 2) the primacy of the future over the presence;
- 3) the primacy of aspirations over claims; and
- 4) the primacy of social capital of development over the social capital of survival.

These core principles embody most challenging dilemmas to be resolved while formulating long-term strategies of development for Poland and its regions.

The dilemmas inherent in the first of the principles culminate in the questions regarding the balance between regulation (public intervention) and deregulation (market forces), between spontaneous participation by society and guided action by public institutions. The dilemmas inherent in the second of the principles culminate in the questions regarding the balance between civic responsibility towards next generations and political responsiveness to current demands. They also pertain a balance between short-term solutions (which might only temporarily suppress mounting developmental barriers) and long-term ones (which might occasionally necessitate painful measures in an attempt to unblock developmental paths).

The dilemmas inherent in the third of the principles culminate in the questions regarding dominant societal attitudes towards public institutions, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, self-responsibility of the individual and social groups. They touch on the issue of balance between claims for assistance addressed at public institutions, aspirations to author one's own success, and capacity for bottom-up collective action to provide for common good. The dilemmas inherent in the fourth of the principles culminate in the

questions regarding the balance between historically conditioned adaptive (survival) and innovative (developmental) potential of Polish society. Increased public trust is a crucial precondition for successful resolution of the four clusters of dilemmas.

Jan Olbrycht emphasized the timing and scope of the Conference, indicating that debates concerning regions and the global framework for their development are also carried out at the European Parliament. In the European Parliament and in its dialogue with the European Commission these debates are often related to the debates between proponents and opponents of horizontal and sectoral policies. Regional policy and cohesion policy – constituting prime examples of horizontal policies are subject to an increasing criticism for their supposed inefficiency. In the circumstances, instead of automatic surrendering to this criticism, there is, rather, an urgent need to improve scientific methodologies underpinning evaluation of horizontal policies. The measuring of their impact is much more complex than the measuring of the impact exercised by sectoral policies. This methodological improvement is specially needed in the case of Objective One regions, such as the regions included in the comparative study of the Triple Mezzogiorno Programme. At the same time there is no doubt that the formula of regional and cohesion policies needs to be updated in the future.

Moreover, with the reinterpretation of subsidiarity principle envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty as well as a new concept of territorial cohesion of the EU – going a way beyond the old GDP-based conception of socio-economic cohesion – there is a clear need to again rethink the political and not solely administrative role of the regions in the European Union. Globalization has made regions more important than ever in terms of forces driving economic growth. On the other hand, the impact of globalization on the regions is not uniformly beneficial, while the relationships between states, regions and the Union's institutions basing on the current interpretations of the subsidiarity principle remain ambivalent. A reform of the EU's future approach to the regions seems unavoidable. Therefore, debating long-term strategies of regional development and factors that condition them is so relevant.

Barrie Stevens highlighted the fact that the Warsaw Conference could be seen as a timely response to the apparently rising demand for forward thinking – after its demise in the 1980s and most of the 1990s. This rising demand has been taken into account by the OECD and resulted in the establishment of its International Futures Programme. The International Futures Programme does not try to forecast the future, however, but rather to assess existing developmental resources and barriers to development as they appear in the long term perspective as well as proposing new policy ideas that might be tested in the particular OECD countries. This long view turn is motivated by a growing realization that many key challenges

to the world economy are of long-term nature, spanning several decades or even generations. This is best exemplified by an increasing concern with issues of demography (including labour markets and pension systems), climate and energy.

Global interdependencies as well as causal relations much prolonged in time call for urgent reorientation/coordination of domestic policies and increased international co-operation on many such global issues. With its International Futures Programme OECD is intent on identifying major challenges faced by its member states, including Poland, in the global context as well as on assessing their experiences in terms of relevant developmental potential. The OECD approach is based on sectoral analyses, while its forward studies programme constantly strives for proving its validity and relevance to policy-making. The Polish interest in developing long-term strategies – national and regional – seems particularly relevant from the point of view of the OECD objectives.

Professor Elżbieta Mączyńska underlined the emerging trend to strengthen strategic thinking in Poland, which is led by two governmental institutions – the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Regional Development. A few Polish non-governmental institutions, such as Komitet Polska 2020 (Committee Poland 2020), the Polish Association for the Club of Rome and the Polish Economic Association have also been for years involved in the promotion of strategically oriented studies. The Polish Economic Association (PEA) has recently initiated Forum Myśli Strategicznej (Forum of Strategic Thinking), which is a (largely) open-source type of arena to publicly debate issues of strategic importance to Poland and Europe. In the future, the Forum will aim at formulating and discussing more policy-oriented recommendations related to selected developmental dilemmas at the beginning of the XXI century.

This revival of strategic thinking is particularly welcome in Poland which is facing challenges stemming from a double transformation: not only systemic, intensified by the country's accession to the European Union, but also civilisational – entailing a transition from industrial to post-industrial civilization (Mączyńska, 2008: 3-7). The ever more encompassing – both constructive and destructive – waves of innovations spilling over in the global space make it ever more difficult for countries, regions, enterprises and individuals to plan their futures. The complexity, rapidity and uncertainty of future developments makes planning ahead extremely challenging. Yet, the more complex and uncertain the future ahead, the greater the need for forward thinking.

However, thinking about the future now needs both a conceptual and methodological resuscitation. New concepts, new methods to produce knowledge, new rules for its discursive

absorption and mobilisation, new procedures to make use of the knowledge in the condition of permanent uncertainty are necessary. Given the global and inter-scalar nature of most of the major current challenges, the new approach to long term strategic thinking should be reminiscent of principles of social futurism, once expounded by Toffler. A new approach akin to social futurism advocated by the famous futurologist, would promise to allow for the necessary broadening of social participation in the processes of strategic thinking and therefore might contribute to reaching a higher systemic competence of nations, regions and enterprises to “construct their future” (Mączyńska, 2008: 14-15).

As observed by the panel Chairwoman, Minister Bieńkowska, the panelists used their different competences to structure the field of the following panel sessions and discussions in an enlightening and thought-provoking way. They pointed out several of both on-going and in-coming approaches to strategic thinking, being in accord on the issue of the need to invest all efforts in effective revival of a strategic approach to the future development of countries and regions. Furthermore, they were all agreed that strategic thinking at the level of nations, regions, and enterprises needs to be carried out with an acute awareness of their global context.

1st Panel Session –

A New Path for World Development – the Programme of the Club of Rome

The 1st panel session was chaired by Professor Ernst Ulrich von Weizsaecker (Dean of the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California in Santa Barbara). It was dedicated to the presentation of the Club of Rome’s “New Path for World Development” global research programme. As emphasized by the Chairman, motivated by the speed and urgency with which several globe-wide threats to the future have emerged on the verge of the XX and XXI century, the Club of Rome had decided to carry out its new global research programme, leading to elaborating a set of coherent strategies and policy-proposals to counteract the global threats as well as raising public awareness of them and generating support for the necessary changes in many spheres of life.

Martin Lees, Secretary General of the Club of Rome, briefly outlined the major global threats necessitating strategic action at the beginning of the XXI century which is seen as a turning point in the history of humankind. The threats include: climate changes, depletion and/or degradation of natural resources, rising inequality of income/wealth distribution, the growing vulnerability of financial systems, sustained poverty and deprivation in many parts of

the globe, the spread of infectious diseases, the spread of violence, terrorism and crime (cf. CoR, 2008). All of the threats are interlinked and require a concerted approach, which is at the same time sensitive to local variations in the appearance of the threats and means to tackle them. Their accumulation clearly shows that the so far implemented path for the world development is not only not sustainable but – if continued – spells disaster to humankind.

The approach to the new path of development, adopted by the Club of Rome, is based on five principles:

- a) longer term thinking;
- b) systemic thinking;
- c) interdisciplinary thinking;
- d) multicultural and independent thinking; and
- e) policy relevance and access.

Because of the complexity of the research agenda, the methodology to be pursued involves:

- 1) analyses of clusters of issues;
- 2) analyses developing along cross-cutting strategic themes; and
- 3) a process of systems integration to bring the “sectoral” and “horizontal” analyses together.

The cross-cutting strategic themes to be pursued by means of a matrix approach, include:

- i) institutional architecture and global governance;
- ii) strategies for economic growth;
- iii) new curricula and methodologies for education;
- iv) enhancing the role of women;
- v) research and innovation; and
- vi) financial mechanisms.

The final step of systems integration “will help to understand the linkages between trends, issues and actions and to identify the drivers of the global change” (CoR, 2008). The CoR’s programme scope and methodology could be seen as a source of inspiration and global-issue focused input for other, strategic challenge-oriented research programme.

The 2nd panel session was chaired by Professor Gilbert Fayl (European Academy of Science). The panelists included: Professor Witold Orłowski (Director of the Warsaw University of Technology Business School and PricewaterhouseCoopers), Professor Paul Drewe (Delft Technical University), Professor Alexander Granberg (Regional Development Expert, Russian Academy of Science) and Professor Ivo Šlaus (World Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatian Academy of Sciences). The presentations were devoted to an evaluation of the XX century, interpreted through the conceptual lenses of the Gordian Knots and Alexandrian Solutions framework.

Overall, this session tried to answer the question what lessons could be learnt from the past in regard to different economic and social strategies and political solutions. As emphasized by the Chairman regarding the question of both lessons to be learnt from the past and strategies to counter imminent threats and challenges, it is to be remembered that the world and the processes occurring in the world are rarely if at all of linear nature. Therefore no simple lessons or automatic solutions are better expected. Still, the past can teach us many things, not the least that courage and imagination, creativity and solidarity pay off in the long run – as at least two of the XX century lessons, i.e. the Marshall Plan and the establishing of the European Coal and Steel Community vividly show.

The presentation focused on the first half of the XX century identified several Gordian Knots and pointed to some (Alexandrian) solutions which emerged to solve those magnified developmental barriers. In conclusion a hypothesis was ventured that – despite attempted (both intentional and “spontaneous” solutions) – the major Gordian Knots witnessed by the first half of the XX century have re-emerged, necessarily transformed, at the end of the XX century or at the beginning of the XXI century. They are visible in the current heightening of tensions and crises related to a global balance of political power, distribution of economic production, financial architecture, patterns of social unrest, cultural/civilisational clashes, and an uneven impact of technological innovations. It was also observed that in many instances the once applied Alexandrian solutions actually turned out to be new Gordian Knots only half a century later.

A succinct evaluation of the XX century pointing to major areas of success and failure evidences in general that this century succeeded in the development of scientific knowledge. Advances were made in all disciplines of science, in particular in applied sciences; many new disciplines have been founded such as biotechnology and nanotechnology; increased methodological awareness has resulted in now intensifying trends towards interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. Despite deep changes and transformations of scientific paradigms, the

continuity of scientific knowledge has been preserved and its operative resources are in the process of accumulation, which is relevant from the point of view of responsible and informed political decision-making (Šlaus, 2008).

On the other hand, the field of the political has itself produced rather disappointing results over the course of the XX century, especially if evaluated in the global perspective. Even though the quality of life has increased all over the globe, the satisfaction of local people with the distribution of wealth and the quality of governance has decreased. There is also a mounting frustration related to the weakness of global governance structures. This means a serious challenge involving overcoming the popular distrust with political elites and lacking confidence in institutions, if strategically oriented projects are to gain public support. On the other hand, the global span of most of today's problems and threats to development exercise a great pressure on politicians to reconcile the global demands with local expectations and requirements. While proper interactions between the many levels and spheres of governance that exist nowadays are essential, fruitful interactions between the differently scaled cultures of knowledge and creativity are none the less crucial (Krull, 2008).

These types of interactions and interflows are also encouraged by a long view approach to the evaluation of developmental trends, which clearly evidences that "basic innovations, identified at world level, do not 'happen' automatically in all countries, regions or cities" (Drewe, 2008: 2). There exists not only a history but also a geography of innovation. On the other hand, a long view on regional trajectories proves that despite dominant, relatively stable center-periphery patterns, certain regions manage at certain historical conjunctions to gain momentum and join the league of developmental leaders while other regions, conversely, lose their momentum and become developmental laggards. The cases of more persistent "laggards" such as the three "mezzogiornos", identified by Kukliński (2008b) should be interpreted against the background of this evidence.

Furthermore, there is a need to invest more analytical and political efforts in the facilitating of the aforementioned cross-cutting interactions and interflows since those have the capacity to trigger change. Also, looking at factors stimulating the region's gaining momentum, the concept of innovative milieu might be utilized quite broadly (Drewe, 2008). The emergence of such milieus is dependent on simultaneous accumulation of the following elements: a group of actors, material, immaterial and institutional infrastructure, norms of cooperation, and mechanisms of permanent learning. Policy-oriented research into the conditions of emergence of innovative milieus in lagging behind regions could be brought forward by the application of a methodology, called mixed scanning approach, which had

been developed and already tested in relation to Regio Futures methodology (Drewe, 2008: 7-10; cf. Kukliński, 2008a,b). Since a group of cooperating and mutually learning actors is a condition sine qua non of an innovative milieu, such actors need to be identified before public support for innovations is implemented (cf. Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008: 25-26).

Following then a stakeholder analysis, a mixed scanning approach may be employed to arrive at both realistic and socially shared diagnoses, visions, scenarios and strategies at the regional level (cf. Mączyńska, 2008: 14-15). Both stakeholder analysis and mixed scanning approach seem likely to facilitate the identification of regional Gordian Knots and ways to overcome them (cf. Galar, 2008). On the other hand, juxtaposing the regional visions and strategies with global scenarios might be specially valuable since it could pinpoint for instance the potential weight of some global Gordian Knots on the potential regional trajectories (cf. also Rončević et al., 2008). In other words, this approach is promising as far as assessing “the sensitivity of the preferred path of regional development with respect to the global scenarios, such as for example the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (...)” (Drewe, 2008: 10).

*3rd Panel Session –
The Reality and Visions of the XXI Century*

The 3rd panel session was chaired by Dr. Wilhelm Krull, Secretary General of the Volkswagen Foundation. It shed still different light on the conceptual approach adopted during the previous sessions, focusing on the reality and visions of the XXI century. This session tried overall to project and interpret emerging visions, scenarios and strategies for development of countries and regions in the XXI century. Krzysztof Rybiński (Ernst&Young), Barrie Stevens (OECD) and Borut Rončević (the School of Applied Social Sciences in Nova Gorica/Lancaster University) presented in particular three different approaches to building and assessing knowledge infrastructures which are relevant for strategic thinking.

It was demonstrated for instance that to cater for contemporary global-local interrelationships, strategic analyses and recommendations such as the ones prepared by the OECD expert teams drawing on the experiences and trends identified both in the member states and non-OECD countries are valuable. The forward research activities include the tracing of global trends such as population shifts, shifts in the economic growth poles, effects of the climate change, growing interconnectedness of various regions, sectors etc. and an

extrapolation of their potential impact on particular regions and states. In the condition of growing uncertainty and rapid change, strategic foresight has become one of the leading features of the OECD offer.

One of the recent key OECD forward research projects focuses for example on global infrastructure investment requirements by 2030, including three major fields of analyses and projections: bioeconomy, international migration and competition for talent. Basing on this and other research projects, a few governance conundrums have been identified. The conundrums are related to dilemmas arising from the span, scope and scale of the identified problem areas and type of strategic action needed to tackle them. One of the major issues concerns an approach that is needed to overcome a tension between an increasing number of actors involved in global governance and apparently decreasing level of its effectiveness. Another concerns the issue of necessary and acceptable trade-offs between legitimacy and effectiveness of strategic interventions.

The need to resolve these and other governance conundrums is explicitly evidenced by the current global financial crisis. On the one hand, the crisis may be interpreted in terms of global complexity grown beyond current predictive capabilities and institutional controllability by any single analytic and monitoring centre. On the other hand, it could be interpreted in terms of governance failures, which are caused inter alia by lacking correspondence between real and legitimate decision making power on the global scene. The solutions to the crisis devised so far by dominant political elites point to an absence of new ideas in the political milieus and testify to their short-sightedness. Political cannibalism, identified as a major Gordian Knot of the beginning of the XXI century (Rybiński et al. 2008), has been rampant in the period of the crisis. New solutions must be sought and find support, including an issue of urgent global regulation of financial markets and then expanding the global architecture idea to cover other fields of interaction as well. A sine qua non condition for the new solutions is a recognition of the already changed balance of real power, resulting in including the BRIC countries as equal footing players to the USA and EU (the latter treated as a single entity representing one vote).

Long term scenarios for particular countries and regions must take into account global trends' impact as the recent financial crisis has proved. Apart from the method of trend extrapolations, the scenario method has been recognized so far as the most useful way to envisage future developments on the global, continental, national, and regional level and to prepare for them. However, long term thinking focused on strategies of development of particular countries and regions needs to employ also other methodologies. These

methodologies must be particularly sensitive to internal factors of development, with a special focus on socio-cultural ones “since stabilization of the macroeconomic framework is only a part of systemic competitiveness genesis” (Rončević et al., 2008: 9). In a globalizing world, the national/regional/local soft factors of development are likely to prove to be decisive for generating sustainable development.

Analyses of historically known cases of a “jump” from a periphery to the core (or from a periphery to a semi-periphery) seem to indicate that broadly understood civilizational competences reflected in the dimensions such as:

- cognitive mobilization;
- entrepreneurial spirit;
- social cohesion;
- quality of governance;
- social capital; and
- openness (internationalization)

are of key importance for the potential enabling the jump. Another crucial factor is constituted by *strategic discourse* which acts as an instrument to mobilize and legitimize the potential (cf. Rončević, 2008; cf. also Maćzyńska, 2008: 2, 12-14; and Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008: 13). A fuzzy-set methodology for analyses of the developmental factors and a discourse analytical methodology for analyses of discursive preconditions of the developmental leap have already been successfully applied by researchers and policy analysts working on countries such as Ireland, Finland, or – more recently in the connection with the Regio Futures Programme – Slovenia (Rončević et al., 2008). This approach seems also relevant from the vantage point of persistently lagging behind regions.

On the other hand, it is clear that bringing strategic thinking to the regional level involves multiple difficulties, of which tackling uncertainties related to global processes and uncertainties derived from the absence of global/national long-term strategies are frequently most pronounced. Nevertheless, strategic thinking at the regional level is both possible and necessary. History has proven that regions are seedbeds of new paths of development. Owing to their diversity – which should not be reduced by top-down implementation of uniform models of development – they may act as efficient testing ground for diverse innovative ideas (cf. Galar, 2008; cf. also Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008: 24-25).

The concept of “future ready regions” is premised not on an anticipation that the future of the region can be predicted but rather on the conviction that the diversity of creative cultures at the regional level may be better recognized and put to a better use within a

conceptual framework of one generation plus strategies of development (ibid.; cf. also Amoroso, 2008). Being aware that predicting the future is limited, apart from constant scanning for emerging trends, no single grandiose commitment should be enforced in a region but rather harmonious, adaptive and evolutionary model of development strived for (Galar, 2008: 16).

*4th Panel Session –
The Experience of the European Regions*

The 4th panel session, chaired by Dr. Piotr Żuber, Director of the Department of Structural Policy Coordination (Polish Ministry of Regional Development), tried to interpret the experience of the European regions with a special attention to the cases of Southern Italy, Eastern Germany and Eastern Poland in a comparative perspective. Panelists in this session applied the Gordian Knots and Alexandrian Solutions methodological approach to a discussion of the experiences of the European regions, looking at developmental trends of Southern Italy, Eastern Germany and Eastern Poland. The panelists included Professor Bruno Amoroso (Roskilde Universitetcenter), Professor Giovanni D’Orio (Director, Regio Calabria), Professor Pierluca Ghibelli (International Coordinator of the Cooperative Consortia for Social Cooperatives in Italy, Director of the Italian Foundation for Social Enterprises in Italy – SOLIDARITE), Dr Wilhelm Krull (Secretary General, Volkswagen Foundation), and Professor Jacek Szlachta (Warsaw School of Economics).

One of the guiding questions asked during the panel discussion was – why different long durations have created similar barriers in Southern Italy, Eastern Germany and Eastern Poland? A common dimension in the study of the Gordian Knots produced in the three lagging behind regions was proposed to be constituted inter alia by tracing the course in which progressing globalization has contributed to their marginalization – on the one hand – and on the other – to an emergence of specific models of specialization within those macro-regions. Another common analytical dimension was thought to be related to an investigation of the processes due to which efforts to adapt those respective regional (and local) economies to the dominant national model of development have aggravated their backwardness and led to their colonization, accommodated within dualist structures of their respective national economies (cf. Amoroso, 2008; cf. Kukliński, 2008b and Gaşior-Niemiec, 2008).

It was agreed that a novel approach is needed to enable a better recognition of endogenous cultures of creativity in those regions leading to more adequate public support for

their developmental potential (Krull, 2008). As stated regarding the eponymous Southern Italian region: “The experience of the Italian Mezzogiorno is a classical example of the power of long duration, which could be seen in the perspective of centuries or even millennia. This long duration has created the unique cultural landscape of the Italian Mezzogiorno. This landscape is a great resource for the future. This long duration has created also barriers for development embedded in the history of social and political structures and in the patterns of personalized mind sets and behaviours. The cumulation of those barriers has created the Gordian Knots of the Italian Mezzogiorno” (Kukliński, 2008b: 7; cf. Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008: 13-14, 20-22; cf. also Gąsior-Niemiec, 2004 and Zarycki, 2004).

An adequate recognition of the endogenous potential and identification of systemic barriers to development implies not only an application of new research methodologies but also surrendering the “monocentric approach” characterized by “centralized objectives elaborated on abstract principles of competition and efficiency, independently from local and regional needs and production systems” (Amoroso, 2008: 5). The financial resources invested in accordance with this approach have not been overall successful in triggering growth in lagging behind regions, such as the Italian Mezzogiorno (ibid.; D’Orio, 2008; Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008: 13-14, 17-18). On the contrary, distributed in a centralized and quasi-automatic manner, they have often produced many perverse effects (ibid.).

In consequence, the policy of aid has contributed to the strengthening of already existing obstacles to local and regional development and frustrated the capability of local endogenous production systems (Amoroso, 2008: 9-11). Moreover, in many instances those policies of aid have produced new developmental barriers, not the least of which is constituted by predatory systems of the aid absorption at the regional/local level (ibid.; cf. also Gąsior-Niemiec, 2008). The vicious circle of non-development entails then further emptying out of the endogenous resources by migration, reduction of endogenous productive systems, over-dependence on external supply networks, and partial colonization of the aid channels by criminal organizations (ibid.).

Following a thorough and honest evaluation, an attempted change in the currently implemented policy of development entails on the one hand a stronger support for local collaborative enterprises and social economy (Ghibelli, 2008), while on the other a more concentrated, more transparent and more participatory way to manage the bulk of the regional development programme (D’Orio, 2008). Building trust is crucial to the implementation of these streams of strategic action.

The experience of the Eastern German regions confirms that investments tuned to building a critical mass are crucial to trigger development in stagnating/depressed regions (Krull, 2008). If no action is taken, the issue of depopulation and further degradation of the existing resources in such regions has to be faced. The history of public intervention in Eastern Germany shows that “history matters” in terms of favouring a diversified (customized) and not uniform public intervention to trigger regional developmental dynamics (ibid.; cf. Kukliński, 2008b: 11). As in the case of Southern Italy, it seems that public investments in the fields of research and education complemented with an introduction of competitive-based logic of their operation is in the long term an investment most likely to produce positive results. Therefore, such “islands of hope” need to be invested in and sustained to paradoxically make the regions – otherwise perceived as unattractive – be able to attract talent and entrepreneurial knowledge producers and brokers (Krull, 2008). On the other hand, as in the case of Southern Italy, the Eastern German example shows that an inflow of financial resources cannot by itself overcome developmental barriers in the regions nor trigger their growth.

According to many major indicators, Eastern Poland is in need of large scale pro-developmental intervention. The experience derived from the previous rounds of EU supported operational programmes evidences, however, that first of all the “structure of assistance is not user friendly” (Szlachta, 2008). Secondly, reinforced by the accounts of Southern Italian and Eastern German experiences, a set of strategic questions arises. These are the questions related for example to the most adequate structure of financial outlays (what shares for infrastructure, human capital, assistance to enterprises etc.); ways of accommodating the Lisbon agenda within the aid framework; ways to build effective partnerships for development; ways to enhance endogenous potential; ways to integrate global perspective in the regional/local strategies etc.

The bringing together of the cases of the three persistent regional “laggards” makes it clear that they share duality, marginalization and passivity (or inverse innovation) syndromes – each manifesting itself in a variety of manners. There are important lessons to be drawn and learnt from a comparison based on well tailored analyses of processes of the accumulation of their developmental barriers as well as histories of successes and failures related to the public intervention programmes implemented in those three macro-regions (Krull, 2008). However, learning is possible and recommended if it leads to creative adaptation and not to automatic transfers – regional history and geography matter; “no size fits all” rule should be taken into account in programming regional development strategies (ibid.). Development is not linear,

which constitutes a source of hope even for the most “backward” regions (cf. Galar, 2008; Drewe, 2008). Given sustained commitment to provide critical support which is coupled with adequate identification of regional cultures of creativity, the breaking free of the vicious circles of non-development seems possible.

5th Session
– Polonia Quo Vadis?

The 5th session was chaired by Hanna Jahns, Secretary of State in the Polish Ministry of Regional Development. The session was concentrated on the presentation of Polish strategic dilemmas subsumed under the question “Polonia Quo Vadis?”. Chief of the Group of Strategic Advisors to the Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Dr. Michał Boni embarked on outlining crucial challenges and opportunities to be faced by Poland in the time frame 2008-2030 (“Wyzwania dla Polski...”). The presentation aimed also at showing in which way the already discussed global, European and regional concerns are integrated in the new approach to strategic thinking at the national level in Poland.

The present strategic diagnosis starts from a realization that Poland may be threatened by a “developmental drifting” syndrome. To assess the imminence of the threat and to conceive of solutions to counteract the drifting, a holistic analytical perspective needs to be adopted with a one-generation plus horizon in-built in it, while lessons must be drawn and learnt from the experience of other European countries (especially Finland, Ireland and Spain). It is crucial that strategic thinking about Poland’s future is not reduced to the impact of the European Union as the only source of developmental stimuli – the need to incorporate a global context was during the conference also aptly demonstrated inter alia by the presentation of the representative of the Club of Rome.

Moreover, it is of paramount importance that strategic thinking about drivers of development in Poland is not limited to so called hard factors but is also inclusive of so called soft factors, including people’s identities and attitudes. It is also vital that strategic thinking about Poland involves an issue of a change of developmental model to be pursued in the future. The provisional direction of change entails a move from a model of the welfare state to the model of workfare state and welfare society. Different national future scenarios need to be prepared and analyzed, taking into account broader scenarios – European and global.

The challenges identified for the national strategy of 2030 include ten priorities, each of which involves a set of dilemmas to be solved in accordance with the overall logic

demonstrated by the question “Polonia Quo Vadis?” (cf. “Wyzwania ...”; Kukliński, 2008a); .

These priorities include:

- sustainable and high economic growth;
- demographic balance;
- high level of integration in the labour market and adaptability of human resources;
- adequate potential of infrastructure;
- security (energy-climate);
- knowledge-based economy and development of intellectual capital;
- solidarity and regional convergence;
- improvement of social cohesion;
- increase in social capital (pride and trust);
- effective state and governance.

The posing and elaboration of these priorities and dilemmas still requires further efforts before specific recommendations for strategic action are formulated and the action is taken.

6th Session –

Final Comments and Closing Remarks

The 6th session was shared by Dr. Piotr Żuber and Professor Antoni Kukliński who aimed at summarizing and closing the two-day Conference proceedings. They also indicated some of the immediate follow-up activities emerging out of the proceedings. The Warsaw Conference clearly demonstrated the need to invest efforts in the revival of strategic thinking – both at the national and regional level. It also acutely proved that this thinking needs to be carried out with an awareness and sensitivity to global structures of threats and opportunities. There emerged a conviction that in view of global uncertainties, growing complexity and interconnectedness there is an urgent need for better integration of strategic initiatives (both analytical and political) carried out at the various scales – from global to regional and local, and at various institutional milieus – OECD, EU, national task forces, regional think tanks etc. Both the Triple Mezzogiorno Programme and Polonia Quo Vadis Programme are hoped to result in such improved interactions.

Moreover, it highlighted the necessity to create channels leading to an expansion of social participation in the strategic thinking initiatives. Some approaches and methodologies

enabling this turn have been indicated during the Conference (cf. CoR, 2008; Drewe, 2008; Galar, 2008; Gaşior-Niemiec, 2008; Mączyńska, 2008). Special attention needs to be paid to as broad as possible involvement of the younger generations in the strategic thinking enterprises (cf. Kukliński, 2008d). Education for the future should, however, encompass whole societies. Mass media ought to be drawn to cooperate in this urgent public task as well.

The immediate follow-up activities envisaged at the end of the Conference include predominantly an opening for a trajectory of comparative studies related to the three macro-regions labeled as “the Triple European Mezzogiorno”. The Programme is expected to result in 1) holistic diagnoses of developmental potentials and barriers to development in Southern Italy, Eastern Germany and Eastern Poland and 2) emerging from the diagnoses, sets of evidence-based, policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness of public intervention in the regions. Secondly, there is a wish to establish a permanent base for Polonia Quo Vadis Programme acting as a platform to enhance exchanges between the different domestic centers dedicated to strategic thinking and a bridge to fruitfully connect the Polish strategic thinking efforts with some of the major international and global strategic research programmes (cf. CoR, 2008). The overall direction of the follow-up activities is to lead both in the direction of strengthening the culture of strategic thinking in Poland and building evidence-based policy approach to national and regional development. This direction testifies to a commitment to invest in the creation of knowledge relevant to longitudinal trajectories of development.

Conclusion

The 4th Warsaw Conference on regional development, its global context and strategic thinking, initiated by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development, has demonstrated a rising need to invest in forward studies and strategic thinking at all levels of social organization – from local to global, across all strategic communities (political, intellectual, economic, civil society, mass media), and across generations. The recently exploded financial crisis has reinforced a message repeated by several of the Conference participants – the period of unprecedented risk and uncertainty requires a renaissance of prospective thinking supported by wisdom, imagination, courage, and responsibility.

It is worth stressing that prospective thinking has a strategic importance, being at the same time devoid of an illusion that future can be accurately predicted. Instead it should offer tools and incentives to induce social actors to try to “construct the future”. The following quotation from Michel Godet reflects the shared conviction and its premises aptly:

“Prospective is neither forecasting nor futurology but a mode of thinking for action and against fatalism. Prospective recognizes that the future is the ‘raison d’être of the present’, that it is multiple and uncertain, and that it is a way for everyone to take control of their own futures” (Godet, 1992, quoted after Kukliński, 2008a: 4). The Conference participants followed Godet’s prescription when focusing on identifying various challenges and opportunities to developmental processes. While discussing them under the label of Gordian knots and Alexandrian solutions, they pointed out several dilemmas that need to be resolved before strategic action is taken.

In this, they have convincingly shown that there is room for interactions, knowledge sharing and building across the different spatial scales and epistemic communities. However, trust and responsibility need to be reinforced to make the interactions more fruitful. The deeply internalized notion of responsibility for the future is one of the grand ideas of our October Conference. It has direct implications for all discussions related to the future of regions [nations and continents] of the XXI century.

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