

Voivodship self-government as a creator of regional development and its new identity on the example of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland

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Abstract

The aim of these considerations is, firstly, to pay attention to the role of local self-government at the voivodship (województwo) level as a creator of regional development in Poland. Secondly, an indication of how the above function may be a useful tool for the reconstruction or creation of the region's cultural identity, after the destruction made in this sphere in the period when Poland was not existing as a result of the partitions (1795-1918), and during the communist dictatorship (1944) - 1989).

The above analysis will be made on the example of the present Polish Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, which is the area where various cultural and civilization traditions meet. For this reason, it is an interesting example of modern transformation processes and can, from this point of view, become an interesting point of reference for regions facing similar experiences in different parts of the world.

Keywords: Regional administration; public management; Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodship; regional policy; cultural identity

1. The reform of the public administration model in Poland in 1998 and the creation of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship

The region (voivodship) of Kujawsko-Pomorskie in its present territorial shape, was established in 1998 as a result of the reform of the administrative division of Poland at that time³. This was accompanied by a change in the existing model of the territorial organization of

³ The reform of the administrative division was introduced by the Act [Ustawa] of 24 July 1998 on the introduction of an essential three-tier territorial division of the state (Journal of Laws [Dziennik Ustaw] 1998 No. 96, item 603). The new division of the state into voivodships and poviats (powiat) came into force on January 1, 1999. The map of poviats was introduced by the Regulation [Rozporządzenie] of the Council of Ministers of 7 August 1998 on the creation of poviats (Journal of Laws from 1998 No. 103 item 652).

public administration. As a result, along with the governmental administration existing at the voivodship level in the form of voivod (wojewoda) offices⁴, a self-governmental administration was created consisting of: elected representative bodies - constituting voivodship assemblies and collegiate executive bodies in the form of provincial bodies with marshals at the head⁵.

In the new political system, almost total responsibility for regional development was submitted to local self-government⁶, which in practice was the sole exclusive at this level of funds dedicated by the European Union to this area under the cohesion fund and structural funds⁷.

Having this financial tool was to become the basic instrument for creating regional development so as to equalize the civilization distance in relation to the average EU level. It is necessary to add here (we will come back to this issue later) that the new voivodship had a difficult starting position and much to catch up with.

2. Kuyavian-Pomeranian region, its composition and historical affiliation

The Kujawsko - Pomorskie Province, established in 1998, corresponds approximately to only one historically defined territorial unit in the area of interest to us - existing in the years 1945 - 1975 - in the Bydgoszcz Voivodship⁸.

⁴ Voivods are the Government representatives appointed by the Prime Minister in the voivodship, see The Act of 5 June 1998 on government administration in the voivodship (Journal of Laws of 1998 No. 91, item 577)

⁵ The provisions regulating the system of the voivodship self-government were implemented by the Act of 5 June 1998 on the self-government of the voivodship (Journal of Laws of 1998 No. 91 item 576)

⁶ This problem in comparative perspective between Unites States and European Union is described in important study: J. Górka - Szymczak, „*More perfect Union*” versus „*ever closer Union*” *Rozwój unii między państwowych w Stanach Zjednoczonych i Unii Europejskiej w pierwszych pięćdziesięcioleciach ich istnienia, [More perfect Union "versus" ever closer Union "The development of the interstate union in the United States and the European Union in the first fifty years of their existence,]* Toruń 2018.

⁷ In accordance with the National Development Plan adopted by the Council of Ministers on 14 January 2003, the Integrated Regional Operational Programs were to be used as a tool for implementing the new regional policy. Responsibility for their preparation and implementation has been taken over by the resolution's bodies and executive bodies of voivodship self-governments. For the implementation of the next financial perspective (2007 - 2013), the National Cohesion Strategy was adopted ("Poland - National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 - 2013 supporting economic development and employment", Ministry of Regional Development, May 2007). Under these assumptions, voivodship self-governments outside the Regional Operational Programs obtained a significant impact on the spending of funds from the programs: Infrastructure and Environment, Human Capital and Innovative Economy. The legal framework for the implementation of the tasks of the voivodship self-government in this respect is determined by the provisions of the Act of December 6, 2006 on the principles of conducting development policy (Journal of Laws 2006 No. 227 item 1658).

⁸ On August 21, 1944, the decree of the so-called The Polish National Liberation Committee was established in the Pomeranian Voivodeship with headquarters in Bydgoszcz. In 1950, the administrative division was modified, along with the change of the province's name to the Bydgoszcz voivodship. About the conditions of these changes, see: Biegański Z., *Territorial and administrative shape of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region in the 19th and 20th centuries.*

In the forming state of the Piast dynasty in the 10th and 11th century, most of the area constituting the eastern part of the Bydgoszcz voivodship was part of the Mazovian province⁹. Precise determination of the border between two provinces: Mazovia and Wielkopolska is not easy, especially on the southern side of the Vistula. It seems that from the west side these lands were delimited along the run of Noteć River to Nakło. The area of the estuary of the Brda River to the Vistula was also part of Mazovia. Thus, on this left-bank section of the Vistula, Mazovia was cut with a wedge between Wielkopolska and Pomerania.

In the southern section, the delimitation ran more or less from the run of Noteć River to Skrwa Lewa River, originally called Brwa River. On the north side of the Vistula, the Mazovian land encompassed areas later separated as the Dobrzyń land and the Chełmno land, along Skrwa River and Osa River.

Thus, the majority of today's Kuyavian-Pomeranian region constituted the western part of the Mazovian province at the dawn of the existence of the Polish state. The present-day north-western part of the region - Krajna and Bory Tucholskie, were already part of Pomerania.

Changes in the belonging of these areas began to occur during the so-called provincial breakdown¹⁰. The southern part of this province in the 13th century began to alienate from Mazovia as the area of the Principality of Kujawy¹¹. The north-eastern part on the right bank of the Vistula became part of the organizing Teutonic state¹². With the control of the Teutonic Order of Eastern Pomerania¹³, also Krajna and Bory Tucholskie became part of their state.

This division of western Mazovia resulted in more lasting consequences. The Chełmno area occupied by the Teutonic Knights began to integrate more closely with Pomerania and

[in:] *Relations between Kujawy and Pomorze over the centuries*. A collection of studies edited by Biegański Z. and Jastrzębski W., *Works of the BTN history committee* vol. XVII: Bydgoszcz 2001; Sudziński R. *Shaping the borders and administrative divisions of the Pomeranian Voivodeship (Bydgoszcz) in the years 1945-1950*. *Zapiski Historyczne* Toruń 1973, R.37, z. 2. Wider context of these changes, see Górski G., *Polonia Restituta. Polish constitutional order in the twentieth century*, Toruń 2018 and Górski G., *Around the genesis of the PRL*, Lublin 2004.

⁹ The Mazovian Province as part of the Piast state during the reign of Mieszko I (963 - 992) was one of the five main regional territorial units alongside Wielkopolska, Małopolska, Śląsk and Pomorze.

¹⁰ The southern part of this province in the 13th century began to alienate from Mazovia as the area of the Principality of Kujawy. The north-eastern part on the right bank of the Vistula became part of the organizing Teutonic state. After the death of Bolesław Krzywousty in 1138, his sons received individual provinces of the state in the management. As a result of first breaking and then changes in its succession statute from 1136, the process of gradual fragmentation of these provinces into smaller territorial units, inherited in the expanding Piast family, began. Together with the Order of Eastern Pomerania, also Krajna and Bory Tucholskie entered into composition of their country.

¹¹ Eventually, the authorities in Kujawy were taken over by the Piast's of Kuyavia, as a side line of the Piast dynasty from the prince Konrad of Mazovia.

¹² In 1228, the mentioned Konrad of Mazovia gave the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary the right to dispose of the Chełmno Land. In 1235, this Order merged with the Order of the Dobrzyń Brothers, who earlier (also in 1228) received the right to dispose of the Dobrzyń Land from Prince Konrad.

¹³ On the circumstances of the takeover by the Teutonic Order of Gdańsk Pomerania in 1308 see: Jasiński K., *Occupation of Gdańsk Pomerania*. *Zapiski Historyczne* Toruń 1966, R. 31, 3.

Prussia as part of their Order's religious state. On the other hand, the areas south of the Vistula were associated more and more with the Wielkopolska area.

Sanctioning this state of affairs has become the principle of administrative division within the Kingdom of Poland, which was restored in the fourteenth century. This was due to the fact that most of Mazovia remained formally outside the Kingdom until the beginning of the 16th century¹⁴. However, this part of Kujawy at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries became part of the Kingdom, because for Władysław Łokietek it was part of the hereditary domain that he brought to this state.

The situation was similar with Kazimierz Wielki, and this state consolidated the de facto relationship of this land with the province of Wielkopolska. After the full entrance of Mazovia to the Crown, its former eastern territories have not returned to this land. It should be pointed out, however, that the Dobrzyń region, connected by belonging to the Kujawy Brest Duchy, isolated from Kujawy and, consequently, Wielkopolska, still had strong ties with the Mazovian land, and the two areas separating it in the formal Skrwa River sense did not constitute a serious barrier in relations on the Vistula side. As a result, the sui generis process of reintegration of the Dobrzyń region with Masovia will progress over time.

Another important breakthrough was confirmed by the Second Peace of Toruń in 1466, the earlier incorporation of Gdańsk Pomerania into the Kingdom¹⁵. As a consequence, the part of the Crown became a province that adopted the name Royal Prussia¹⁶. It included the Chełmno land and the already mentioned Krajna and the southern part of the Tuchola Forests, at that time part of the newly created Pomeranian Voivodeship. This division of present-day areas of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region between Wielkopolska, Royal Prussia and in fact Mazovia, proved to be extremely durable. The division into voivodships within the framework of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth survived until the period of partitions. As a consequence of the subsequent actions of the German Prussian authorities, the entire area of interest to us in 1793 became part of the territory of the German Kingdom of Prussia¹⁷.

Another change brought the Napoleonic era. In 1807, part of the area we were interested in became after the Treaty of Tylża a part of the Duchy of Warsaw, created as a consequence of this French - Russian - Prussian agreement. Thus, the Toruń Department embraced the Chełmno lands on the right bank of the Vistula and the entire historic Kujawy. The Dobrzyń region returned to Mazovia by belonging to the Warsaw department. On the other hand, Krajna and Bory Tucholskie on the left bank of the Vistula, north of Kujawy, remained in Prussia.

¹⁴ After the restoration of the Kingdom of Poland at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mazovia remained formally outside of it, constituting the fiefdom of the Polish Crown. At the beginning of the 16th century, Mazovia was finally incorporated, which by virtue of the Lublin Union's provisions of 1569 became part of Wielkopolska.

¹⁵ In 1454, as a consequence of the outbreak of the anti-Teutonic uprising in Gdańsk Pomerania, King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk issued an incorporation act stolen in 1308 into the Kingdom of Poland. The treaty sanctioned acts were the Second Peace of Toruń concluded in 1466.

¹⁶ Royal Prussia was a province covering the areas of Gdańsk Pomerania (eastern) and the Warmian bishopric. Three provinces were created in its area - Chełmno, Pomeranian and Malbork. The entire area of Chełmno and the southern part of the Pomeranian Voivodship were located in the area of interest to us. Like Mazowieckie, the Royal Prussia was incorporated into Greater Poland by the Union of Lublin.

¹⁷ As a consequence of the First Partition of Poland in 1772, Prussia seized all of Royal Prussia, excluding Toruń. The Dobrzyń Land and eastern Kuyavia still remain at Poland. These areas of Prussia were seized in the second partition in 1793.

As a consequence of the provisions of the Vienna Congress in 1815, only the Dobrzyń land and the eastern part of Kujawy (the former Duchy of Brzeg with Włocławek) became part of the Kingdom of Poland¹⁸ (and after its actual liquidation into the Russian Empire¹⁹). The remaining part of Kujawy was included in the Grand Duchy of Poznań, while the Chełmno land with Toruń in the Pomeranian province, both in German Prussian Kingdom.

This division, in which Western Kujawy became part of the German Greater Poland, while Eastern Kujawy and Dobrzyń part of the Russian Mazovia, while the Chełmno land and left-bank areas of Krajna and Bory Tucholskie German Pomerania survived until the outbreak of World War I.

Eastern Kujawy and Dobrzyń land enjoyed their independence the earliest in November 1918 and became part of the newly created Warsaw Voivodship²⁰. Western Kujawy covered by the Wielkopolska Uprising became part of the Poznań Voivodship and became part of the 2nd Polish Commonwealth after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles²¹. On the other hand, the Chełmno land, Krajna and Bory Tucholskie became part of the Polish state at the beginning of

¹⁸ The Kingdom of Poland was established on the strength of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, covering the majority of the lands of the Duchy of Warsaw. Wielkopolska was excluded from it, to which western Kujawy was annexed, while Chełmno Land was incorporated into the Prussian province of Western Pomerania.

¹⁹ The process of the actual liquidation of the Kingdom of Poland took place within a few years after the fall of the January Uprising and proceeded more or less until the mid-1770s. For more on the legal and political conditions of this process, see : Górski G., *Around the genesis of the PRL*, and Górski G., *Polonia Restituta*. See Also: Mażewski L., *Kingdom of Poland 1815 - 1874. Establishment and collapse of the state*, Przegląd Sejmowy 2017 Nr 2.

²⁰ Eastern Kujawy and the Dobrzyń region were the first to enjoy independence in November 1918 and entered Tereny these were part of the territory of the Kingdom of Poland, the General Governorship, created by the Germans in 1915, which was a form of temporary military administration of the occupied territories. After the takeover of power from the Germans in November 1918 by the Regency Council and its subordinate administrative institutions, and then after it was handed over to Józef Piłsudski, new units of the administrative division of the state were gradually created. In the area of interest to us, the Dobrzyń Land, which before the outbreak of the war was a part of the Russian Poviát Governorate and eastern Kujawy, part of the Warsaw Guberniya, became part of the Warsaw Voivodship. The newly created Warsaw Province. Western Kujawy covered by the Greater Poland Uprising became part of the Poznań Province and became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. On the other hand, the Chełmno land, Krajna and Bory Tucholskie became part of the Polish state at the beginning of 1920 and became part of the entire Pomeranian region of Pomerania in the Pomeranian region. The province of Działdowo, that is, the historical Lubawa land, was also added to the province.

²¹ Under the Treaty signed on June 28, 1919, Poland received the territories of Wielkopolska and Gdańsk Pomerania according to the borders corresponding more or less to the Polish Prussian border from 1772 (with the exception of Gdańsk and Warmia). Wielkopolska in practice, as a result of the Wielkopolska Uprising, was in the hands of the insurgent authorities from the beginning of 1919. After the formal attachment of these areas to Poland, Western Kujawy became part of the Poznań province.

1920 and became part of the entire Gdańsk Pomeranian region in the Pomeranian Voivodship²². The lands around city Działdowo, that is, the historical Lubawa land, was also added to the province.

At the turn of 1938 and 1939, as a result of wider changes in the administrative system of the state, whose aim was to break down the various territorial subdivisions, the Pomeranian Voivodeship underwent major reconstruction²³. The Działdowo powiat was excluded from the Pomeranian Voivodeship to the Warsaw Voivodship, while the Dobrzyń Land and Kujawy Wschodnie were included from Warsaw Voivodship to the Pomeranian Voivodship. However, Western Kujawy was excluded from the Voivodship of Poznań and became a part of Pomeranian Voivodship.

The new shape of the "Great Pomerania" was also aimed at strengthening the Polish element on the one hand, and on the other, it was about taking away its new shape from the conditions of the historical Russian-German divisions. Interestingly, after including the areas of interest to the Third Reich after the September campaign and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Germans with their unlawful decisions recreated administrative divisions from the period of the Second Reich²⁴.

After the end of World War II in 1945, the Bydgoszcz region was created on the area we were interested in. In relation to the present Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, the only significant difference was the fact that the powiat of Chojnice belonged to the then voivodship. Therefore, apart from the period between 1975 and 1998, when there were three voivodships in this area (Bydgoszcz, Toruń - including the Nowomiejski powiat and Włocławek), the region has some spatial stability characteristics for 80 years.

3. Local and supra-local regional identities in Kujawsko-Pomorskie

The existence of a large cultural diversity in the area of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodship is - in the context of the aforementioned fates of particular territories forming them now - not a questionable fact. It seems that compared to other Polish voivodships, we are dealing here with the greatest diversity. Let's look briefly at individual Polish voivodships.

Let's start this review with the provinces located in the areas that returned to Poland in 1945²⁵. Zachodniopomorskie, Lubuskie and Dolnośląskie voivodships are areas in which the Polish population, which flowed in from different parts of Poland after 1945, is still in the phase

²² According to the Versailles stipulations, Poland covered the areas of Pomerania in January and February 1920. As a result, the areas we are interested in have become part of the Pomeranian Voivodship.

²³ The contemporary authorities of the Republic, making wider changes in the administrative division of the Second Republic of Poland, indicated that the remaining boundaries established by the invaders have a negative impact on the rate of socio-economic reconstruction of Poland, and at the same time perpetuate unnatural barriers destroying the centuries-old ties formed during the First Polish Republic.

²⁴ As a result of this decision of the Germans, Western Kuyavia were incorporated into the Reich and once again became part of the Greater Poland province. The Dobrzyń region became part of the General Governorship. The remaining part of the province combined with the Free City of Gdańsk formed the district of Gdansk - West Prussia.

²⁵ As a consequence of the decisions of the Potsdam Conference in 1945, the territories of Warmia and Mazury, Western Pomerania, Lubusz and Lower Silesia as well as the rest of Upper Silesia returned to Poland.

of seeking a new identity. It is obvious that the elements of Polish cultural identity have not survived there since the Middle Ages, while the German culture that dominated in the later period has been effectively and completely eradicated²⁶. The new cultural identity is therefore formed from scratch, as a specific synthesis of various cultural environments that flow in and settle there.

It looks a little different in the case of the Opolskie and Warmian-Masurian voivodships. In the Opole region, there are strong elements of the centuries-old Silesian cultural identity, which although it is undoubtedly the subject of attempts to exploit German culture for the restaurant, has a huge impact on the regional identity of this area. It is not altered by the fact that here too numerous settlements of Poles from the center and from the east found a place of settlement.

The situation is similar in Warmia and Mazury, although undoubtedly the mindless extermination of the Masurian culture by the communists²⁷ significantly impoverished this area. However, both relics of this culture, such as micro-identities in the genus of Lubawa culture or the land of Kwidzyn, are an important value for the identity of the region being built.

The Pomeranian Voivodeship in its present form is characterized by very strong influences of the Kashubian and Kociewie culture, the tradition of centuries-old cultural exclusiveness of Gdańsk and the cultural identity of Gdynia shaped in a specific way in the interwar period. These are the elements that allow a relatively consistent shaping of the identity of this region, although the tensions between the current character of the Tri-City (Gdańsk - Gdynia - Sopot)²⁸ and the character of the sui generis of the provincial interior are certainly evident.

One can also talk about the relative cultural cohesion of the Mazovian, Podlasie, Wielkopolska, Świętokrzyskie, Silesia, Małopolska, Podkarpacie and Lublin provinces. In these cases, we are dealing with the persistence of some regional specifics over a few hundred years. Finally, the Łódź region combines, on the one hand, the rich cultural legacy of the Łęczyca-Sieradz or Łowicz region, and on the other hand, shaped in the years of the first industrial revolution, the specificity of multiculturalism brought by Łódź.

It is only on this background that we can see how complex matter is in the area of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. Therefore, it should be pointed out in the first place to the existing and dividing region almost in two equal parts the border of two completely different

²⁶ The German population living in this area largely left it, escaping from the Soviet army. Subsequent transfers of population took place in 1945 and 1946, so that in practice only a small percentage of this population remained.

²⁷ Problems related to the communist authorities' policy towards national minorities in Silesia and towards Masuria in the PRL today have rich and reliable literature. See, among others *National minorities in Poland. The state and Polish society and national minorities in the periods of political breakthrough (1944-1989)*, edited by P. Madajczyk, Warsaw 1998; *National and ethnic minorities in Poland after the Second World War. Selected elements of state policy*, ed. S. Dudra, B. Nitschke, Kraków 2010; *Displaced or repolonized? Dilemmas of Polish policy towards Warmians and Masurians after 1945*, ed. T. Filipkowski, W. Gieszczyński, Olsztyn 2001.

²⁸ The proof of this dichotomy is the attempts made in recent years by the Gdańsk local government authorities to build some sort of separatist in its essence and having the character of a certain historical mystification, the ideology of the "Free City of Gdansk". Meanwhile, the vast majority of Pomeranian Gdańsk residents, even representing a strong Kashubian or Kociewie identity, at the same time represent a clear attachment to Poland.

civilizational orders - Russian and German. The power of this difference is still expressed in very many areas in a way that we often do not realize ourselves²⁹.

It is enough to compare the eastern and western regions of Kujawy in various dimensions to see the truth of this thesis. Despite the fact that for many centuries Kujawy constituted a relatively uniform and homogeneous area, the strength of various social, economic or cultural processes between 1815 and 1914 was so great that it caused profound differences between the two parts of this area. In the microscale, we can see many of these differences on the example of Golub - Dobrzyń, which within the existing one urban-communal organism combines two strongly different civilizational orders. The same applies to the Toruń powiat, which combines municipalities from two former partitions, or the city of Toruń, which currently - although to a lesser extent than Golub - Dobrzyń - also combines three separate traditions - Pomeranian, Wielkopolska and Kuyavian³⁰.

In addition to the strongly shaped separate cultural traditions of both parts of Kujawy, we still have many other differences. The Dobrzyń region is located within the so-called „Kongresówka” (the name of lands of the former Kingdom of Poland after mentioned Vienna Congress) it retains a great deal of distinctiveness in relation to the Chełmno identity neighboring the same Vistula. In the areas of Western Kujawy, we find a strong cultural identity of Pałuki land, and north of them the Krajna identity. A specific variant of the Kashubian - Kociewie identity is the Borowiak culture. The strongly present elements of the industrial revolution in Bydgoszcz, located at the north border of the Kuyavian, Pałuki, and Krajna and Borowiak cultures, have alienated it in a new cultural mosaic comparable with Łódź, which is still fighting for its own face.

4. Voivodship self-government and construction of a new cultural and civilizational identity Kuyavian-Pomeranian region

Thus, it can be clearly seen how strongly differentiated it is in terms of culture and civilization in the region. It has been subjected to many changes in its state or administration over the centuries. Therefore, it failed to create a supra-local, strong regional cultural synthesis.

An additional shock for the region has become the so-called political transformation brought about in the period between 1989 and 2005. Its basic feature was the rapid and very deep deindustrialisation of the region, which in the 1960s and 1970s underwent a reverse process of strong industrialization³¹. At that time, important industrial centers on the map of

²⁹ It is characteristic that after of more than 20 years since the creation of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, no scientific work has been created regarding these extremely important issues. Neither regional authorities have initiated such research directions, and - what is even more amazing - two large public universities in the region (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the University of Kazimierz Wielki in Bydgoszcz) did not consider it important that their research teams do elementary work for their immediate surroundings.

³⁰ Both of these centers are a kind of social micro-lab, which is best seen on the occasion of elections and electoral preferences of their residents. It is in electoral situations (mainly in the elections for the President of the Republic of Poland) that civilizational and cultural differences appear in the most spectacular way.

³¹ In this period, the great chemistry industry, the metal and machine industry as well as textile industry rapidly developed in this area. As a result, thousands of large industrial assemblies were established in all five major cities of the region. The result was population development, because in total these cities reached almost 1 million inhabitants.

Poland were those which still had earlier traditions, Bydgoszcz, Grudziądz, Inowrocław, Włocławek³², and Toruń³³, which was actually experiencing its then industrial revolution. It is characteristic that as a consequence of this process, the Kujawsko - Pomorskie Voivodship was the only one outside the Śląskie region in Poland, with such large numbers as for Polish conditions (ie over 100,000 inhabitants) of cities.

However, the nineties and adopted model of Poland's economic transformation resulted in a radical destruction of this industrial potential³⁴. The consequence of this state of affairs for this region³⁵ was the rapidly growing social problems, expressed at a very high level of unemployment, the emergence of many areas of structural exclusion of huge groups of people from the labor market and the consequent consequences for social life. These processes resulted in a significant outflow of the most qualified workforce to regions with a higher standard of living, as well as a permanent outflow of graduates of various levels of education, seeking more attractive centers for the development of their further life careers. In connection with the growing demographic crisis³⁶, this created a very difficult situation at the beginning of the 21st century, when the process of accessing larger funds dedicated by the European Union was beginning³⁷.

Poland's accession to the European Union was to serve - as in the previous experience of Spain, Portugal or Greece - the rapid integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with the better developed countries of Western Europe. An important element of this process was to be the development of individual regions so that they would soon approach the average level of development of regions in the countries of the current "fifteen".

The structural and cohesion funds were to play a special role here, whose main purpose was to support these processes. According to the rules in force in the EU, the regional self-government authorities were to play a decisive role in planning the directions of regional development that would ensure the implementation of this cohesion. From this point of view,

³² These four cities became important industrial centers still at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, ie in the period when Polish winter, both in the Prussian partition and in the Russian partition, underwent a process of rapid industrialization.

³³ Toruń, which is an important German stronghold on the border with Russia, has not undergone a comparable industrial explosion. The city was dominated by German military purposes, which determined the non-industrial existence of this center.

³⁴ It was so called „Balcerowicz Plan” (vice Prime Minister in the period 1989 - 1991 and 1997 - 2001 which resulted in the destruction of hundreds of Polish factories. Symbolic sign of this destruction was the destroying with completely neutral position of this economic dictator of Poland one of the most important and present in the world industry shipyard branch.

³⁵ As we have mentioned above so-called „Balcerowicz reform” constituted the deadly end for most of the largest industrial plants in the region. In addition to large chemical plants, only a few industrial plants have survived this peculiar economic tsunami, radically changing the face of the region.

³⁶ Over the last 30 years, we have been observing either the demographic stagnation of large cities (Bydgoszcz, Toruń) or degression (Grudziądz, Włocławek, Inowrocław). Also, the entire population of the voivodship remains at a more or less stable level, with the increasing process of raising the average age, ie the aging of the region's inhabitants.

³⁷ Confirmation of all these observations are the data contained in the *Statistical Yearbook of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship 2018*. Provincial Statistical Office Bydgoszcz 2018. Similarly, see : *Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. Subregions, poviats, communes*. Provincial Statistical Office Bydgoszcz 2018.

the possibilities of such shaping of the directions of this regional development were opened so that it would maximally rebuild and enrich the regional civilizational and cultural identity. For a region as diverse as the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region, it meant a unique chance to achieve such goals.

Unfortunately, the last twenty years have not brought any significant change here. It seems that during this period, there was simply lack of deepened reflection on the historical determinants indicated above. For it is impossible to shape a new reality without elementary recognition of the historical background, especially in such delicate matter. The result of the lack of this reflection were also relatively chaotic activities in various dimensions that did not manage to lead to any vision of building even minimal cohesion of the region.

Also in the area of rebuilding the industrial potential of the region, no significant progress has been made. In the major industrial centers, a part of the current potential has been preserved, but in the vast majority of smaller centers (poviat towns), this deep regression has not been restored - despite the attempts made. Therefore, these consequences of the industrial counter-revolution in the social sphere have proved to be a permanent phenomenon.

Unfortunately, the attempt to seek the place of the region in new areas of the economy was unsuccessful as a rule. It was not until 2015 that a study project concerning the assumptions of the revitalization process of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship was created³⁸. These works have not been finally completed. Meanwhile the main efforts of both regional and sub-national authorities focused on seeking development opportunities in the tourism sphere. Creating development plans at various levels, based on the development of the tourism sector, became a specific tenet³⁹.

It might seem in this context that such a unique regionalization of the region will be conducive to the reconstruction of its cultural mosaic. From the point of view of developing the tourist attractiveness of the region, just displaying its wealth of cultural heritage could be a very important asset. It turned out, however, that the regional authorities had much more faith in the construction of mini-aquaparks or dinosaur parks than in their own power⁴⁰.

5. Synthesis or regional multiplication?

The above statement is very sad. The more so that the specific multiculturalism of the region in today's reality should be one of its major assets. We have been observing a lot of successful experiments in this area over the last decades. The very tradition of the First Polish Commonwealth shows that its multiculturalism has been for many centuries the source of its great strength and attractiveness.

One can point to the example of Toruń, which over several centuries successfully synthesized German and Polish culture, thus creating the basis for the great splendor of the city⁴¹. We also see similar elements of the creative synthesizing of different cultures in later

³⁸ *Project assumptions for the revitalization process in the province Kuyavian-Pomeranian*, Office of the Marshal, Toruń 2015.

³⁹ On this subject, see b interesting remarks regarding the experiences of the Kujawsko - Pomorskie region [in:] A. Potoczek, *Regional policy and spatial economy*, Toruń 2003.

⁴⁰ Here also important observations on this issue [in:] A. Potoczek, *Territorial Policy as a public policy*, Toruń 2017.

⁴¹ It is amazing that at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, despite the very anti-Polish policy of the German authorities (so-called *Kulturkampf*), the population of Toruń, mostly using German language at that time, underwent a process of linguistic and cultural Polonization.

periods. At the same time, it was about the strength of Polish culture, which, thanks to the ability to draw from various sources, was able to defend itself, or even dominate, supported by autocratic German and Russian regimes, the cultures of these nations.

It is obvious that what today is about the weak bonds of various communities within the region is caused by numerous internal tensions. They prevent rational concern for the common good, through a wise search for common goals and benefits, which could become a strong development impulse for the region.

It must be remembered, however, that there is no place for any attempt to build a defined, new cultural community of the region. It seems that the various failures of the voivodship authorities so far result precisely from the conviction of various centers that such a top-down procedure is possible. This was accompanied by the conviction that regional institutions with the help of serious external funds would lead to the creation of such a model.

This operation was reminiscent of the heroic attempts of forcefully building some sort of "European identity" imagined in Brussels in recent years. Needless to say, just like the project of the European technocrats, debris collapsing before our eyes with increasing intensity, so have to end the attempts at a smaller, regional scale in a similarly diverse environment.

For the inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe this is not a new experience. For many generations in individual countries of this part of the continent remember how, through the ideological pressure of the Soviet Union, they tried for half a century (and in the case of the state that is part of the USSR three quarters of a century) to create a new, universal "socialist" cultural identity, destroying centuries-old traditions. This project collapsed in a spectacular way and it is only surprising that at the beginning of the 21st century a new mainstream of the European Union, it undertook a similar in its essence effort to rebuild the nations and European countries. As indicated, the effects of these intentions are similar, but they turn out much more quickly.

However, to seriously discuss this topic, the question should be asked: is it necessary for the region to have a such unified identity? Even assuming - which seems rather impossible to us - that it could be constructed during the life of one generation, the question arises for what? Is the existence of such a thing a condition for the existence and development of the region? In our opinion, no.

The result of the hitherto "regional policy" is the constant tension and internal disputes that make him a "sick man" in external perception⁴². In this way, we ourselves give evidence that the existence of a region in such a construction is pointless. Since it is not only unable to solve the basic problems of its inhabitants, and also generates the necessity of external interference through permanent animosities, it will eventually lead to the conclusion that the only way to change this situation is the partitioning of the region between more mature neighbors⁴³. We have the impression that in many places in Kuyavian - Pomeranian region,

Consequently, at the beginning of World War II, the population identifying itself as Polish in Toruń, equaled or even exceeded the population identifying with German language and culture. After Toruń's return to Poland in January 1920, regardless of the fact that part of the German population left the city, the rest identified with Poland to the extent that the city had the largest share of Polish population among its inhabitants, from all major cities of the Second Polish Republic (nearly 95 %).

⁴² A classic example here is the conflict between the two main cities of the region: Bydgoszcz and Toruń. This conflict actually paralyzes the region's development opportunities.

⁴³ These sad reflections result directly from an important document: *Diagnosis of the socio-economic situation of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. Voivodeship on the country's*

local communities are increasingly matured to such conclusions, recognizing that only in this way will it be possible to break the existing development impasse.

In this context, one must realize that each of the possibly fragmented parts of the region, however, will become even more peripheral in a possible new system and will fall even lower in its civilization status. However, the awareness of this is obviously post factum.

So how to respond to this challenge and create an unstoppable problem? It seems that the decisive action to strengthen all of the region's micro-cultural identities, strengthening them beyond the local character, is the way to rebuild the strength and significance of the region. The empowerment of these supra-local communities, strengthening their development potential and cultural traditions is the way to build a sense of regional community. Local communities, gaining real support from regional authorities, will become their greatest ally.

Only by supporting bottom-up development processes, raising the civilization level of crops.

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