SPATIAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN POLAND

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Résumé

Depuis 1990, la Pologne réalise des réformes économiques fondamentales. Déjà en 1991, plus de la moitié des emplois, et en 1993 la moitié du PNB relevaient du secteur privé. Le processus de privatisation fut plus rapide en Pologne occidentale que dans la partie est; le taux d'emploi le plus élevé est observé dans le nord de la Pologne, tandis que le plus bas se présente dans les agglomérations urbaines. Par conséquent, la Pologne peut être divisée en régions actives et passives, et en régions en crise. Une telle situation requiert un politique régionale particulière et énergique, tant de la part du gouvernement, que des autorités locales.

MOTS-CLÉS : géographie de transformation, restructuration, chômage, politique régionale
KEYWORDS : geography of transformation, restructuring, unemployment, regional policy

Political transformations occured in Poland in mid-1989 rendered possible sine 1990 a realization of the basic economic reforms, which aim is the market economy, including the general privatization and the restructuring of the national economy. The considerable growth of the private sector has been observed sine 1990 (in agriculture it amounted about 75% even in the « socialist economy »period). Already in 1991 more tha n half of employees in Poland (51.1%) fell to the private sector, and two years later 52% of the GNP were made in titis sector, in 1994 56% (table **1).** Thus, Poland ranks the second in the privatization process among the ex-socialist countries (after the Czech Republic). The private enterprises broke also the State monopoly in the external trade, as their share in imports amounted already in 1991 50% and in exports over 20%, in 1994 66% and 51% respectively (table 1).

Table 1 - The privatization process in Poland

Economic	Share of private sector in % of sale					
Sectors	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Economy total	28.6	31.0	42.1	47.0	52	56
Agriculture	77.6	76.0	80.7	>80.0	>90	>90
Industry	16.2	18.3	23.7	31.0	37	38
Construction	21.9	32.2	55.2	77.7	86	86
Transport	11.5	14.2	26.5	39.3	44	46
Trade	59.5	63.7	82.8	85.0	88	89
Exports	-	4.9	21.9	38.4	42	51
Imports	-	14.4	49.9	54.5	58	66

Sources : Statistical Yearbooks (GUS, Warszawa), several issues

Another proof of the growing economic activity of Polish society is the increased number of enterprises (tertiary and industrial) led by individual persons - it amounts to 1.9 million in 1994, thus every sixth Polish family has its own business.

The spatial pattern of the privatization process is very characteristic. There are numerous centres or regions (voivodships) showing a high privatization rate, i.e. Pozna, Warsaw, Lódz, also Gdansk, Cracow and Bielsko-Biala. In the same time the country is divided distinctly into the western part, more active, where the privatization level is higher - and the eastern part, rather passive, in which the privatization process is less advanced. Besides of some historical and cultural conditions, one of the factor of the farter privatization in Western Poland is its direct neighbouring with Germany and indirect with other West-European countries, with which economic contacts are developed. In 1992-93 50% of Polish transborder road passenger transport and 66% of road freight transport crossed the Polish-German border, which is in the same time the border between Poland and the European Union.

An unavoidable effect of the privatization process is the informai economy. In spite of counteractions undertaken by the State, its share in the GNP was estimated in 1993 - 1994 at 20% - 25% (while in 1989 about 9%). But in the same Lime about 25% - 30% of the unemployed people fmd job in this informai economy.

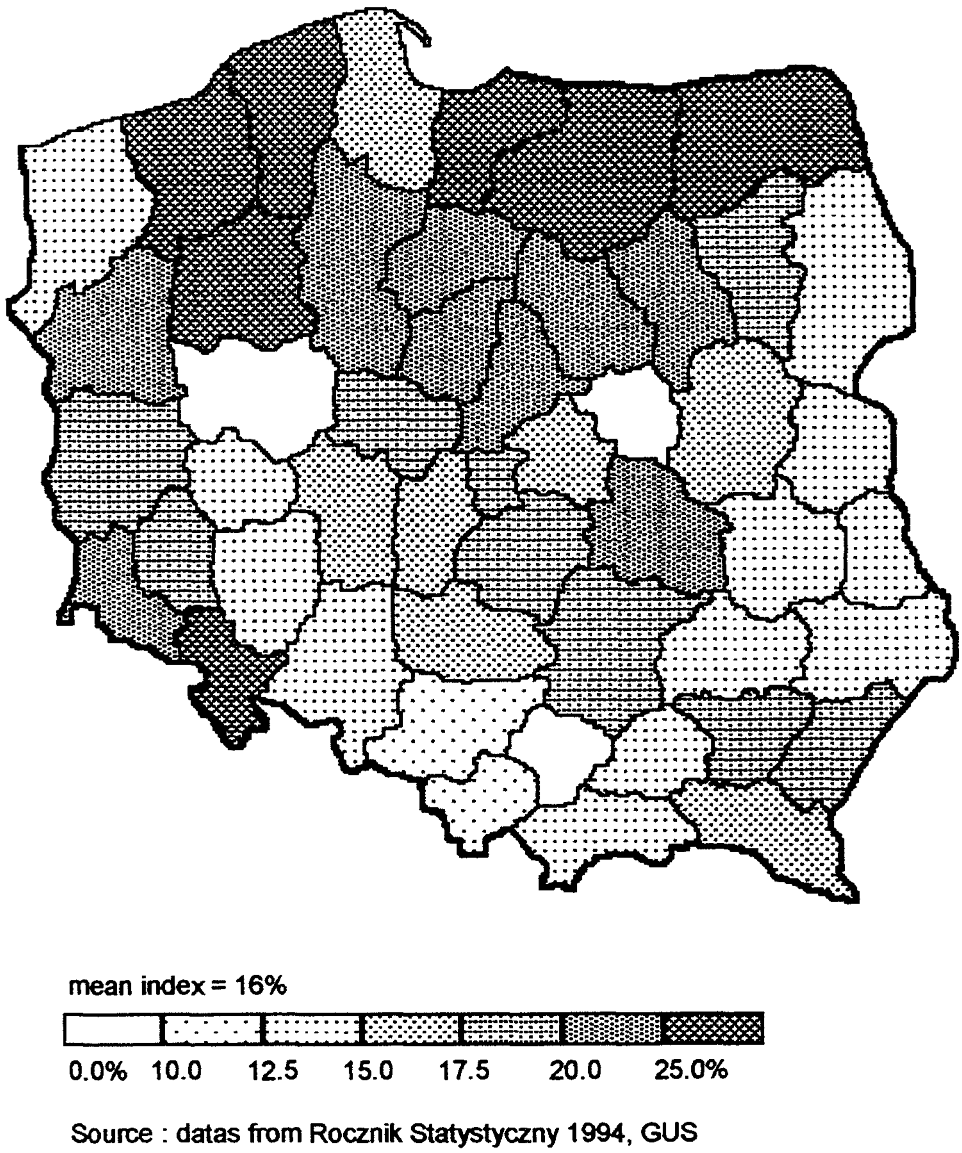

Figure 1 - Unemployment rate (31.12.1993)

Another effect of the restructuring of Polish

reached at the end of 1994 2.85 millions people - 16.2% of the economically active population. But it is worth to remember, that in the past period of the planned economy » there were considerably surpluses of the employment (the so-called « hidden nemployment »), which size was estimated in 1987 t 20-30% of the total employment in that time [4]. Spatially, die highest unemployment rate is actually bserved (figure 1) in northern Poland - over 25% except for the voivodeships of Gdansk and

Szczecin), mostly due to a liquidation of the state farms, which dominated there. In the South, the high unemployment in the Walbrzych voivodeship is connected with the crisis in the Walbrzych coal industry.

The results of Poland's economic development after 5 years of the systemic economic reforms are shown in table 2.

Table 2 - After 5 years of transformations

Indices of change (previous year=100)	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
GNP	-11.6	-7.6	1.5	4.0	5.0
Industrial output	-24.2	-11.9	4.2	6.2	12.0
Agricultural output	-2.8	-2.0	-12.0	2.2	-3.5
Inflation	586	70	44	35	30.0
Unemployment rate (%)	5.2	10.7	13.6	16.0	16.2
Real incomes of the population	-24.4	-0.3	-3.6	-1.8	3.0
External trade balance (million USD)	2214	51	734	-2036	-836
External debt (bill.USD)	48.5	48.4	47.0	47.2	41.3

Sources : Statistical Yearbooks (GUS), Reports of the Central Planning Board (CUP)

After the first two years of the considerable recession, in 1992 the first positive symptoms appeared - the growth of the GNP and of the industrial output, and the reduction of the inflation. But the unemployment and the budget deficit increased. In 1993 and in 1994 those positive trends were stable, but accompanied by the high unemployment rate and the high externat debt.

Due to the geopolitical changes in the former Eastern Europe the externat economic links of Poland were basically reorientated and the geographical structure of Polish externat trade changed completely. Before 1989 the first trade partner of Poland was Soviet Union, although its share in the total turnover has been reduced constantly sine the mid-80s - from 31% in 1985 to 19% in 1989. The similar trend concerned the trade with the remaining COMECON countries.
Since 1990 the first trade partner of Poland has been the Federal Republic of Germany (even before the re-unification with the GDR), which share in the total turnover of Poland amounted 22-23%, white that of the USSR - some 17%.
In the 1991-92 the share of United Germany in Polish externat trade increased to 26-27%, and in 1993-94 to 32%, white the share of Poland in the German externat trade amounted then 1.5% - 1.6% only. Both the countries should aim to reduce this disproportion, but an effort of Poland in this sphere must be greater.
In 1993 over 75% of the Polish externat trade turnover fell to the highly developed countries, of which 60% to the 12 European Union countries, white the share of the ex-COMECON countries amounted 14% only, and that of Russia - some 5%. The geoeconomic orientation of Poland is therefore completely new. Among the ex-socialist countries Poland shows the strongest « west-reorientation » in the externat trade - in 1993 75.5% of the turnover felt to Western industrial countries, in comparison with Slovenia (72%), Czech Republic (71.5%), Hungary (66%), Romania (over 50%) and Bulgaria (43%)(according to « ycie Gospodarcze », No 27, 28, 1994). Nevertheless, Poland tries to recover, at least partially, the eastern markets to provide greater sale for Polish products.
The four Visehrad-countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) concluded in 1993 the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) which should promote the economic cooperation between those countries (in 1993 the CEFTA partners participated in 4% in Polands externat trade). The foundation of CEFTA is also to ensure that white East-West trade liberalization proceeds, the Central European countries match this process by dismantling barriers among themselves.

The above described changes of the geographical pattern of the externat links of Poland requires the transport infrastructure to be enlarged and adopted to this new situation. On the one hand, this is a necessity of the growing contacts (botte in the good traffic and the passenger one) of Poland with Western Europe and on the other hand, a proper use of the transit site of Poland (the peculiar

« geographical rent ») between Western and Eastern Europe. and between Northern and Southern Europe. Poland lies in th e middle of Europe and has - after the last geopolitical transformations - even 7 neighbouring states. Therefore the role of transit through Poland will increase. The most important Warsaw-Berlin railway line is now under modernization. In the wider perspective, this line should give the better access to Paris and Moscow. Also Poland's road network must be connected with the European one. It regards mostly the highways.

The basic transformations in the former East-European countries made possible an inflow to them the foreign capital, which is important for their further economic growth. The factors determining this inflow are : the size and structure of the national market, the perspectives of economic development, the supply of cheap but skilled man power, and the favourable so-called « investment climate » i.e. the stable legal system, a political, economic and social stabilization, an efficient administration and the proper infrastructure. Poland fulfills some of those conditions, being a relatively great market of nearly 40 millions inhabitants, disposing also of the skilled and relatively cheap man power. The remaining conditions, especially those of the « investment climate » were formerly less favourable, but were improved since the mid - 1992. Therefore Poland becomes the country of the decreasing investment risk. According to some evaluations, it ranks second or third in this respect, after the Czech Republic and Hungary (or in between). Till the end of 1994, the foreign capital was engaged the most in Hungary (5.2 bill. USD), in Russia (5.0), next in Poland (4.5), in the Czech Republic (3.7), Slovakia (1.5), Romania (1.2), Slovenia (1.0), Ukraina (0.3), Bulgaria (0.3), and Albania (0.2). In Poland, the greatest share has American capital (about 35%), next the Italian, German, Dutch, British and French ones. 70% of the foreign capital investments fell to the industry; 10% is engaged in the financial sector, 6% in telecomunication, the other fell to trading and to some ecological projects.

The regions the most attractive for the foreign enterprises location are the City of Warsaw and its region (where 38% of foreign capital is concentrated) and the voivodship Bielsko-Biala (28%), next those of Poznãn, Katowice, Wroclaw, Gdansk, Szczecin, Cracow and Bydgoszcz. Thus, the foreign capital enters the areas economically the most active, showing the advantageous (i.e. differentiated) economic structure and the favourable transport site.

The above described economic transformations, connected with an implantation of the market economy, the privatization processes and the restructuring of the economy, have also their spatial dimension and spatial effects. The actual changes and processes reduce the former significance of the traditional strong industrial areas, i.e. that of Upper Silesia, Walbrzych, Lódz and some others. Simultaneously in other areas, the new modern branches of economy - the modern industry, trade activity and tertiary facilities - are developed. These are the regions of Warsaw, Poznañ, Gdañsk, Szczecin, Wroclaw, Cracow and Bielsko-Biala, where the privatization rate is the highest and that of die unemployment, the lowest. There is also the greatest concentration of die foreign capital. These are the « leaders of transformation » in Poland (figure 2). On the other side, there are in Poland the crisis areas, i.e. those of Northem and partly c-Central Poland, the Walbrzych Coal Basin and the Lódz Region, showing die « textile monoculture ». The above listed areas show hardly differentiated economic structure, therefore there were less resistant against die economic recession symptoms. Another class of the crisis areas are the s.c., « company towns », disposing of one, usually great industrial plant. Much of those plants, mostly the armament ones, fell to the crisis after a collapse of the armament market, both the national one, and that of the whole Warsaw Pact. Such a plant was often the only workplace for the inhabitants of the given city, sponsoring often die most of its social infrastructure. In Poland there are some 60 crisis centres of this type, i.e. those of Starachowice, Mielec, Œwidnik, Stalowa Wola, Praszka, Gorlice, Zambrów and others.

The result of the above presented spatial processes is that in Poland there are the areas economically active - and the crisis ones (called also die problem areas). According to several analyses and prognoses, the differences between the progressive and the regressive (or between the strong and weak) areas tend to rise, especially as regards the differences in unemployment rate [1]. Such a situation requires th e proper and active regional policy, led both by the govemment and the regional / local authorities. For the time being, only the immediate means, mitigating the crisis effects, i.e. in the zones of the highest unemployment rate (over 20%) were used. In 1992 the Polish Agency of Regional Development was organized. Its aim is to collect and to dispose of funds (also the foreign ones), for backing and aiding the regional development. It is worth to add, that die leading of

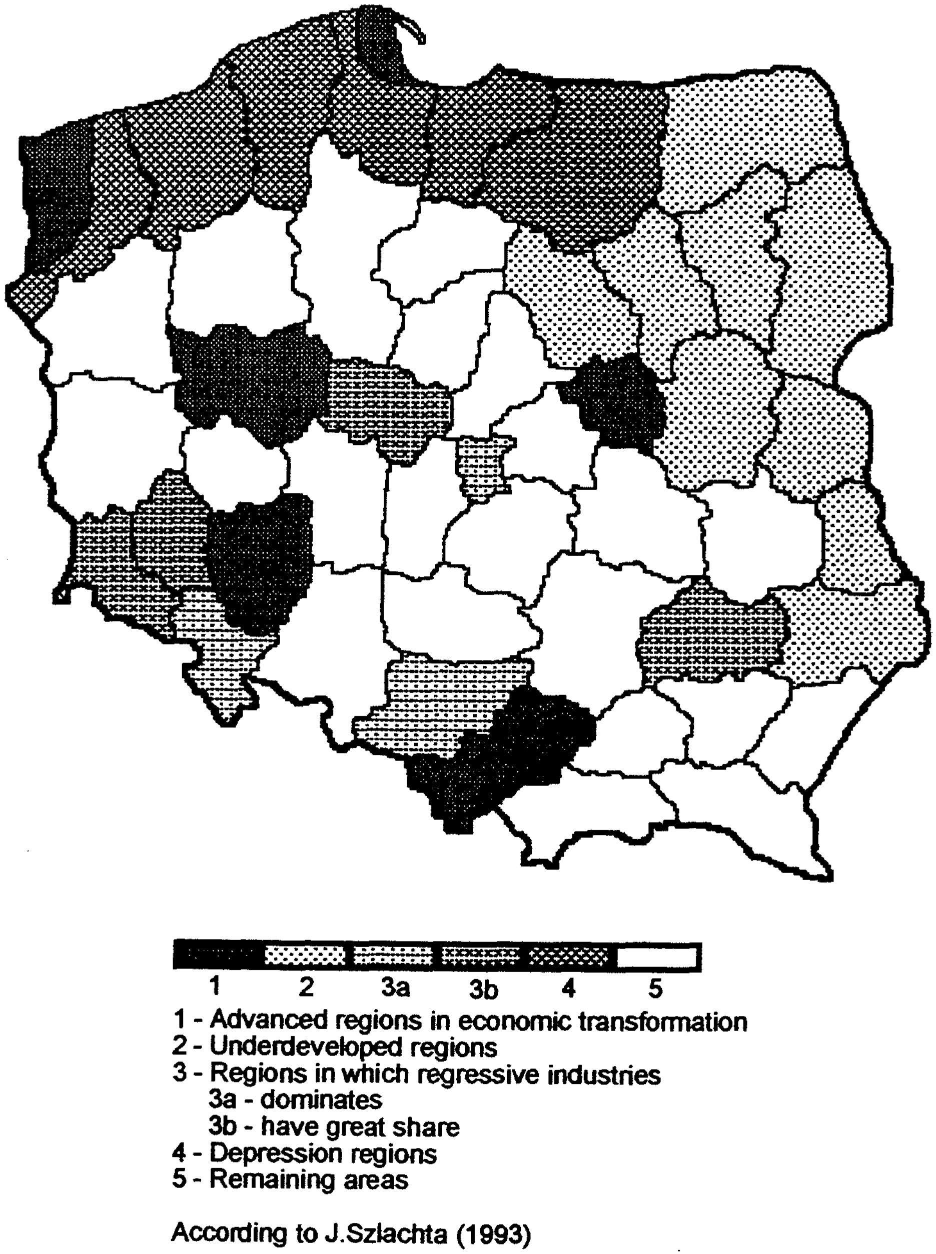

Figure 2 - Poland's regional structure after 3 years of transformation

the proper regional policy is one of conditions which should fulfill Poland as the associated member of the European Union. The realization of the regional policy by the government should be aided by an authentic territorial selfgovernment, which is now arising, both on the level of communes, and , maybe also, on that of poviats (districts).

In the spatio-economic transformations of Poland the specific rote is that of the border regions. Because of the military and political restrictions in the former system, those areas were discriminated economically. Nowadays, under circumstances favourable for international co-operation, when the frontiers are opened those areas have opportunities of active development using their « near-border » location. Like in West-European countries also the varions initiatives of transborder co-operation i.e. •those of the « euroregion » type, are undertaken. The most active transfrontier co-operation is observed on the Western Polish border (with Germany) and next on the Southern one (with the Czech and Slovak Republics). So far the following « euroregions » were established : the Euroregion Nysa / Neisse (involved are Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic), Euroregion Pomerania (Poland, Germany, Danmark and Sweden), the « Viadrina » Euroregion (Poland, Germany), Euroregion of the Carpathians (Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary) and the Tatra-Euroregion (Poland and Slovakia). Other projects of this type are under discussion.

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