
Section 1.

REGIONAL POLICIES

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EVOLUTION OF REGIONALISM IN POLAND – TIMES OF OFFENSIVE

Abstract

The author discusses the evolution of Polish regionalism in the interwar period, during World War II and in communist Poland, concluding his analysis at the time of the systemic transformation in Poland after 1989. The purpose of the paper is to present the ideological principles, different expressions of regionalism and characteristic tendencies that influenced its evolution in the period from 1918 to 1989. In the course of the analysis, it is observed that despite profound political transformations the core of regionalism has remained the same, and its assumptions, goals and activities continue to be accepted and followed in modern times.

Key words: *regionalism, forms of regionalism, the evolution of regionalism in Poland of the 19th and 20th centuries*

The defensive face of regionalism that was characteristic of the time of partitions of Poland and its struggle to retain national identity, particularly to retain the Polish language and culture, rapidly transformed to an offensive approach, due to the pressure of the new situation after Poland regained independence in October 1918 (Birkenmajer, 2009, pp. 241–244; Grzybowska, 2005, pp. 31–46; Kwiatkowski, 1984, pp. 143–156). This situation promoted civil activation, expressed among other things through regionalist activities. Teresa Kulak (2001, p. 38) stresses the clearly activist character of regionalism in the interwar Poland and its positive, or rather positivist nature: “[r]egionalism was to ensure the development of the individual social, economic and cultural values of the region, it was to stimulate the intellectual life of the provinces on the basis of the regional assets of history and culture, and to reveal and preserve the lively historic and folk tradition in academic works.” Considerably increased activities in the field of socio-cultural regionalism, accompanied by the dynamically developing regionalist movement, resulted in the regionalist ideology achieving its mature form in the interwar period, which

found its expression in the publishing activities of, among others, Tadeusz Brzeski (1924), Stanisław Bukowiecki (1924), Władysław Orkan (1930), Aleksander Patkowski (1924; *Ruch regionalistyczny*, 1934) and Stefan Żeromski (1923). In the opinion of Kwiryna Handke (1993, p. 7), the term regionalism emerged in literary discourse as late as 1926, accompanied by the exchange between Władysław Orkan and Juliusz Zborowski, who published his polemical remarks on the topic in *Wierchy* in 1930.

It should be mentioned here that the languages of national and ethnic minorities played a significant role in the development of the cultural identity (including regional identity) of the multinational country Poland was before the outbreak of World War II, despite their marginalisation by the linguistic majority. Benjamin Lee Whorf (1982, p. 323) observes that thinking is “a matter of different ethnic languages.” Therefore, the social and cultural status of these languages is not uniform, as expressed by the typology based on the oppositions between languages, for instance an official versus unofficial language, language used in the entire territory of the country versus that used in a part of its territory, culturally strong versus culturally weak language, normalised versus not normalised language (Perlin, 1986, pp. 12–13).

Theoretical considerations on regionalism did not affect the spontaneity of its perception, as exemplified in the statement by MP Adam Chętnik (1921, p. 2), in whose opinion “[p]eople in different regions of Poland form distinct clusters with different properties, customs and slightly different cultures, different historical past, their own scholars and heroes. They should not be defied and rejected, instead these properties should be retained, developed and strengthened for the benefit of the whole of Poland.” In the continuation of the Polish regionalism which had developed before 1918, Z. Gryń (1932) particularly stressed its educational and patriotic aspects, writing that “nothing absorbs human feelings, nothing is ingrained with a man’s soul more than his family land, the love for ‘his own field and nest’, the experience of his youth (...) Let us then work and ingrain the love for our family land in the hearts and minds of our young, the land that held the cradles of our ancestors and that enshrines the bones of our fathers.” Regional education and regionalism held a considerable position in the Polish education and culture of the interwar period (*Edukacja regionalna*, 1999; Glimos-Górska, 1991, pp. 208–2015; *Region i edukacja*, 2004; *Szkoła*, 1996; Taboń, 2005, pp. 23–29), and one of the fundamental objectives of regional education was “to form a strong emotional bond with the Motherland in young men, to prepare them for

commitment in working for their environment and to instil the attitude of openness and tolerance for other communities and culture in them” (Lysko, 1996, pp. 35–38).

The authorities of the interwar Poland, especially after the May 1926 coup, primarily supported the idea of what was termed ‘state regionalism.’ It was a somewhat peculiar form of regionalism that Edward Chudziński (2013a, p. 70) defined as follows: “[i]f the primary interest of the country as a whole is expressed in the form of state-forming ideology, as was the case in the Second Republic of Poland, while the government simultaneously promotes and supports some regionalist slogans and activities – we are dealing with the state regionalism.” Circular no. 209 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 29 November, 1927, *On the studies into the relations of regions as territorial units and regional action programmes*, exemplified how the regionalist movement was used for political purposes. Under the difficult conditions of socio-economic, national-ethnic, political and territorial divisions (sometimes even antagonisms) in the interwar period, the top-bottom concepts of regionalisation and regionalist ideas were fervently supported by some circles, but there were also numerous groups of critics and relentless opponents among politicians from different affiliations (in particular from nationalist and people’s parties), national and ethnic minorities, as well as the state apparatus (Gojan, 1935; Hrabysk, 1926, 1927; Piszczkowski, 1928; Wójcik, 1928).

As a result, in the interwar Poland, the idea of socio-cultural regionalism was shaped under the influence of different trends, some aiming to integrate regionalist movement and others stressing its diversity and regional distinctiveness. This issue was discussed, among others, by Juliusz Zborowski (1972, p. 185) who expressed the core of regionalism at that time in the following manner: “[t]he entire worth of regionalism concerns the identification of all the cultural or economic values and differences characteristic of a given region and their further development on the basis of local traditions and the regional environment, created by different settlement, geographic and economic conditions. From this point of view, imposing any ideology based on different foundations to other regions is against regionalism.” It needs to be mentioned that, both in the interwar period and after World War II, the ideas of federal and autonomous regions (with the exception of Silesia) were rejected in favour of self-governing regions (Ślugocki, 1997), which is particularly significant in view of the objectives of current Polish regionalism (*Karta regionalizmu*, 1994). The interwar regionalism was not a manifestation of separatism or particular-

ism, either. J. Štěpanek (1934, p. 81) addressed this issue writing that “[r]egionalism is neither separatism nor provincialism (particularism). Regionalism binds and groups the spiritual and economic powers of the country and state, making everybody capable of utilising the resources in the immediate surroundings and natural social conditions.”

World War II brought significant losses to the circles of intellectuals and intelligentsia interested in regionalist activities. The territorial changes that affected Poland in the wake of WWII were also of the utmost importance in this respect. Immediately after Poland was liberated from German occupation, social structures were revived, including the revival of the regionalist movement. The political atmosphere of that time was clearly not favourable, however. Edward Chudziński (2013b, pp. 74–75) described the status of regionalism under the new socio-political conditions as follows: “[a]fter the war regionalism did not find favourable conditions for further development. It was blamed for the negative experience of the occupation, the left wing attacked the movement and its ideology for social solidarity and erasing social divisions, as it used to do in the interwar period, but most importantly, the cultural policy of the centralised and ideological state was in stark contrast with the goals that regionalism tries to attain, wherever and whenever. Therefore, after 1948, even those regionalist organisations and institutions that managed to resume activities (such as the Polish Highlanders Alliance) practically ceased their operations or were liquidated. Relatively speaking, the best conditions for regionalism were ensured in the Recovered Territories¹ because it was important for the authorities that the new Polish settlers became firmly rooted there. Therefore, apart from supporting institutional educational and cultural centres, the authorities supported also the emergence of various social culture societies, publishing ventures and literary groups that promoted and practically implemented the idea of regions [‘small homelands’ in Polish].” Kazimierz Kozłowski (2005, p. 70) wrote about the role of socio-cultural activities, including educational and publishing initiatives in the process of the re-Polonisation of the Recovered Territories: “[f]rom spring 1945, the process of the Polonisation of the region involved – alongside the expulsion of Germans – reminding of Slavic and Polish roots (schooling and culture played a particularly significant role in this respect), the removal of German signs and even of some facilities (this concerns historical cemeteries to some extent).”

¹ In Polish: ‘Ziemie Odzyskane’ – term used to describe the territory of the former Free City of Danzig and the parts of pre-war Germany that became part of Poland after World War II [translator’s note].

One of the leaders of the Motherland of the Cieszyńskie Land society, Ludwik Brożek commented on this situation, saying in 1961: “[r]evived after the war, the Motherland society soon found out that it was practically redundant in the new, post-war relations. The people’s state spared no funds for education and culture taking over nearly all fields of cultural and educational life. In many places where the lively cells of the Motherhood society actively operated before the war, there were no more volunteers to continue these activities. The old activists were killed or died, the younger ones felt no connection to the old Motherland. Only a few cells attempted to resume work under the new, changed conditions of the post-war period. Under those conditions, the Motherland as a society did not dissolve for good, but suspended its activities for some time, having handed over its assets to the state and Polish Teachers’ Union” (Makowski, 2010, p. 5).

After 1956 the policy of the authorities towards socio-cultural regional societies which supported the idea of regionalism was clearly liberalised (Bądkowski, 1961, p. 93; Patla, 1961, p. 106). Edward Chudziński (2013a, p. 30) writes that “[a]fter 1956, which saw the profound modification in the cultural state policy, regional cultural societies (...) became the very organisational foundation for Polish regionalism. They represent the so-called association trend exhibiting clear aspirations to draw up programme platforms for regionalism. Although it is true that before the 1980s the term regionalism was not used, let alone emphasised, in the activities and programme documents adopted at congresses of such societies, yet in practice in a more or less covert manner, they implemented a number of tasks and objectives stemming from regionalism. They primarily fostered the emergence of communities with a strong sense of local and regional identity, and by this token – of distinctness. They were, and continue to be, an important link in cultural heritage and its creative continuation at local, regional and central levels, depending on the type and range of activities. Despite all their internal differences, socio-cultural societies (operating in large cities, smaller towns and villages, dedicated to academic and educational activities as well as propagating knowledge, etc.) form a system that complements central cultural and academic institutions, and sometimes they are their alternative. On account of their status and scope of activities, they play important roles in the social, cultural and academic life of individual circles, regions and even the entire country (encompassing opinion-forming, programme-forming, diagnostic, cognitive functions, etc.).”

The programme aspirations of socio-cultural societies were not limited to the cultivation of selected traditions of the given region (although this was the primarily role assigned to such societies by central authorities), but went beyond that, seeking to become a constructive, social and civil force transforming the life of the region in many dimensions. Such aspirations find their expression in the statement by Bohdan Suchodolski, who noted that “at present, regionalism involves not only the programme to protect the cultural relics of the given area, but first and foremost regionalism is the programme of activities aiming to simulate all forces in all respects to update the life and culture as much as possible and to expand traditional and potential bonds” (Pestka, 1976, p. 5). This approach resulted in the emergence of a relatively large number of regionalist periodicals after 1956, despite the then highly centralised press system (Dziki, 2008, p. 215). The increasing activities of different socio-cultural societies in the area of regionalist publications were illustrated, for example, by the publication of *Notatki Płockie* [Notes from Płock] in July 1956, initially a quarterly bulletin of the Research Committee on the Founding and Development of Płock, and from 1959 a periodical of the Płock Academic Society, one of the oldest academic societies in Poland (Kansy, 2012; Kansy, 2013, pp. 250–261; Koński, 2012). In 1957 *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie* [Communications from the Mazursko-Warmińskie region] were published by the Research Centre of the Polish Historical Society in Olsztyn (Mazurski Institute). In 1958 *Małopolskie Studia Historyczne* [The Małopolskie Region Historical Studies] were established by the local branches of the Polish Historical Society in Kielce, Krakow, Nowy Sącz, Przemyśl, Rzeszów and Sandomierz. In 1959, the Polish Ethnographic Society started publishing *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* [Łódź Ethnographic Studies]. In Wielkopolska *Ziemia Kaliska* [Kalisz Territories] (1957) and *Ziemia Gnieźnieńska* [Gniezno Territories] (1959) represented regionalist monthlies at that time (Kowalczyk, 2013).

Regionalism of that period should not be limited to the field of culture, as is sometimes the case (*Słownik*, 2008, pp. 22–23). Although the political authorities of the Polish People’s Republic [abbreviated as PRL in Polish] did not typically refer to the term regionalism, they used the term region in their propaganda, economic and statistical studies. In the system of real socialism, opportunities to promote the idea of regionalism were systemically limited, as were the attempts at broader regionalist socio-political activities of citizens. Consequently, the range of patterns and ways of manifesting regionalism in socio-cultural terms was extremely

limited (*Anatomia*, 1990), although this idea played a considerable role in societal integration, in particular in the Recovered Territories (*Edukacja*, 2005; Nowakowska, 1980). According to Anna Turska (1990, p. 10), “the models of local collective activities that were created and sustained in small local communities were systematically curbed over the 45-year history of the PRL by the models developed at the macrostructural level and imposed from the top on local decision-makers and local communities.” This resulted in poor regional self-identification of Poles in the PRL, and the socialist state sought to even out regional differences and disparities between regions in terms of development and mentality (Bednarek, 1994, p. 65). Paweł Śliwa (2000, p. 185) addressed this issue writing that “[i]n general, the predominant assumption of the homogeneity of Polish society (at least as a desirable state) precluded the possibility of the central authorities formally accepting the fact that minorities were present (especially if that was to be associated with granting certain rights to them, for instance as concerns the establishment of true self-government or autonomy). This primarily concerned ethnical and national minorities, but did not spare regional communities that were inherently more difficult to identify.”

The socialist state restricted grassroots civil initiatives and exercised strict control over societies; it also tried to centralise societal movements in order to control them more efficiently (*Antologia*, 2012). Under such conditions, the role of representation-based local authorities that should naturally provide organisational and financial support for regionalist movements, in the PRL was largely limited to following the wishes of the ruling party (Regulski, Kulesza, 2009, pp. 17–20). Therefore, regionalism as a relatively independent and autonomous, but actually marginal, societal movement could only operate under socio-cultural cover, allowing its members to become committed to their region, or ‘small homeland,’ in civic (and thereby patriotic) terms, in particular by virtue of working in regional and local associations of cultural, historical, hobbyist, folk, literary, artistic and tourist nature, or in the field of environmental protection, religion or nation and ethnicity. The latter concerns the activities of socio-cultural associations of different religious and national and ethnic minorities, such as Belarusian, Karaim, German, Roma, Tatar, Ukrainian and Jewish populations. Talking about regionalism and regionality, and delimiting regions as the foundation of regionalisation, some authors refer to a concrete national and ethnic group inhabiting the given region when stating that “this is a concept and practice of societal and organisa-

tional activities based on a defined ethnic group (or a set of closely related groups) which in the course of a historical and cultural process formed a relatively coherent and stable group distinguished from other groups” (Skorowski, 2000, p. 130). In a democratic, pluralistic, multinational society this assumption is questionable, since a region cannot be distinguished solely on the basis of one factor, that of nationality, which potentially marginalises the remaining national and ethnic minorities inhabiting this region, and usually having their own historical contribution in the achievements, tradition and development of this region. This assumption introduces disproportions in their treatment, thereby depriving such minorities of their subjectiveness, which defies the principle of equality and justice. Transnational or frontier regions (Euroregions) are another matter. Their core principle is relative integration of different neighbouring nations and ethnic groups (Danielewski, 2006, p. 18).

Alongside the socio-political transformation processes which occurred in Poland after 1989, the phenomenon of a specific revitalisation of regional identity, as well as that of the cultural identity of different national and ethnic minorities and of so-called civil identity (Chodubski, 2012; *Tożsamość*, 2011) could be observed, accompanied by the emergence of dynamic regionalism – a grassroots movement crumbling the artificial national and cultural monolith of real socialism (Bokszański, 2000; Geisler, 2009, pp. 63–83; Sługocki, 1990; Sztompka, 2002, p. 526; Wódz, Wódz, 1999) and characterised today by regions developing “diverse values of their own distinctness in order to enrich the broadly understood societal life of modern world” (Skorowski, 1990, p. 13). Paweł Śliwa (2000, p. 185) added a handful of accurate remarks on the topic writing that “[a]lthough the communist authorities in their own way legitimised regionalism and regional differences associated with it, for instance supporting different forms of protecting local and regional traditions and customs, it was only after the processes of political transformation commenced that regionalisms could formally organise themselves and fully develop in all dimensions, weakening the complexes of provincialism. Regionalisms reorganised in this manner initially won quite strong social support and provided grounds for the emerging pressure for regionalisation.” This is indicated by the authors of the report studying the regional identity of the inhabitants of Lower Silesia (*Tożsamość*, 2011, p. 9): [f]rom the early 1990s the process of revitalisation of regional identities could be observed in Poland. Politico-economic transformations favoured the emergence of movements and parties that referred to regional traditions

and called for more independence from the central authorities, and even for autonomy for their regions. The fairly strong regional traditions that were reinforced, *inter alia* by the partitions, were revived. Differences between regions came to be perceived, that had been overlooked in the PRL period for ideological reasons. On the other hand, the European unification process and Poland's attempts to become a member of the European Union forced the state to adjust to the new political, economic and social conditions. In a united Europe, the region became the key unit."

The modern regionalist movement in Poland refers to the same values and ideas as its forerunners and continuators followed (Omelandiuk, 2013, pp. 87–109). They are addressed, among other things, in the *Programme declaration of Polish regionalists 2006*, adopted by the participants of the 8th Congress of Regional Cultural Societies, held in Warsaw from 27 to 29 June, 2006, which stated that the "Polish model and pattern of regionalism, formed over decades of efforts and experience, is marked by transparent ideas such as: national and patriotic motivation, national unity, the political unitarity and territorial integrity of Poland; an attitude of civil service and work for the common good; a bond with the tradition of Christian culture, including its hierarchy of values; culturalism – creating culture and cultural specificity of regions and local communities; territoriality, that is real and emotional ties to one's homeland and its rich landscapes; pluralism and tolerance – accounting for a variety of entities and forms of association, programmes and a variety of tasks; active and autonomous participation in public and political life at the local and central level. These features determine the specificity of Polish regionalism and Polish social culture."

Tomasz Zarycki (2000, p. 7) claims that "the 45 years of PRL unification policy did not manage to erase regional traditions and identities and succeeded only in their silencing and absence from the public realm they immediately returned to when socio-political life became liberalised." Therefore, after the collapse of the PRL, which sustained the myth of the ethnic unity of Poles, according to Kazimiera Wódz and Jacek Wódz (1999, p. 117), there emerged "the postulates that it was necessary to come up with a new formula of national identity that would refer to significant cultural differences and make this identity a factor that would bind large groups characterised by clear cultural differences." The authors of one of the reports on social participation in culture observe that "at present (...) there are no more acute conflicts between the world of politics and that of culture. The withdrawal of the state from forcing ideological projects

meant that the only problem in the practical implementation of cultural projects are insufficient resources and legal framework” (Poleszczuk, Sztop-Rutkowska, Kiszkiel, Klimczuk, Mejsak, Winiecka, 2012, p. 6). It should be borne in mind, however, that both regional movements and regionalist ideas operating under the circumstances of political freedom and civil freedoms in the integrating Europe (*Integracja*, 1998) are sometimes treated instrumentally by their true advocates and activists as well as regional and local politicians (Narloch, 2011, pp. 65–73; Turowski, 2010, pp. 13–15).

It should be noted that regionalism does not reject religious elements and does not eliminate them; in the case of Poland, the enormous importance of Christian religious culture in shaping and strengthening regionalism is actually emphasised (*Regionalizm*, 1997; *Regionalizm w Kościele*, 2001; Zellma, 2002, pp. 46–58). This attitude, however, is not shared by the entire political Christian democracy. Speaking about socio-political transformations initiated in the Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the World Union of Christian Democrats indicated regionalism, among other things, as one of their negative outcomes (Przeciszewski, 1993, pp. 197–211).

The idea of socio-cultural regionalism has always been supported and aided by the achievements of socio-academic regionalism (interdisciplinary regional studies), socio-historical regionalism (multi-dimensional studies into the history of the region), socio-literary regionalism (literary and poetic achievements of the region), socio-artistic regionalism (folk art, photography, painting, music, sculpture and other forms of artistic expressions associated with the region), regional studies (studies into the history and geography of the region) as well as naturalist regionalism (focusing on the landscape and nature qualities of the region) (Ćmak, 1989; *Regionalizm krajoznawczy*, 1970; *Regionalizm*, 1995). Regionalism has various manifestations that all blend into one great socio-cultural movement enriching the cultural achievements of a given region as well as the national culture they are an integral part of.

The foundations of socio-cultural regionalism in Poland were formed during the 19th century. Regionalism evolved in this period under the primary influence of the life of society subjected to the severe legislation of partitioning powers and the organisation and mentality typical of their cultural and socio-political life. This evolution was positively expressed on the one hand by the growing sense of national awareness, forged in different shapes of resistance against the anti-Polish policies of the partition-

ing powers, and on the other – by the growing level of regional awareness in the territory of Polish state, divided into three parts. The subsequent stages of the evolution of regionalism fell in the 20th century, which in November 1918 saw the formal reinstatement of the Polish state that was then tragically impacted by the events of World War II, followed by the coerced redrawing of the state's borders and the resulting resettlements. Later on, the socio-political and cultural life of Poland was subjected to sovietisation which partly ended in the second half of 1989. The new chapter in the evolution of Polish regionalism falls in the years of political transformation that created favourable conditions for the authentic, active, grassroots form of regionalism based on selfless civil activities in many fields of socio-political life which is not enforced by the state.

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Streszczenie

Autor omówił proces ewolucji regionalizmu w Polsce, osadzając jego pierwociny na progu XIX wieku, a kończąc analizę na transformacji systemowej Polski po 1989 roku. Przedstawiono założenia ideowe i różne formy wyrazu regionalizmu, a także charakterystyczne tendencje, które wywierały wpływ na jego przeobrażenia na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. W tym czasie istota regionalizmu pozostawała jednak niezmienna, a jego założenia, cele i działania są również akceptowane i kontynuowane współcześnie.

Słowa kluczowe: regionalizm, formy regionalizmu, ewolucja regionalizmu w Polsce XIX i XX wieku

Резюме

Автор оговорил процесс эволюции регионализма в Польше, обозначая его зачатки на пороге XIX века и заканчивая анализ на системном преобразовании Польши после 1989 года. Представлены идеологические концепции и различные формы выражения регионализма, а также характерные тенденции, оказывающие влияние на его преобразование на рубеже XIX и XX веков. В то время сущность регионализма, однако, оставалась неизменной, а его принципы, цели и действия так же приняты и продолжены по сей день.

Ключевые слова: регионализм, формы регионализма, эволюция регионализма в Польше XIX и XX веков

Резюме

У статті розглядається процес еволюції регіоналізму в Польщі, починаючи з його зародження на переломі XIX століття і закінчуючи трансформацією

політичної системи в Польщі в 1989 році. Представлено ідейні принципи та різні форми втілення регіоналізму, характерні тенденції, які мали вплив на його зміни на переломі XIX та XX століть. Однак сутність регіоналізму залишалась незмінною, а його принципи, цілі та дії є актуальними і донині.

Ключові слова: *регіоналізм, форми регіоналізму, еволюція регіоналізму в Польщі в XIX та XX століттях*