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FROM EUPHORIA TO FRUSTRATION: INSTITUTIONALIZING PROGNOSTIC RESEARCH IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC, 1969–76*

Abstract

In 1969 an interdisciplinary committee for long-term forecasting was created at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Together with the central planning authorities, statistical offices and every branch of government it constituted a system of prognostication which remained legally in place between 1971 and 1976. This article regards prognostication as an institutionalized experiment based on one of the key myths of modernity – that future events can be known and shaped. The genealogy of long-term forecasts in Poland dates back to pre-war experiences with state planning and transnational transfers of knowledge since 1956. After an outline of its pre-history, this article describes the construction and programmatic ideas of the prognostic system and asks how its functioning affected participants' understandings of the future as a political category. Finally, this article makes the case that this state-run prognostication venture resulted in an amplitude of euphoria followed by frustration regarding future knowledge, which can be understood as an indirect but significant cultural symptom of the emerging political and economic crisis in the Polish People's Republic beginning in 1976.

Keywords: future research, history of futurology, modernity, state socialism, Polish People's Republic

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I
INTRODUCTION

Scientists and state officials began to organize "prognostic activity in Poland … along a wide front"[1] with pioneers' enthusiasm in the late 1960s. The Polish Academy of Sciences (*Polska Akademia Nauk*, PAN) created the interdisciplinary Committee for Research and Prognostics 'Poland 2000' (*Komitet Badań i Prognoz 'Polska 2000'*, KP-2000) in 1969 to experiment with "super-long-term forecasting" treated as the opening of "a new chapter in prognostic research".[2] Two years later, with the central planning authorities, statistical offices and every branch of government, the Committee was part of a system of prognostication that was officially established in 1971.[3] This institutionalization of a "system of Polish future research",[4] which had been discussed by members of PAN since the mid-1960s, was assumed to modernize state socialist governance. The aim was to extend economic planning towards complex and holistic long-term social development goals through the year 2000.

Officially, the prognostic system served the purpose of spelling out – and at the same time symbolizing – the political vision of "dynamic development" towards an "advanced socialist society" with science and technology as major sources of progress.[5] But the venture contained its own paradoxes, as the sociologist, Jan Szczepański (1913–2004), observed. He was concerned that the division of specific tasks would impede the "possibility to draw a forecast synthetizing all those particular works and providing us with an orderly image of the whole

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[1] Jan Szczepański, 'O konstruowaniu zarysu syntetycznego obrazu rozwoju społeczeństwa polskiego do roku 2000', in Komitet Badań i Prognoz 'Polska 2000' (ed.), *Społeczny rozwój Polski w pracach prognostycznych*Warszawa, 1974[2]), 13–32, here: 13.

[2] Kazimierz Secomski, 'Prognostic Research in the Polish Academy of Sciences', *The Review*, 3 (1970), 17–29, here: 24.

[3] 'Uchwała Nr 150 Rady Ministrów z dnia 17 września 1970 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia systemu prognoz jako podstawy do opracowywania planów 5-letnych i planów perspektywicznych', *Monitor Polski*, xxxiv, no. 266 (26 Oct. 1970), 513–15..

[4] Andrzej Siciński, 'Future research', *Polish Perspectives*, xv, 1 (1972), 10–16, here: 14.

[5] See: Witold Nowacki *et al.*, 'Miejsce nauki w socjalistycznym społeczeństwie przyszłości', *Nauka Polska*, xviii, 4 (1970), 5–24, here: 17; Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski. 1944–1991* (Kraków, 2011), 384–90.

society."[6] To put it differently, Szczepański assumed that the way in which prognostic research was organized would affect the image of the future it produced. This interrelation is the focus of this article and answers the following question: how did the functioning of institutionalized prognostic research in the Polish People's Republic affect its participants' understanding of the future as a political and epistemic category?

Departing from the notion of "past futures"[7] historical research on futurology, policy sciences, planning, and prognostics in the twentieth century contributes to a better understanding of the ways in which societies, groups and individuals shape their relationship to time and the future through predictive techniques, ideas and institutions.[8] This is also particularly relevant for an understanding of state socialism and its structural legacies. Countries gathered within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) all developed forecasting institutions in the 1960s and 1970s, which as of yet have rarely been studied.[9]

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[6] Szczepański, 'O konstruowaniu zarysu', 13.

[7] Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

[8] See: Jenny Andersson, 'The Great Future Debate and the Struggle for the World', *The American Historical Review*, cxvii, 5 (2012), 1411–30; Rüdiger Graf and Benjamin Herzog, 'Von der Geschichte der Zukunftsvorstellungen zur Geschichte ihrer Generierung. Probleme und Herausforderungen des Zukunftsbezugs im 20. Jahrhundert', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, xlii, 3 (2016), 497–515; Lucian Hölscher (ed.), *Die Zukunft des 20. Jahrhunderts. Dimensionen einer historischen Zukunftsforschung* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2017); Elke Seefried, *Zukünfte. Aufstieg und Krise der Zukunftsforschung 1945–1980* (Berlin and Boston, 2015); Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, *The Power of Systems: How Policy Sciences Opened Up the Cold War World* (Ithaca, NY, 2016); Dirk van Laak, 'Planung. Geschichte und Gegenwart des Vorgriffs auf die Zukunft', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, xxxiv, 3 (2008), 305–26; Elke Seefried, 'Reconfiguring the Future? Politics and Time from the 1960s to the 1980s', *Journal of Modern European History*, xiii, 3 (2015), 306–16.

[9] See: Vitezslav Sommer, 'Forecasting the Post-Socialist Future: *Prognostika* in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia, 1970–1989', in Jenny Andersson and Eglė Rindzevičiūtė (eds.), *Forging the Future: Transnational Perspectives on the History of Prediction* (London *et al*., 2016), 144–68; Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, 'A Struggle for the Soviet Future. The Birth of Scientific Forecasting in the Soviet Union', *Slavic Review*, lxxv, 1 (2016), 52–76; Ana-Maria Catanus, 'Official and Unofficial Futures of the Communist System: Romanian Future Studies between Control and Dissidence', in Jenny Andersson and Eglė Rindzevičiūtė (eds.), *The Struggle for the Long-Term in Transnational Science and Politics: Forging the Future* (New York, 2015), 170–94.

The Polish officials were convinced that their way of organizing prognostic research was unprecedented, but it can be shown that Polish future research was situated well within the context of state socialist planning and transnational discourses on futurology. Hence, in its second part, this article explores how the institutionalized system of prognostication in Poland came about with regard to state socialist and global debates about long-term forecasting. Part three is focused on the institutional set-up and the programmatic principles of the system of prognostication established after 1969. At its core was the Main Commission on Prognostication (*Główna Komisja Prognozowania*, GKP) that functioned within the Planning Commission at the Ministerial Council (*Komisja Planowania przy Radzie Ministrów*, KPRM) from 1971 to 1973 and was legally abandoned in 1976.[10] Here, sources from those major fronts of prognostic activity in Poland are analysed as documents of organizing, practicing and debating the boundaries of knowledge about the future.[11] In other words, the research question is: what were the premises regarding the predictability of future developments under the institutional framework of prognostic research in Poland? The challenges to those ideas and the experiences within this framework are the topics of part four of this article. It claims that not false predictions but the systematic organization of prognostic research eventually became a source of frustration for those who believed in the political utility of forecasting. This prognostic frustration can be regarded as part of the cultural underpinning of the crisis of state socialism in Poland after 1976 which has recently been interpreted as the climax of the post-Stalinist ideological formation with its paradoxical attempts of socialist modernization.[12]

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[10] The GKP's remaining archival documents are kept as part of the KPRM's collection in Warsaw, Central Archives of Modern Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych* [hereinafter: AAN]).

[11] The "boundaries of what can be said, thought and done" are the focus of historical discourse analysis as conceptualized by Achim Landwehr, *Geschichte des Sagbaren. Einführung in die historische Diskursanalyse* (Tübingen, 2001), 13.

[12] See: Pavel Kolář, *Der Poststalinismus. Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche* (Köln, Weimar and Wien, 2016); Marcin Zaremba and Błażej Brzostek, 'Polska 1956–1976: w poszukiwaniu paradygmatu', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, v, 2(10) (2006), 25–37.

II
EXPERIMENTING WITH THE LONG-TERM FUTURE: PROGNOSTIC RESEARCH AND PLANNING UNDER STATE SOCIALISM BEFORE 1969

Historical materialism provided socialist states and their elites with a scientific "macro-prognosis"[13] for the communist future. However, after the successful revolution it turned out to contain only a few general guidelines for the making of everyday socialist realities.[14] In other words, Marx's theory of social progression did not ultimately answer the epistemological and at the same time political question of how the future could be known and shaped. The major laboratory for putting to work techniques of conceptualizing and governing the future were the national regimes of central planning. This was first tested on a large scale by the State Commission for the Electrification of Soviet Russia (GOELRO) during the Russian Civil War in 1920, and following it, the State Planning Commission, known as *Gosplan*. Their examples of successful rapid industrialization seemed to prove that social reality was configurable with the help of a total and unified plan. Gosplan was also the site of a paradigmatic controversy on how to perceive the long-term future with 'genetic' planners opting for prognostication of long-term evolutionary laws external to state intervention on the one side, and 'teleological' planners on the other side, to whom the future was a field for setting goals and deducing the necessary instruments for their achievement.[15]

The second teleological approach won Stalin's appreciation and was deemed more appropriate to the post-revolutionary context. As a result, methodological debates on scientific forecasting were marginalized and the genetic works remained officially forbidden until the 1960s, whereas U.S. think tanks and military planners experimented with long-term forecasting as a strategic resource in the Cold War confrontation.[16] Based on such paradigms as system analysis, game theory, rational choice theory and cybernetics, the idea emerged that a science

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[13] For this term see Andrzej Siciński, *Prognozy a nauka* (Warszawa, 1969), 130.

[14] See Stefan Plaggenborg, *Experiment Moderne: Der sowjetische Weg* (Frankfurt am Main *et al.*, 2006), 87.

[15] See Stephen J. Collier, *The Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton and Oxford, 2011), 49–61.

[16] See: Seefried, *Zukünfte*, 49–74; Rindzevičiūtė, 'A Struggle for the Soviet Future'.

of the many possible 'futures' could allow for more rational decision-making. With de-Stalinization, Soviet and state socialist scientists began to openly embrace the former 'bourgeois' language of cybernetic self-regulating systems, feedback loops and complex equilibriums, which stimulated debates on the reform of planning and management of the national economy.[17] In Poland, such debates were led by economists and planners drawing inspiration from Gosplan's approach but also from pre-war capitalist state-planning in the Second Polish Republic, such as the 15-year investment plan of the last minister of national economy, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski (1888–1974).[18] Their aim to overcome the rigor of Stalinist directive planning thus merged into the establishment of perspective planning with 15-year time horizons. As the then deputy chairmen of the Planning Commission Kazimierz Secomski (1910–2002) put it, this was a 'fundamentally different' approach compared to five-year planning because it only identified broad and flexible tasks based on multi-variant 'paths of development'.[19] This shift of attention towards more long-term perspectives was coordinated within Comecon and marked the growing concern not only with economic but also scientific and technological sources of social progress among socialist elites.[20]

In addition to the concept of a 'scientific-technological revolution' and the cybernetic language taking hold of socialist countries, a second background for Polish elites' interest in long-term prognostication came with renewed contacts with Western scholars. During two study-trips to France coinciding with the political thaw in the fall of 1956, planning-officials became acquainted with the French *Commisariat Général du Plan* and its approach to *Planification* based on general

[17] See: Slava Gerovitch [Vjačeslav A. Gerovič], *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2002), 274–9; Jerome Segal, 'Kybernetik in der DDR', in Klaus Pias (ed.), *Cybernetics: The Macy-conferences 1946–1953*, ii: *Essays and documents* (Zurich *et al.*, 2004), 227–51.

[18] For the continuities of economic experience in Poland see: Czesław Bobrowski, *Wspomnienia ze stulecia* (Lublin, 1985); Adam Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność. Polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943–1980* (Warszawa, 2013), 313 and 324.

[19] See Kazimierz Secomski, 'Problemy planowania perspektywicznego', in Jan Główczyk *et al.* (eds.), *Polityka gospodarcza Polski Ludowej*, ii (Warszawa, 1962), 511–79, here: 515.

[20] See Adam Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe 1949–1987. Der dornige Weg von einer politischen zu einer wirtschaftlichen Integration* (Wien and New York, 1988), 33–4.

indicative frameworks.[21] Together with social scientists, a handful of Polish planning officials also attended a three-week seminar on the social and cultural consequences of post-war economic growth, rapid industrialization and technological change. There they became acquainted with contemporary French debates on Jean Fourastié's[22] anticipation of a tertiary sector, which would emerge during the twentieth century. This provided an example of long-term *social* forecasting as a means for optimizing *Planification*.[23]

Third, the trips to France initiated ongoing transfers of knowledge through numerous scholarships and academic exchanges organized mainly by the Ford Foundation and UNESCO's Social Science Documentation Centre in Vienna – headed by the Marxist philosopher from Poland Adam Schaff (1913–2006).[24] Polish economists and sociologists could thus closely observe the successive formation of future research as a transnational network of scholarly exchange during the first half of the 1960s.[25] Secomski's close colleague, Józef Pajestka (1924–94) – one of the delegates to France in 1956, who during the 1960s was the head of the economic research institute at KPRM – reviewed one of the first monographs from Western debates on the subject of the year 2000, translated to Polish in 1963. Despite its significantly longer time-horizon, Pajestka claimed that Fritz Baades' *Year 2000*[26] was 'reminiscent of our methods of perspective planning'.[27] This illustrates Polish elites' interest in incorporating social forecasting into planning, which in fact Pajestka termed, 'in its nature, a long-term affair.'[28]

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[21] For the prognostic aspects of *Planification*, see Seefried, *Zukünfte*, 72–4.

[22] Jean Fourastié, *Le grand espoir du XXe siècle. Progrès technique – progrès économique – progrès social* (Paris, 1949).

[23] See for a participant's report Jean Meynaud, 'Paryskie spotkanie', *Kultura*, x, 1–2 (1957), 91–104.

[24] See Igor Czernecki, 'An Intellectual Offensive: The Ford Foundation and the Destalinization of the Polish Social Sciences', *Cold War History*, xiii, 3 (2013), 289–310.

[25] See: Seefried, *Zukünfte*, 69–74, 179–210; Andersson, 'The Great Future Debate', 1417–24.

[26] Fritz Baade, *Rok 2000. Ku czemu zmierza świat?* (Warszawa, 1962).

[27] AAN, Press clippings of the Centre for Documentation and Programme Collections, TVP SA [Polish Television], 2/385, [section:] 'Futurologia. Rok 2000', incl. Józef Pajestka, 'Rok 2000. Ku czemu zmierza świat?', *Przegląd Kulturalny* (3 June 1963).

[28] Józef Pajestka, 'Certain Problems of Economic Planning in Poland', *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, xcii, 1 (1964), 163–80, here: 167.

Ultimately, it was a synergy of officials' interest in expanding time horizons and planning methods, along with the humanist intellectual's lobby for social and cultural forecasting during the 1960s, which gave birth to futurology in Poland. Organized by Adam Schaff and Julian Hochfeld, financed by the UNESCO, and directed by Andrzej Siciński (1924–2006), a Polish research team participated in a cross-national public opinion poll in the early 1960s, which evolved from an interest in disarmament into future studies and brought together scholars from Norway, France, Poland and seven other European and Asian countries.[29] Siciński actively introduced Western futurological debates into the study group on contemporary cultural change organized by the literary critic Stefan Żółkiewski (1911–91).[30] He and his group were interested in social forecasting as a means to generate a humanist and socialist vision of Polish culture in the year 1990, with the goal of avoiding the negative consequences of mass-consumption and technology for the human creative potential. Promoting this idea as a contribution to perspective planning, Żółkiewski, who was a member of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), used his influence as an important figure at the PAN until he openly showed solidarity with protesting students during the events of 1968 and lost his positions. Before this, he had found supporters in Kazimierz Secomski, Józef Pajestka, Jan Szczepański and other intellectual authorities with a prevailing political reputation at the Academy. Żółkiewski organized a well-attended conference titled 'Predicting the future and a model of culture'[31] in May 1967, which he and his colleagues considered the inauguration of "Polish 'futurological' studies".[32]

[29] See Nils H. Halle, 'Social Position and Foreign Policy Attitudes: A Comparative Study of France, Norway and Poland', *Journal of Peace Research*, iii, 1 (1966), 46–74; and the preface in Helmut Ornauer *et al.*, *Images of the World in the Year 2000: A Comparative Ten Nations Study* (The Hague and Paris, 1976), V–X.

[30] See Andrzej Siciński, 'Działalność wydawnicza i badawcza a polityczne "zawirowania" w socjalizmie. W związku z losami *Kultury i Społeczeństwa* w latach 1960–1968 – relacja z "obserwacji uczestniczącej"', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xl, 3 (1996), 99–104.

[31] See Stefan Żółkiewski, 'Zagajenie: Zadania konferencji', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xi, 4 (1967), 9–13.

[32] See Andrzej Siciński, 'Polskie studia "futurologiczne"', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xi, 2 (1967), 243–4.

The discussions at this conference referred to methodological conceptualizations of 'futures research', which already crystallized around the French government's forecasting council *Groupe 1985* and Bertrand de Jouvenel's *Futuribles* project in Paris and the U.S. Commission on the Year 2000 led by the sociologist Daniel Bell. Their "holistic forecasts"[33] (*prognozy całościowe*) circulated within PAN as a source of methodological inspiration during work on a long-term research plan since the mid-1960s.[34] At the same time, Polish scholars were fully aware that social forecasting was also on the rise in other state socialist countries and the Soviet Union.[35] This made it compelling to develop Polish national research agendas. For instance, the philosophical tradition of Polish praxeology seemed to offer a superior base for reflection not only on the practise of planning but also on prognostic activity or "prognoseology".[36] According to Siciński, Polish science was to play a part in the global "explosion of futurology".[37] While rather sceptical about the term due to its bourgeois origin,[38] a tendency of global cultural and technological convergence was nonetheless one of the main intellectual driving forces behind the Polish conference in 1967, which called for systematic prognostic research and a more pronounced independent vision of national cultural evolution. A 'war over prognoses' was underway and demanded for a readjustment of perspective planning – with these words Siciński summoned his colleagues to "think up our own future if we don't want to be replaced

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[33] Andrzej Siciński, 'Nauka o naszej przyszłości', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xi, 1 (1967), 89–97, here: 95 f.

[34] From 1965 to 1967 the Centre for Research Planning and Coordination edited a series of translations from Western futurology and Polish programmatic documents, i.e., Bertrand de Jouvenel, *O przewidywaniu (W aneksie skrót szkicu Emila Fagueta 'Jaki będzie dwudziesty wiek')* (Warszawa, 1966); Daniel Bell, *Dwanaście sposobów przewidywania w naukach społecznych* (Warszawa, 1966).

[35] See: Waldemar Rolbiecki, 'Badania prognostyczne – prognozologia – futurologia (W związku z sympozjum prognostycznym w Pradze w dn. 21–24 II 1967 r.)', *Nauka Polska*, xv, 4 (1967), 95–9, here: 98; Sommer, 'Forecasting the Post-Socialist Future', 153 f.

[36] Waldemar Rolbiecki, 'Prognostication and Prognoseology', in Robert Jungk and Johan Galtung (eds.), *Mankind 2000* (Oslo and London, 1969), 278–85.

[37] Siciński, 'Nauka o naszej przyszłości', 92.

[38] The term can be traced back to 1943 and the German-speaking Jewish-Ukrainian emigré to the United States Karl Ossip Flechtheim. See Seefried, *Zukünfte*, 69.

by others, because one has to be afraid, that those 'others' might come up with something not very pleasant for us."[39]

The discussants at the conference found it necessary to extend time-horizons because of a relatively stable level of welfare compared to the first two post-war decades and an optimistic outlook on the possibilities of state socialist planning. At the same time, in the stiffening intellectual atmosphere under Władysław Gomułka's leadership and the beginning recession their claim could also contain an implicit hint at a lack of future concerns within contemporary political and ideological debates. After all, it was in the scholars' own strategic interest to place prognostic research on the agenda and promote their own research, while planners viewed it as a promising means to refine their methods and extend the range of planning towards social and cultural matters. Despite the anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual campaigns, which began to unfold at the time of the inaugurating symposium in Poland and impacted most of the participants of the prognostic symposium in 1967, the initially sceptical political leadership during the fourth plenary session of the Central Committee of the PZPR in 1969 passed a resolution on the institutionalization of scientific forecasting.[40] In fact, science functionaries related prognostic research to the official emphasis on intensive growth and the scientific-technical revolution as carrier of progress and catching-up with highly developed countries in the West. They argued that the establishment of prognostic research implemented the idea of socialism as a "type of society, which one can describe as a society of scientific culture"[41].

III
SETTING UP THE EXPERIMENT: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A PROGRAM OF PROGNOSTIC RESEARCH IN STATE SOCIALIST POLAND 1969–73

Edward Gierek's takeover as the first secretary of the PZPR in 1971, along with his new style of government relying strongly on scientific

[39] Siciński in Andrzej Ważniewski *et al.*, 'Dyskusja', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xi, 4 (1967), 85–131, here: 131.

[40] The resolution was published in *Nauka Polska*, xvii, 6 (1969), 1–16.

[41] Nowacki *et al.*, 'Miejsce nauki', 17.

expertise, propelled forward the construction of a large-scale system of prognostic activity. In contrast to Western future research it was regarded as an extension of, not a compensation for planning.[42] But what exactly was the relation between forecasting and planning? To some economists, futurology was a mere copy of the genetic approach to planning formulated at Gosplan in the 1920s.[43] However, the emphasis in the late 1960s was on *systematic scientific* research, *extended* time-horizons, the *integration* of many disciplinary perspectives and *new methodological capacities* allowing for so-called "super long-term forecasting"[44] in order to gain a novel completeness and complexity of the picture.[45]

Moreover, the belief in a scientific image of the future was connected to the pathos of modernization rhetoric. During the PAN plenary session in December 1969, Secomski justified the creation of a Research and Prognostics Committee as a key part of the emerging system of prognostic research. He stated that

> [t]he increasingly wide scope of forecasting and its increasingly high degree of usefulness mean growing tasks in the permanent strengthening of the scientific foundations of prognostic studies. … both the scientific character of the forecasts and the proper development of appropriate methods of prognostic studies become a particularly urgent task: the point is also to improve and modernize the process of long-term planning.[46]

The later administrative resolution specified this idea of modernization as the scientific rationalization and refinement of perspective planning – to "enable it to make choices between alternative solutions".[47] Although the conceptual boundaries permanently remained fuzzy, for Secomski, who was the key actor connecting academic and political resources and decision-makers in the establishment of prognostic research, the division of labour was clear: a *prognosis* was meant to operate on hypothetical grounds and approach the future

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[42] See Siciński, 'Future research', 11 f.

[43] See Bobrowski in Rażniewski *et al.*, 'Dyskusja', 111.

[44] Secomski, 'Prognostic Research', 24; for the original Polish version see *idem*, 'Badania prognostyczne w Polskiej Akademii Nauk', *Nauka Polska*, xviii, 1 (1970), 9–21.

[45] See Siciński, *Prognozy a nauka*, 127 f.

[46] Secomski, 'Prognostic Research', 18 f.

[47] 'Uchwała Nr 150 Rady Ministrów, 513 §1, 3.

as a horizon or 'wide range' of multiple probabilistic scenarios, resulting from 'objective' past and present trends.[48] The emerging prognostic information would enable the planners to make more realistic optimal choices by postulating the sought future reality. This in turn would provide guidance and put "considerable discipline to prognostic research".[49]

Of course, the guiding function of the plan was, at least officially, still reserved for ideological party control. Prognostic research was meant to contribute to a perspective strategy of socio-economic development until 1990 and the year 2000 respectively.[50] Political scientists close to the party line argued that spelling out the concept of the 'advanced socialist society' posed an antithesis to Daniel Bell's theory of the 'post-industrial society',[51] which was one of the seminal concepts for Western futurology claiming the superiority of the liberal capitalist order in adapting to the structural social and economic changes brought about by the growing importance of scientific knowledge and technological expertise.[52] This reveals a widespread belief in the scientification of the socialist future that bound together sociological forecasting, long-term planning and the ideological concept of advanced socialism. With regard to the aim of modernizing socialist governance by the development of prognostic capacities, one may speak of an "experiment"[53] with one of modernity's key 'myths'[54] – the idea that science could anticipate and shape future action 'before the event.'[55]

What, then, did the experimental arrangement look like? The system of prognostication (*system prognozowania*) was established with

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[48] See Kazimierz Secomski, *Prognostyka* (Warszawa, 1971), 73.

[49] *Ibidem*, 71.

[50] See *idem*, 'Prognostic Research', 21 f.

[51] Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York, 1973).

[52] Artur Bodnar and Eduard Tarnawski, 'Wstęp', in Daniel Bell, *Nadejście społeczeństwa postindustrialnego. Próba prognozowania społecznego*, Pt. 1, ed. by Magdalena Tanalska (Warszawa, 1975), 1–56. Bell's work was translated and – selectively – published on manuscript rights by the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Problems of Capitalism (*Instytut Badania Współczesnych Problemów Kapitalizmu*).

[53] Plaggenborg, *Experiment Moderne*, 19.

[54] Laak, 'Planung', 322.

[55] Niklas Luhmann, 'The Future Cannot Begin. Temporal Structures in Modern Society', *Social Research*, xliii, 1 (1976), 130–52, here: 134.

an administrative decree by the KPRM in fall 1970 for a period of three years, after which it would be subject to evaluation. Its functional locum was "not [to] substitute, but [to] preclude the fashioning of the plans."[56] The system was steered from the KPRM, precisely by the newly created Main Commission of Prognostication (*Główna Komisja Prognozowania*, GKP), located at the Department on Perspective Planning (*Zespół Planowania Perspektywicznego*, ZPP).[57] The government nominated KPRM's deputy director Kazimierz Secomski to chair the Commission and the GKP gathered heads of all participant institutions including delegates from the party's Central Committee in order to monitor, coordinate and discuss the state of on-going prognostic research. It was also responsible for contacts with Comecon.

Secomski was also the deputy head of KP-2000, which had been founded as an interdisciplinary Committee of experts at the Academy's presidium, to initiate, optimize and disseminate methods and discussions on forecasting. The initial number of around 50 Academy members, delegates from government departments, and intellectuals quickly exceeded 75.[58] Among them initially was Stanisław Lem, who later commented critically on those scholars' enthusiasm with regard to the political utility of forecasting present in the early stages of the experiment.[59] KP-2000 was the place where economists and planners like Secomski or Pajestka met with social scientists like Szczepański, Żółkiewski, Siciński or the philosopher and pedagogue, Bogdan Suchodolski (1903–92) as well as with experts from other fields. In several subcommissions, they worked on a diverse range of specific prognostic reports and, in the Committee's plenary sessions, discussed the overall state of prognostic research in Poland.

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[56] AAN, KPRM, ZPP, 816 4/13, Decree No. 7 by the Head of the KPRM regarding development prognoses and guidelines specifying their procedure, methods, forms, outreach and stages (16 March 1971), 1–69, here: 3.

[57] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 1–12, Decree No. 28 by the Head of the Ministerial Council regarding the appointment of a Main Commission on Prognostication (15 March 1971), 1.

[58] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 4/1, 142–63, Report on the activities of the KP-2000 in 1972 (5 April 1973), 159.

[59] See Stanisław Lem and Stanisław Bereś, *Rozmowy ze Stanisławem Lemem* (Kraków, 1987), 96 and 250 f.

Around the dual centre of gravity, the system included ministerial departments, research committees at PAN, the Committee on Science and Technology (*Komitet Nauk i Techniki*, KNiT) – responsible for prognostic research on technological innovation – the Main Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, GUS) and other state research institutes and councils. A list of prognostic issues counts around 30 participant institutions responsible for drafting a sum of 73 single prognostic reports between 1971 and 1973, their focus ranging from economic, technological and energy questions to education and culture.[60] Backed by a cybernetic ideal, those works had to be integrated and supervised by the GKP in order to guarantee a constant flow of information with feedback loops and a sequenced, interactive process to support the KPRM's department for perspective planning.

The KPRM thus issued an administrative guideline stipulating the thematic limits of each unit's task, the range of applicable methods and the sequence leading up to a prognosis.[61] Every forecast was to "identify objective laws of socio-economic development"[62] drawing on data series from Polish and foreign statistical sources, political declarations as to goals of state activity, existing forecasts of internal and foreign origin and own research. Concerning authorized methods, the guideline distinguished extrapolations from reflective methods such as expert talks, surveys or historical analogies.[63] Research had to be conducted in accordance with plans and revised schedules and deadlines set by the GKP, which met monthly and regularly reported to the government. In a first evaluation during the GKP's meeting in June 1971, Józef Pajestka noticed a unique "emotional engagement and dedication"[64] among officials and scientists alike – with the second apparently pleased by what they perceived as the new government's esteem for their expertise.

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[60] AAN, KPRM, ZPP, 816 4/13, Decree No. 7, 11–24.

[61] *Ibidem*, 25–61.

[62] *Ibidem*, 48.

[63] *Ibidem*, 55–9.

[64] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 21–36, Report from the GKP's meeting on 16 June 1971, 25.

IV
RUNNING AND EVALUATING THE EXPERIMENT: CHALLENGES TO THE SYSTEM OF PROGNOSTIC RESEARCH FROM 1971 TO 1976

What then can be said about the outcomes of the prognostic research experiment? In practice, the collaboration between scientists and officials was time-consuming and difficult. For example, sociologists gathered in a special commission at the Ministry of Culture – among them Andrzej Siciński – recalled how the politicians didn't agree with the conclusions of their reports and how their own methodological tools of sociological modelling, expert-talks and surveys were superior to the extrapolations practiced by officials, who had previously been engaged in planning and now were merely doing the same thing under a different name.[65] In general, the prognostic activity mainly consisted of authoring forecasts, presenting and discussing them at gatherings, collecting comments, making corrections and lastly negotiating a final report. For instance, in the case of the prognosis on cultural life, the presiding minister's reservations towards some conclusions delayed the final report – a problem that did not occur frequently but posed a severe challenge for the GKP's aim to integrate and further proceed to a synthetic forecast.[66] While the GKP could report the successful completion of about 44 of the projected 73 thematic works in 1973 – among them perspectives on demography, education and spatial planning – it also registered many delayed forecasts functioning as prerequisites for more complex predictions.[67]

In the meantime, the KP-2000 produced more than half a dozen documents beyond its projected output, hence introducing detailed information on issues such as active participation in cultural life or steel metallurgy in the year 2000 into the systematic flow of information.[68] Highlighting the overall number of fulfilled tasks, thus, the KPRM's Department on Perspective Planning voted for the prolongation

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[65] See Andrzej Ziemilski (ed.), *Prognoza rozwoju kultury 1973–1990: dyskusje i refleksje po dziesięciu latach* (Warszawa, 1984), 76 f.

[66] *Ibidem*.

[67] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 164–7, Information on the course and state of prognostic works (1 March 1973), 164 f.

[68] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 142–63, Report on the KP-2000's activities in 1972 (5 April 1973), 142–53.

of the GKP's mandate in 1973. But apart from specific forecasts, they listed only general benefits such as a professionalization of cadres, the establishment of positions, salaries for prognostic researchers, integration among scholars and government officials, and the quantitative growth of prognostic information.[69]

External challenges: Limits of post-industrial growth?

The Department for Perspective Planning at the KPRM wanted to systematically make use of prognostic knowledge during preparation of its perspective plan ranging from 1974 to 1990. This official government document designating long-term strategic goals was treated as the objective to which the system of prognostic research should ultimately contribute. Archival documents show that the Department was the most critical among all participant institutions in evaluating the system of prognostication. After two years of prognostic research under the auspices of the GKP, the Department took a critical stance towards the lack of consideration of foreign forecasts and global development trends.[70] Transnational debates on social forecasting during the early 1970s passed through a peak of attention in mass media closely linked to its waning optimism regarding linear economic growth. Daniel Bell's concept of the 'post-industrial society'[71] – with its claim of the diminishing role of traditional industrial production and the growing importance of knowledge and experts as the foundation of economic prosperity and social welfare – challenged traditional notions of industrial growth. However, the idea was itself soon questioned by those critical to the concept of linear progress, extensive resource-consuming growth, and a technocratic feasibility of social reality.[72] The global resonance of the study for the Club of Rome on the *Limits of*

[69] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 196–7, Explanations on the draft of a government decree regarding the refinement of the system of prognostication in economics [1973], 196.

[70] *Ibidem*.

[71] Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.

[72] See Seefried, *Zukünfte*, 279–84; *idem*, 'Bruch im Fortschrittsverständnis? Zukunftsforschung zwischen Steuerungseuphorie und Wachstumskritik', in Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael (eds.), *Vorgeschichte der Gegenwart. Dimensionen des Strukturbruchs nach dem Boom* (Göttingen, 2016), 425–49.

Growth, which was published in 1972 and quickly translated into Polish,[73] indicated these shifting views, which were also debated by the perspective planners in Poland.

While criticizing prognostic reports from other units, the Department itself drafted an extensive compendium on foreign forecasts. The 175-pages booklet was internally used to verify their own projections against "conclusions from global forecasts".[74] Although it did not mention its sources and as such cannot provide evidence on its impact on the perspective plan, the considerations reveal the perspective planners' imagination of Poland's future. Concepts and data hardly ever referred to the Soviet Union or neighbouring socialist countries – not to mention Asia or the southern hemisphere. The term 'global' was used to refer to the West. With all its ambivalent implications of convergence and competition, this orientation resonated well with the foreign policy of the Gierek administration highlighting the necessity to import technology and loan money from the 'highly-developed West'. The planners' report reviewed forecasts on nearly every topic from demography, education, global economy, infrastructure, science and technology (excluding geopolitical issues). Refraining from explicit analytical or ideological judgements, here post-industrial growth was seen as a comparative advantage for the state-socialist economy over capitalist countries in the long run, because structural change and greater knowledge-based production were better realized within a centrally steered economy.[75]

The publication of the report for the Club of Rome had the potential to question this optimism. It drastically portrayed the impossibility to sustain economic and demographic growth based on extensive industrialization and the use of exhaustive natural resources. Moreover, its publication nearly coincided in time with the abrupt increase of oil prices resulting from political conflicts in the Middle East. The economic recession in Western countries seemed to confirm the study's emphasis on limitation, balance and a qualitative equilibrium instead of quantitative growth. Although the crisis did not hit state-socialist

[73] See Donella Meadows *et al.*, *Granice wzrostu* (Warszawa, 1973), with a preface by Kazimierz Secomski.

[74] AAN, KPRM, ZPP, 816 4/182, Conclusions from global forecasts through 1990–2000 (Jan. 1974), 1–175.

[75] *Ibidem*, 9 and 69. The fields of advantage mentioned were mechanical engineering, microelectronics and the reduction of working hours.

countries directly because of the Soviet Union's price guarantees, the KP-2000 gathered to discuss the study's implications for Poland. Chairman Witold Nowacki (1922–86), an engineer and vice-head of the PAN, admitted: "this energy crisis is a kind of astonishment for all the people, who are forecasting … The limits of growth were foreseen … yet we did not predict that there will be such a severe energy crisis."[76] Concerning this perceived external challenge to Poland's catch up with the 'highly developed countries', however, the KP-2000 concluded that "we must not surrender to all this, to this pessimism, that it can't be done."[77] Similarly, the Department of Perspective Planning in its internal booklet was quite clear: "… the 'Rome report' should be seen as a warning that is pointing to the need for global long-term planning, but one must not conclude to inhibit growth."[78] Put differently, the crack in optimism with regard to the idea of – still mostly industrial – linear growth at that time did not appear to seriously challenge the prognostic image of the future.

Internal challenges: Systemic fragmentation and incompleteness

The documents reflecting and evaluating the prognostic system under the GKP suggest the prevalence of internal and systemic challenges perceived by those who were forecasting. First and foremost, the practice of prognostic research turned out to permanently blur the distinction between forecasting and planning. The initial methodological guidelines had called for distinguishable "normative" as well as "research forecasts" (*prognozy badawcze*): The first should be referring to a desirable future and the second to most probable *futures*.[79] The latter were meant to provide working hypothesis and should have been the major output of the prognostic system. Yet, the perspective planners from KPRM complained that much normative forecasting practically copied their task of planning instead of performing an informative function.[80]

[76] AAN, PZPR, 1354 LVIII 421, folder 'Komitet Prognoz "Polska 2000"', 1–79, Transcript from KP-2000's meeting [1974], 1.

[77] *Ibidem*, 30.

[78] AAN, KPRM, ZPP, 816 4/182, 44.

[79] AAN, KPRM, ZPP, 816 4/13, Decree No. 7, 53.

[80] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 202–17, Stanisław M. Komorowski, 'On the practical utility of prognoses in perspective planning' (April 1976), 209.

Although the Department on Perspective Planning called for the continuation of the prognostic system, GKP's term was not prolonged in 1973 and only three years later the new legal basis for PAN's scientific advisory function shifted the principle of state-run prognostic research from a coordinated system towards a collaborative relationship between KP-2000 as the centre of prognostic expertise and KPRM as the governmental planning authority.[81] What had happened to the initial enthusiasm with regard to the 'wide front' of a prognostic system?

"To simplify it – reported an internal dossier on prognostication within the PAN in October 1976 – one can conclude, that the departments forecast 'for themselves,' on behalf of 'their own needs' and in a way 'they deem it appropriate'."[82] This was the conclusion at a meeting of members of the KP-2000 with governmental officials engaged in forecasting. The complex organization seemed to have stimulated dynamics that neither on a methodological nor on a material level could still be integrated by the guidelines cited above. During the same meeting in autumn 1976, a representative from the Department on Perspective Planning complained that the planners' demand for prognostic information had not been met "even on a minimal level."[83] Either information was based on wrong or missing data, or it was simply not complex enough. But the major problem was its "fragmented" and "incomplete" nature.[84] It appeared that in practice most of the forecasts were sticking to traditional econometric models and equations drawn from Gosplan's example. Faced with structural change – to which "economic growth was only compromising"[85] – the commonly practiced linear extrapolations of past developments appeared inadequate.

Talking of the generally unquestioned "practical usefulness of prognostics to perspective planning," the same official from the KPRM identified a second, even more serious challenge. Supportive of the need

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[81] See: Edward Hałoń (ed.), *Polska Akademia Nauk 1952–2002. Kalendarium* (Warszawa, 2002), 78 f.; Witold Nowacki *et al.*, 'Rola ekspertyz naukowych w rozwoju kraju', *Nauka Polska*, xxv, 2 (1977), 3–16.

[82] AAN, KPRM, GKP, 816 4/1, 200–1, Memo for Prof. S.M. Zawadzki regarding PAN/KP-2000/ prognostication (19 Oct. 1976), 200.

[83] Komorowski, 'On the practical utility', 205.

[84] *Ibidem*.

[85] *Ibidem*, 215.

for an ideologically based guiding principle (*wizja kierunkowa*), which had been provided by the political leadership officially announcing the advanced socialist society during the 7th Congress of the PZPR in 1976, he stated: "The scrupulous search has led to the conclusion, that science has not yet worked out a model of the advanced socialist society and that the lack of this key element results in a severe delay of prognostic work dealing with the formulation and choice of goal-complexes …"[86] Presumably due to the official milieu, to which those words were addressed, they did not identify whom to blame for this state of affairs. Yet they stated unmistakably that a lack of clarity on behalf of the guiding ideological future vision was the most serious challenge to prognostic research under state socialism. Systematic prognostication had revealed this deficiency. The flipside of organizing and integrating it in a complex system was the fragmentation of results. Aiming at a synthetic orderly and holistic image of the advanced socialist future, prognostic research arrived at the lack of clarity and completeness of this guiding image.

The perspective planner cited above eventually voted for a further improvement of "our recent ability of perception concerning the future."[87] He soberly concluded, "we went through an episode of euphoria … into an episode of frustration – in which new forecasts became a rarity. Hopefully, however, we will arrive at an age of maturity – an episode of stabilization, when founded in a well-understood notion of plannedness [*planowość*] the prognostic system begins to pulsate rhythmically."[88]

V
CONCLUSION

The initial enthusiasm concerning scholarly and political benefits of prognostic research in Poland was eventually overcast by several frustrations during the relatively short period of the GKP's existence. The preceding history of socialist planning and emerging transnational transfers of knowledge from Western futurology provoked the birth of Polish futurological studies. Humanists and sociological scholars

[86] *Ibidem*, 207.
[87] *Ibidem*, 206.
[88] *Ibidem*, 204.

from PAN openly articulated this vision in 1967. Due to the political events in 1968 their initiative was institutionalized after 1969, taking the shape of a complex system of prognostication under the GKP's supervision. The construction of this system was based on a bureaucratic logic while at the same time it incorporated cybernetic ideals of feedback loops and continuously flowing information prominent at the time. However, when it came to running the experiment set up by this arrangement, serious external and internal challenges occurred. Debates about the structural changes required to adapt to post-industrial and limited growth, however, were not perceived as a major challenge at the time. Dynamics of fragmentation from within the system and a lack of ideological guidance seemed much more critical. The GKP was abolished in 1973 In 1976 it was followed by a new formula of institutionalized long-term forecasting for the needs of perspective planning in the Polish Peoples' Republic. In short, the KP-2000 continued with future research as an expert committee – reporting directly to the KPRM and the government and coordinating the remaining and downsized prognostic activities within state institutions.

The Polish example invites to a comparison to other state socialist countries, where trajectories of establishing and redefining prognostic research took comparable but still different paths.[89] Besides, the national developments were often entangled. Comecon decided to establish and coordinate prognostic capacities in each country of the council. For instance the organizational formula of Soviet forecasting may have been observed and partly copied by their Polish colleagues.[90] Yet, the circulation of prognostic knowledge among state socialist countries remains an interesting topic for further research.

As this article has argued for the Polish case, the large-scale organization of prognostic research as a system turned out to dissipate the image of the future. As a result, prognostication was hardly able to deliver the expected clarification of the official political goal of an 'advanced' socialist future society. This lack of clarity combines with the post-1976 economic and political crisis which finally mounted

[89] See for instance Vitezlas Sommer, 'Vom sozialistischen Postindustrialismus zur Marktgesellschaft: Zukunftsforschung in der Tschechoslowakei (1960er–1980er Jahre', *Bohemia*, lvii, 1 (2017), 55–81.

[90] See Gordon L. Rocca, '"A Second Party in Our Midst": The History of the Soviet Scientific Forecasting Association', *Social Studies of Science*, xi, 2 (1981), 199–247, here: 201–19.

in Solidarity and martial law, seriously challenged the belief in a predictable linearity and planned nature of long-term socialist development as such – only hypothetical scenarios remained.[91]

The depicted fragmentation and disintegration of the Polish system of prognostication challenged the communist idea of a synthetic, orderly and wholesome image of the future society. This, of course, should be regarded as a structural dilemma of the collective organization of research. More questions and perspectives breed more uncertainty. The contingent historical circumstances benchmarked with the notion of the advanced socialist society made the planning officials perceive organizational disintegration as a lack of precision, orderliness and guiding vigour on behalf of the official political vision.

Pondering further about the relationship between scientific knowledge and political discourse might help us understand the implosion of the so called 'advanced socialist society' and more fundamental shifts in the way modern societies reflect on themselves. Around 1976, as it has been argued, the post-Stalinist ideological formation of state socialism gave way to a widespread feeling of stagnation, a severe shortening and lack of integrating future perspectives.[92] The somewhat structurally pre-programmed fragmentation of systematic prognostic research in Poland may have been one of the catalytic factors of this implosion. One could further ask, if the effects of this portrayed frustration under state socialism continued to have an effect on the neoliberal transformation after 1989 when complaints about the lack of anticipation and future-oriented political visions were brought forward.[93] Since prognostic euphoria has been muted not only in Poland, it might be a not at all uniquely "Polish syndrome of incompleteness"[94] that nowadays often leaves collective images of the future society fragmented.

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[91] See Bogdan Gotowski *et al.*, *Hipotetyczne scenariusze przemian ekonomicznych, społecznych i politycznych w Polsce 1982/83* (Warszawa, 1982).

[92] See Kolář, *Der Poststalinismus*, 328; Stefan Plaggenborg, 'Verstetigte Gegenwart. Über das Zeitverständnis im real existierenden Sozialismus', in Martin Schulze Wessel and Christiane Brenner (eds.), *Zukunftsvorstellungen und staatliche Planung im Sozialismus. Die Tschechoslowakei im ostmitteleuropäischen Kontext 1945–1989* (München, 2010), 19–32, here: 29.

[93] See for instance Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge, 1998), 2.

[94] Marcin Król, 'The Polish Syndrom of Incompleteness', in Stanisław Gomułka and Antony Polonsky (eds.), *Polish Paradoxes* (London and New York, 1990), 63–75.

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