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MACIEJ TYMIŃSKI
Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Warsaw

PIOTR KORYŚ
Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Warsaw

AN ESCAPE FROM BACKWARDNESS? THE POLISH TRANSFORMATION AS A MODERNIZATION PROJECT

The issue of transformation, or perhaps rather transition from command economy and State socialism to a free market and democracy, was one of Jacek Kochanowicz's key research subjects after 1989. In his last lecture he himself stated that: "transformation was a compound process which not only changed political and economic institutions, but also initiated the fast transformation of only partially modernized post-peasant societies during the early stages of industrialization into sociological hybrids which combined post-modern, modern and traditional lifestyles."[1]

Kochanowicz's research into different stages of transformation was largely a continuation of his earlier interests, beginning with studies of the peasant economy and its importance for Polish lands before the partitions and in the nineteenth century,[2] through analyses of Eastern European backwardness,[3] to his interest in modernization and its various aspects (economic, social, cultural) and types, depending on where

[1] J. Kochanowicz, *An Escape Into History: A Personal Recollection*, Presented as part of the series of Ego Lectures, Central European University, Department of History, 5 June, 2014, http://history.ceu.edu/article/2014-10-06/Jacek%20Kochanowicz%-20(1946-2014)%3A%20An%20Escape%20into%20History (2 IV 2015 r.).

[2] Id., *Spór o teorię gospodarki chłopskiej. Gospodarstwo chłopskie w teorii ekonomii i w historii gospodarki*, Warsaw, 1992.

[3] Id., *Backwardness and Modernization. Poland and Eastern Europe in the 16th––20th Centuries*, Aldershot, 2006.

and when it took place.[4] Jacek Kochanowicz's originality consisted of analysing transformation problems – seen as yet another attempt to modernize peripheral Eastern European countries – in the most comprehensive manner possible. He did not limit himself to analysing economic conditions, but also took social, cultural and institutional factors into consideration. The interdisciplinary nature of those studies allowed him to place the transformation issue in a wider context – historical, social and cultural.

The purpose of this article is an attempt to reconstruct Jacek Kochanowicz's interpretation of the process of systemic transformation as a modernization project in the most comprehensive manner possible. We will try to present his opinion on the specific nature of Poland's (and the whole of Central and Eastern Europe's) backwardness and his vision of the sources of peripherality which goes beyond the conditions inherited from the State socialist system. Next, we will present his interpretation of transformation as a modernization project, pointing out the weaknesses Kochanowicz perceived in the solution adopted and, above all, the role he attributed to the State and its institutions. Lastly, we will present Jacek Kochanowicz's expectations with regard to Poland's further development over the next few decades, and we will indicate which barriers he believed were the most important to Poland's further development and whether, in his opinion, there was a real chance of it catching up with the most developed countries.

Sources of backwardness

The starting point of Jacek Kochanowicz's deliberations on modernization and its specific nature in Poland after 1989 were the conclusions he drew from his research into the backwardness of Polish lands. Backwardness was one of Jacek Kochanowicz's main topics of interest. He also referred to the achievements of the most renowned Polish economic historians – his guru Witold Kula,[5] and Antoni Mączak.[6] Kochanowicz's interests were not limited to showing the slower, secondary development of the Polish economy compared with the West. Above

[4] See e.g. id., "Modernization from Above. Between Market Romanticism and Statist Utopia", *Polish Sociological Bulletin*, 1992, nos. 3–4, pp. 303–313.

[5] W. Kula, *Teoria ekonomiczna ustroju feudalnego*, Warsaw, 1983.

[6] A. Mączak, *Wschod a Zachód Europy w XIII–XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych*, Warsaw, 2006; id., *Rządzący i rządzeni. Władza i społeczeństwo w Europie wczesnonowożytnej*, Warsaw, 1986.

all, he tried to point to deeper aspects – institutional and cultural – which in his opinion were the key to Poland's late development. He was convinced that: "Poland's relative delay compared to the West is a permanent feature, it has not changed since at least the end of the sixteenth century. Moreover, the lack of continuity in the economic system is a factor which distinguishes us from many Western countries, and in particular England and Switzerland. Over the past 200 years: we have had feudalism until the mid-nineteenth century, liberal capitalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, then – in the interwar period – Statist economic nationalism. Next, State socialism, in two versions: first centralized and then diluted. Now we have a sort of hybrid, liberal capitalism, which means a great deal of freedom on the one hand and many bureaucratic restrictions on the other; furthermore there are still many State-owned enterprises."[7]

When looking for sources of backwardness, Jacek Kochanowicz pointed to the key significance of the manor farm and serfdom-based economy, which was dominant in agriculture (and thus in the whole economy) from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Kochanowicz repeated, after Witold Kula, that due to the method of operation of the serf-based manor farms, the owner did not have to worry about cost accounting because the costs were borne mainly by the serfs and were in fact 'invisible' for the owner.[8] "Therefore the manner in which the manor farm-based economy was institutionalized did not require any capitalist rationale, and the landlord – who governed the manor farm – did not learn the capitalist way of proceeding, and the market was not a selection mechanism for efficient farm managers."[9] Additionally, legal restrictions which banned noblemen from engaging in exchange, other than trading in grain, had an impact on the nobility's behaviour. In effect, a nobleman who owned land never had a chance of becoming an agricultural entrepreneur, and farm owners did not understand what business activity was in the world of capitalist economy.[10]

Customs observed in the pre-industrial epoch had a decisive impact on the behaviour of former noblemen and land owners in the period

[7] "20 questions to... Jacek Kochanowicz", *Forbes*, 2011, no. 5.

[8] W. Kula, op. cit., pp. 38–56.

[9] J. Kochanowicz, "Duch kapitalizmu na polskiej peryferii. Perspektywa historyczna", in: *Kultura i gospodarka*, ed. by J. Kochanowicz, M. Marody, Warsaw, 2010, p. 36.

[10] Id., "Could a Polish Noble Become an Entrepreneur? Mentality, Market and Capital", in: *L'impresa, industria, commercio, banca. Sec. XIII–XVIII*, ed. by S. Cavaciocchi, Firenze, 1991, pp. 933–942.

of capitalist transformations. When peasants were granted property rights, they had to adapt to the new principles of operation, but many of them were unable to cope and went bankrupt. A large number of impoverished landowners became part of the new social group – the intelligentsia. They contributed the customs and culture of their family homes to this group, as well as their sparse understanding of the capitalist transformations and their distrust towards the new category of people who carved out their careers in the capitalist reality. At the same time very few former landowners participated in the creation of modern industry and financial institutions. As Jacek Kochanowicz emphasized, the "models of a good life which had been formed in the noblemen's and landowners' epoch were of an enduring nature"[11] and resulted in their lack of interest in industrialization.

Another important factor which had an impact on Poland's economic belatedness compared with the West, was the weakness of the Polish burgher classes, which had its roots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In pre-partition Poland, the burghers were on the margins of society and had an insignificant role in social life. In this context Kochanowicz referred to the observations of one of the travellers to the Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century: "The middle class, which elsewhere constitutes the most numerous and most industrialized class of the population, is nearly non-existent here."[12] In effect, the Polish bourgeoisie consisted mainly of immigrants from Germany, and to a lesser degree, from other West European countries, as well as Polish Jews. This latter, relatively small, group was – with some exceptions – alienated from the rest of society, and treated with distrust: "the development of capitalist entrepreneurship was viewed as the action of 'foreigners' – Germans and Jews."[13]

Apart from the lack of a 'capitalist spirit', a second very important factor which slowed down development – and which was emphasized by Kochanowicz – was the absence of modern state structures. In the pre-partition period, a unique political system was created in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, characterized by a weakness of executive power. Poland was exceptional in Europe due to the absence of an absolute monarchy. At the end of the eighteenth century,

[11] Id., "Duch kapitalizmu..., p. 45.

[12] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, ed. by W. Zawadzki, Warsaw, 1963, p. 492.

[13] J. Kochanowicz, "Peryferie i centrum. Gdzie będzie Polska w roku 2050?", in: *Wizja przyszłości Polski. Studia i analizy*, vol. 3: *Ekspertyzy*, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 53–77.

taxes, an army, and administrative apparatus were almost non-existent compared to its neighbours.[14] Antoni Mączak[15] indicated that Polish kings were perhaps the only monarchs unable to develop their own administrative system. In the provinces, noblemen and not the king's men were appointed to positions of power. In the nineteenth century Poland was partitioned without ever having had any tradition of state administration, and without the Poles having had any chance of building universal national awareness based on their own State institutions.

In most European countries, the nineteenth century was crucial not only for economic modernization, but also for building modern state structures. In Poland "elements of a modern state – the government, State service, tax authorities, the army, the courts, and external symbols such as emblems, flags and uniforms, were perceived as […] foreign. […] For Poles and other inhabitants of the region, patriotism was correlated with resistance **against** the State."[16] As a result, the aforementioned institutions were all seen as hostile by a significant part of society. The revival of statehood in 1918 enabled Polish institutions to be established, however the outbreak of the Second World War, and later the introduction of communism once again led to their breakdown.

Jacek Kochanowicz's opinion on the role of the communist system, and the changes it brought, was somewhat contrary to the views about complete revolution which ploughed through the core of Polish society and created conditions for abandoning the mentality defined by rural areas and the manor farm to that determined by cities and the urban way of life.[17] Kochanowicz emphasizes that: "the communist system brought about the immense growth of the State, but also its alienation, indirectly strengthening personal, especially family, ties, thereby leading to a characteristic family-centrism at the expense of citizenship bonds. It, therefore, established an unwritten rule that moral is what is good for one's own family – a rule well inscribed in the peasant tradition of Eastern European societies. It compromised the idea of separation of authorities, rule of the law, and public interest.

[14] A.H. Amsden, J. Kochanowicz, L. Taylor, *The Market Meets Its Match. Restructuring The Economies of Eastern Europe*, Cambridge, Mass. 1994, pp. 187–188.

[15] A. Mączak, *Nierówna przyjaźń. Układy klientalne w perspektywie historycznej*, Wrocław, 2003, pp. 164–165; id., *Klientela. Nieformalne systemy władzy w Polsce i Europie XVI–XVIII*, Warsaw, 1994.

[16] A.H. Amsden, J. Kochanowicz, L. Taylor, op. cit., p. 188.

[17] A. Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja*, Warsaw, 2014.

It created administrative structures which contradicted efficient, apolitical and a lawful Weber-type bureaucracy."[18]

Kochanowicz's interpretation fits into the manner of understanding the Soviet system proposed by Kenneth Jowitt, who described it as neotraditional.[19] "Paradoxically, the socialist system – despite far-reaching economic and social changes – contributed to a petrifaction of attitudes, values and dispositions which evolved in the traditional, pre-industrial society. […] It taught to rely not on oneself but to look for niches in the capricious institutions of bureaucratic paternalism, almost to the level of repeating the behaviours which had characterized the culture of the manor farm and serfdom-based system."[20] Therefore, communism led not to a change but to consolidation of the social characteristics and institutions responsible for Poland's backwardness.

The last factor which had an impact on Poland's persistent backwardness compared to the West is the absence of the continuity of its social and economic development over the past two hundred years. Kochanowicz showed that since the end of the eighteenth century at least six serious break-downs had taken place which resulted in a change in institutional principles. Over two hundred years the economic system changed several times, the country was destroyed in two world wars, there were several rebellions against the partitioning powers, and Poland's political systems and boundaries changed several times. All these incidents disrupted Poland's steady development, often leading to a stand-still, or even decline; they prevented modern institutions from taking root and the accumulation of capital – both tangible and human, cultural and social.[21]

The consequence of these factors was the backwardness and peripheral nature of Poland compared with West European countries, which manifested itself in the specific economic culture adopted after 1989, as a result of the transformation, and which determines Polish people's behaviour to this day. According to Jacek Kochanowicz and Mirosława Marody: "eight specific characteristics of Polish economic culture can be defined, which appear the most frequently in reports on studies and various types of analyses, that seem particularly significant from the perspective which is of interest to us. These are: (1) familiarism;

[18] J. Kochanowicz, "Miękkie państwo", *Res Publica Nowa*, 7/8(70/71), 1994, pp. 27–30.

[19] K. Jowitt, "Soviet Neotraditionalism. The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime", *Soviet Studies*, 35, 1983, no. 3, pp. 275–297.

[20] J. Kochanowicz, "Peryferie i centrum...

[21] Id., "The Curse of Discontinuity. Poland's Economy in Global Context, 1820––2000", *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 2014, no. 1, pp. 129–147.

(2) aversion to large institutions; (3) moral 'solidarity'; (4) anarchic collectivism; (5) ambiguous entrepreneurship; (6) narrow-mindedness; (7) consumerism; and (8) an ambiguous attitude to wealth. The first four features are related to the notion of governance referred to above, and the next four relate to the extent of the analysis of the term 'entrepreneurship."[22]

Systemic transformation – was the transformation successful?

At the turn of the 1980s/1990s Kochanowicz had the rare opportunity of becoming – to use Raymond Aron's definition – both an observer and a participant. In this period he was awarded scholarships and spent several semesters in the USA, which enabled him to cooperate with economists and experts in political sciences who specialized in studying modernization processes in backward countries. Specifically, he met Albert O. Hirschman, an influential representative of the economy of development, who had been concentrating on studying the history of ideas since the 1980s. He also cooperated with Alice Amsden, a renowned expert on the economy and economic history of South Korea.

As a result, he formulated an original concept for systemic transformation in Poland, which evolved over the following decades. He placed the theory in the twentieth-century perspective of modernization processes, development and catching up with developing countries. The key element of his concept lies in indicating the unspecific nature of the process of Polish systemic transformation and earlier attempts at state modernization in the times of real socialism. Therefore, in Kochanowicz's conceptualization, unlike in most analyses conducted in the first period of research into systemic transformation, there is a clear and real conviction that the changes occurring in Poland both in the period from 1945 to 1989 and during the systemic transformation, are one of the possible versions of the attempts made at catching up with, or at least not losing distance to, well-developed Western countries.

In 1998 this idea was expressed more precisely in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*: "It is the common opinion that the transformation,

[22] J. Kochanowicz, M. Marody, "Pojęcie kultury ekonomicznej w wyjaśnieniu polskich przemian", in: *Kulturowe aspekty transformacji ekonomicznej*, ed. by J. Kochanowicz, S. Mandes, M. Marody, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 13–42.

which post-communist states are undergoing, is an unprecedented phenomenon. However, at the same time, the discourse on this transformation is full of historical references, although such references are usually introduced *ad hoc*, when – for example – the incoherence of Polish democracy is explained by the lack of state tradition or by the use of *liberum veto*. We intuitively feel that the historical dimension is not without significance both for understanding this social change, which is, in short, described as 'transformation', and the course of the process itself. Intuition makes us feel that the past is a burden and that – although what happens is not fully determined by occurrences that have already taken place – history which, to some extent, is difficult to pinpoint, limits the options available to us."[23]

What are the consequences of thus phrasing the initial assumptions? In 1992 Kochanowicz considered whether "there are some similarities which transgress conventional divisions into 'capitalism' and 'socialism', or even cross the lines between Eastern and Western civilizations."[24] In trying to resolve those doubts, he attempted to organize the possible versions of modernization, so as to include both the state-governed modernization of the Polish People's Republic and the experience of 'neo-liberal' systemic change. These typologies were based on the State's role in the economy – in 1992 Kochanowicz already emphasized that "we need to reflect more deeply on the State's role in the process of economic changes in backward, peripheral countries."[25]

In his work dating from the early 1990s, Kochanowicz took a very close look at the differences between various versions of the historiosophy of development, both Marxist and liberal, and their consequences for political concepts.[26] He indicated what the various modernization policy projects could lead to: from the policy of Statism and State industrialization imposed by rulers to the similarly imposed liberal project of democratic capitalism. In trying to understand the systemic transformation model in Poland, Kochanowicz wrote a sort of history about the idea of development from the perspective of Eastern European experiences in the 1990s. After several years, he again returned to the issue of 'top-down paradoxes of modernization'. He continued to treat the com-

[23] J. Kochanowicz, "Transformacja polska w świetle socjologii historycznej. Między Trzecim Światem a państwem opiekuńczym", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 42, 1998, pp. 23–38.

[24] Id., "Paradoksy odgórnych modernizacji. Między romantyzmem rynkowym a etatystyczną utopią", *Res Publica*, 1992, nos. 1–2, pp. 116–122.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

munist state modernization which took place in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War not as an rare phenomenon, but as one of many types of top-down modernizations in which the State (and its elites) tried to play the role of prime mover, which pushes backward society towards modernity by building factories (and not institutions). This time with distinct and precise arguments he sketched a model which explained the historical failure of the entire concept.[27]

In his opinion, such modernizations only occur during times of social crises, in particular during times of impending external or internal threat. The State's methods of industrializing the country seemed better adapted to the early stages of technological development (mass production) than to the flexible technological solutions which characterize later stages of development. Such an industrialization model would better benefit national states than countries in the age of economic, political and cultural globalization. There is a greater possibility of this type of attempt at modernization being successful in the early stages of industrialization and urbanization, whereas it has less chance in developed urban societies. However, even when conditions exist which contribute to state industrialization, the internal contradictions which characterize it seriously reduce the probability of success, in particular, since the geopolitical conditions, which are so important for a state undergoing modernization, were unfavourable. According to Kochanowicz, global economic transformations, technological development and globalization reduced the effectiveness of top-down modernization projects, based on State-governed industrialization, to almost nil.[28]

This was accompanied by the conviction that at the beginning of the twenty-first century: "there are no […] propositions other than capitalism for organizing economic life. Therefore, the current global debate relates to issues related to various variants of capitalism and methods enabling its coexistence with the political system and cultural tradition. If there is no alternative for the market – and the most one can do is subject it to some kind of regulation – it has to be accepted, if not with enthusiasm, then at least out of necessity."[29] In effect, Kochanowicz considered neo-liberalism as an almost unavoidable (but, of course, not in the Marxist sense of the term) response to the Soviet version of State-governed modernization and new geopolitical conditions, and

[27] J. Kochanowicz, "Modernization from Above. The End of the Road?", *Studia Historiae Oeconomica*, 23, 1998, pp. 59–78.

[28] Ibid.

[29] J. Kochanowicz, "Dwoista konsolidacja. Transformacja ekonomiczna i zmiana instytucjonalna", *Ekonomista*, 2000, no. 3, pp. 305–323.

globalization. He wrote: "The lack of alternatives to neo-liberal transformation programs results from the state of social awareness which extends outside post-communist countries. It consists of rejecting all politically left-wing ideological projects and accepting – at least in countries which lie within the cultural influences of the West – that democratic capitalism is the only universally acceptable perspective of appropriate social order."[30] In the neo-liberal project for democratic socialism, the idea of progress was replaced with development, common goals with individualism and the State with the market. Above all, however, from his research perspective, neo-liberalism became an attempt to include countries within the region in the main development trends of the West.

However, as he concluded in his later work, the factor which distinctly differentiated the capitalist model, and which was forming in post-communist countries based on its Western prototype, was the condition of the State – and, to a wider extent – of its institutions, both formal and informal. Beginning with the analyses prepared with Alice Amsden and Lance Taylor – as far away as in America – through many feature and academic articles which were written in Poland, he emphasized that the characteristic feature of the Polish (and to a wider extent – post-communist) State is that it is persistently weak. On the other hand, in his opinion, Polish institutions contain traces of backwardness to this day, which distinctly differentiate them from Western European models. Systemic change offered a hope of improvement: "The transformation which took place in post-communist countries can therefore be treated as being a specific instance of a wider class of modernization processes which occurred in the past and are occurring now. The introduction of the market and capitalism is not an objective *per se* but the means of ensuring that more rational relations will develop and contribute to the greater effectiveness of human effort."[31] However, in Kochanowicz's analyses of the 1990s, it is the weakness of the State and institutional problems which are most often referred to as an explanation for the barriers to development in Poland. This weakness can be understood as being limited to the rationalization of interpersonal relations, and thus the transformation of the market into a development tool.

In 1996, Jacek Kochanowicz called his country (this term also referred to Eastern Europe) *The Troubled Leviathan* after analysing

[30] Ibid.

[31] J. Kochanowicz, "Transformacja polska...

the historical and institutional conditions and selected transformation path, and – only a little pessimistically – wrote: "The future State appears both overly expanded and relatively weak, therefore, not fully capable of bringing about many significant changes and reforms. Looking back several years – could the development have taken another path? There is no clear answer to this question because it is difficult to say to what extent the creation of a state is a spontaneous process, and to what extent it can be influenced. The State is built by elites; however, they are part of the process, not outside it. In the case of Poland, there certainly are forces in motion leading to the erosion of the State, and which undermine its strength and quality. The Polish State's weakness, however, is relative as against the backdrop of post-communist countries our case – not only in terms of economic success, but even the efficiency of the State – is a success. It is also difficult to imagine that destructive forces are the only ones which work here – in most social systems there are forces which also support and help them develop."[32]

Seen from this perspective, the comparative analysis shows all the more clearly that the Polish State and related capitalism remain peripheral and maintain their distance from the West. This distance seems to be lasting, despite consecutive modernization efforts – both in the nineteenth century[33] and in the communist period, and now. Adopting a comparative perspective resulted on the one hand in growing pessimism, and on the other it allowed Kochanowicz to attempt to search further for the sources of Poland's peripheral position. These searches, rooted in the tradition of historical sociology[34] and Polish schools of economic history, and drawing on the oeuvre of Warsaw's sociological tradition and studies on the history of ideas and American political sciences, finally led him to the question of Poland's economic history. As Kochanowicz explained together with Mirosława Marody in an article published in 2010: "by 'culture' we understand mainly the value systems, the cognitive framework and behavioural patterns popularized in a given society. They are what create history, and are handed down in the process of socialization; in effect, culture is an intrinsic part of individuals and determines their behaviour. The nature of these components

[32] Id., "Znękany Lewiatan. Państwo wobec gospodarki w Polsce schyłku lat dziewięćdziesiątych w świetle badań porównawczych", in: *Ustrojowa wizja gospodarki polskiej*, ed. by J. Kochanowicz et al., Warsaw, 1997, pp. 5–34.

[33] Id., *The Polish Kingdom. Periphery as a Leader*, Lecture prepared for the 14th International Economic History Congress in Helsinki, August 21–25, 2006.

[34] Id., "Transformacja polska...

of culture is largely unconscious, non-reflective. Secondly, ideas are also a component of culture; they are convictions which relate to the nature of the world articulated in the form of words and other signs."[35]

When examining Polish economic culture, social capital and confidence, Kochanowicz perceived its weaknesses, but also its potential to change for the better.[36] In yet another article published in collaboration with Mirosława Marody, and relating to Polish economic culture, the authors concluded: "Stating these obvious differences between Western Europe and Poland, we do not want to say that they explain the specificity of Polish economic culture. But it is important to bear these facts in mind, as we should not forget that we are talking about the values, perceptions, and sensitivities of a society that, in general, is poor, badly educated and structurally backward. Not surprisingly, the more affluent, better-educated upper strata of society feel closer to 'the West' than the less privileged social groups. While it may be debated whether there are some 'essential' cultural differences between Poland and 'the West,' there is no doubt that there are differences of a degree, related to a phase of social and economic development."[37] Transformations in Polish society provided the basis for moderate optimism for the future. However, Kochanowicz clearly saw the limits of this optimism when he emphasized that our pursuit of Western civilization: cultural, institutional and development-related, was like chasing a moving target: "We have limited cultural resources as well as an inconsistent, ideologically antagonistic society, and many other barriers. Moreover, the West will continue to develop, so we are pursuing a moving target. Although America has myriad problems, it is still able to generate fantastic innovations. Shortening the distance will be very difficult for Poland."[38]

Economic culture, and through its agency, both formal and informal institutions, are formed by elites. Therefore, ideologies naturally became Kochanowicz's subsequent area of interest – they are best defined as a shared, socially-accepted outlook on life, or – more formally – pursuant to Douglass North and the cognitivists, as shared mental models, in this case expressed by elites to persuade 'the people'. The persuasive nature of neo-liberalism was often described by

[35] J. Kochanowicz, M. Marody, "Instytucje mają znaczenie", *Dialog*, 2010, no. 3.

[36] J. Kochanowicz, "Trust, Confidence, and Social Capital in Poland. A Historical Perspective", in: *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. by I. Markova, Oxford, 2004, pp. 63–83.

[37] J. Kochanowicz, M. Marody, "Towards understanding Polish economic culture", *Polish Sociological Review*, 2003, no. 4(144), pp. 343–368.

[38] "20 questions to... Jacek Kochanowicz"...

Kochanowicz as an intellectual project (and ideology),[39] which legitimizes the social costs of reforms. In one of his last articles he addressed the ideological project articulated by circles close to the *Gazeta Wyborcza* milieu, with whom he felt a bond. The conclusions he drew from studying the structure of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* milieu's argumentation, and its actual results, were surprisingly critical:

> What remains is the question of why *Gazeta* was so determined to keep this radical pro-market course. The simplest answer is that the members of its editorial staff sincerely believed in what they were preaching, as they were motivated by their own vision of the desired future, which was liberal-democratic capitalism. They wanted rapid reforms, as they were afraid that pain and suffering would mobilize resistance. They believed that the sooner the economic rebuilding process produced success, the greater support there would be for the reforms. In the enlightenment vein, they also believed that rational arguments had the force of convincing even those whose immediate interests were threatened by the short-term effects of systemic change. The danger they were the most afraid of was right-wing, nationalist populism. Ironically, the type of policies they advocated actually led to marginalization and social exclusion, with few provisions for institutionalizing re-inclusion. Thus, as an overview of East-Central European politics shows, in the longer term they led exactly to what *Gazeta* was most afraid of.[40]

With time, not only did the author's pessimism not lessen, it actually deepened. In 2011 to the question: "How long will the Polish economy last under its own steam – its potential to generate growth? Do we still have any or are we driving on the fuel reserve?", he answered: "We can drive on this fuel – cheaper, more efficient labour – indefinitely; however, with time, more and more slowly. This in turn does not allow us to reduce the distance which separates us from developed countries. The development fuel will gradually become depleted because as years go by the level of real wages will increase. Thus, Poland's attractiveness for foreign investors will decrease, and this channel for transmitting new technologies will narrow down. Moreover, the population will grow old and some of the active youth will emigrate."[41] And he added: "We do not know how to free ourselves [from the past – PK, MT].

[39] Cf. J. Kochanowicz, "Incomplete Demise. Reflections on the Welfare State in Poland after Communism", *Social Research*, 64, 1997, no. 4, pp. 1477–1501; id., "Dwoista konsolidacja...

[40] Id., "Private Suffering, Public Benefit. Market Rhetoric in Poland, 1989–1993", *East European Politics & Societies*, 28, 2014, no. 1, pp. 103–118.

[41] "20 questions to... Jacek Kochanowicz"...

We continue to be oriented towards the present and the past. Poles do not really care very much about what will happen. Even young people are more interested in the history of communism than in what is going on in the world. They do not view the world from the perspective of transformation, but from the attractiveness of the beaches in Sharm el Sheikh."

A year later, in one of his last studies, Jacek Kochanowicz referred to the possible scenarios for Poland's development in the next few decades. In a text prepared for the Forecasts Committee 'Polska 2000 Plus' under the 'Poland 2050' project, he presented his forecasts for the evolution of the economic situation, both the short-term conditions and limitations in the long term, as well as the probability of catching up with better developed European countries. Below, we briefly discuss his intellectual achievements and summarize his – unfortunately prematurely – interrupted studies on transformation.

Vision of the future[42]

According to Kochanowicz, Poland will develop over the next few decades, "it will avail itself […] of the diffusion of technological progress and will acquire organizational solutions based on more developed countries."[43] In particular in the initial period convergence will prevail – its level of economic development will become relatively closer to that of countries in the centre of today's world. However, in Kochanowicz's opinion, in the long term Poland will be – like now – among the more backward countries, as he put it, in the group 'close to the Western peripheries'. In other words, in his opinion, its development would be dependent and limited due to exhausting its growth reserves and its weakening competitive advantages.

In the long term perspective the convergence process will weaken and may even expire. Kochanowicz linked this to the gradual increase in wages, and thus a drop in returns on investments and increasing problems with absorbing "advanced technologies which would allow Poland to come close to the leaders."[44] In effect, its distance to more highly developed countries would probably continue to be significant

[42] This part of the article is based on the subchapter "Polska za lat czterdzieści", which is part of the study J. Kochanowicz, "Peryferie i centrum...

[43] Ibid., p. 70.

[44] Ibid.

and it was improbable that Poland would become part of the world's economic core. He indicated three main barriers which limited the possibility of catching up with the best developed economies: demography, social diversity and economic culture.

The demographic changes, forecast by academic centres both in Poland and in the European Union, clearly indicate a considerable drop in the Polish population over the next few decades and an increase in the number of people over 65 compared with those who are professionally active (between 15 and 65 years of age). This will have negative consequences both for the social benefit system and the volume of the labour force. Additionally, migrations will probably lead to a significant loss in employees with high professional qualifications.

According to the author, social diversification is just as important. The greater differences in income and social status will translate into weaker social identification and could exacerbate conflicts, or even lead to social riots. In Kochanowicz's opinion, the consolidation of such diversification could lead to the transformation of Polish society into a dual society "with a well-educated, developed affluent minority […] and a majority which copes much worse in the changing world."[45] At the same time, as the author noted, the well-off minority would not be interested in the country's backwardness, availing itself of the possibility of functioning globally.

The last factor contributing to the slowing down of development is economic culture discussed above. According to Kochanowicz, it was characterized by "little ability to cooperate within large, depersonalized institutions […] and an orientation more directed to the present than the future."[46] At the same time, there is only a slim chance of a fundamental, radical change occurring in this area over the next decades. Kochanowicz concluded that if this diagnosis was correct, then: "this is not an appropriate resource for the challenges we will encounter over the following decades."[47]

Is there a chance for Poland to catch up with the most developed countries despite the unfavourable circumstances and existing barriers? Kochanowicz was rather sceptical in this respect. In his opinion, the opportunity to successfully leave the periphery would have to be connected with active, far-sighted State policy, mainly related to improving the education system at all levels, and adopting a consistent

[45] Ibid., p. 71.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

policy promoting research and innovation. As "ultimately, it will be the people who are decisive […] – their knowledge, skills, value systems and manner of conduct. In other words, everything that sociologists and economists call human, cultural and social capital."[48] However, he noted that to-date "public authorities are not prepared to think ahead", and all more far-sighted initiatives are related to the actions of "enthusiasts, stimulated by the energy of one person, and not a durable institution, with a strong and distinct impact on the functioning of the State."[49]

Summary

Jacek Kochanowicz's interest in systemic transformation issues after 1989 was a natural consequence of the main bent of his studies undertaken previously, basically from the outset of his academic activities. He analysed the transformation, or transition from a centrally-driven economy and State socialism to a market economy and democracy in a wider context, seen as a process for modernizing a peripheral country, where the sources of its backwardness were not only to be found in the several decades of domination by communist ideology derived from the Soviet Union after the Second World War but also – or even mainly – in previous conditions which often dated from as early as the beginnings of modern times.

Kochanowicz indicated that Polish backwardness (or on a larger scale – the backwardness of the whole region) was complex and could not be regarded exclusively in terms of the economy. His work was characterized by his in-depth interdisciplinary approach; he tried to pinpoint the sources of backwardness: long-term institutional solutions, customs, and the country's specific economic culture which were the consequences of the evolution of Polish society over many centuries. He indicated that the peripheral character of Poland and the whole of Eastern Europe was the result of historical events and that overcoming it required an approach that went beyond the methods proposed by the neo-liberal program of economic reforms.

Kochanowicz's analysis of the various paths to modernization used both in Europe and in the Third World countries led him to conclude that the State had to actively promote change. In this, he agreed with

[48] Ibid., p. 69.
[49] Ibid., p. 73.

the opinion of Alexander Gerschenkron about the key role of the State in implementing modernization programs in peripheral, economically backward countries. He pointed to those countries which had been successful in their transition from a traditional to modern economy (mainly East Asian countries), where the developmental State had a key role in the modernization processes.

At the same time, Kochanowicz indicated the weaknesses of Central and East European states which were unable to play a key role in the transition during the consecutive modernization programs being implemented. He referred to Gunnar Myrdal's concept of soft states, which showed the institutional inability of such states to carry out consistent modernization changes. In Kochanowicz's opinion the course of events in Poland (and in other post-communist European countries) was similar to those which accompanied the modernization of Latin America. According to him, the programs brought about economic development and modernization; however, its scale was limited due to the weakness of public institutions, which were excessively expanded, ineffective and corrupt to the core. In effect, these countries, despite their development, remained backward compared to the economic core, and the relative scale of their backwardness has not changed, and in some instances has even increased.

Therefore, Kochanowicz was rather pessimistic in his forecasts relating to Poland's development over the next few decades. According to him, due to the inefficiency of public structures, its weak civic society and low economic culture, the development gap between Poland and highly-developed countries would persist. He thought it unlikely that Poland would pull itself out of the periphery and join the economic core in the foreseeable future. He saw Poland's place, as it has been so far, rather as the backstage of highly-developed Western European countries.

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Maciej Tymiński
Piotr Koryś

An escape from backwardness? The Polish transformation as a modernization project (Summary)

The authors discuss the late professor Jacek Kochanowicz's views on Poland's backwardness and its modernization in the period of the country's transformation after 1989. The main purpose of the article is to reconstruct Kochanowicz's interpretation of the process of the systemic transformation, understood as a modernization project. In the paper the authors begin by presenting Kochanowicz's opinions on the causes of Poland's backwardness, especially those originating in Polish history. The discussion of the way Kochanowicz saw the causes of Poland's backwardness is followed by the exposition of the way in which he interpreted the process of Poland's transformation. In conclusion, the authors attempt to outline Kochanowicz's view of Poland's development in the following decades, stressing his skepticism as to the country's chances of a rapid and successful modernization.

Key words: Jacek Kochanowicz, modernization, transformation, backwardness