'The common' as the condition of living autonomy of universities in Poland

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Dr Krystian Szadkowski, Center for Public Policy Studies

Structure of presentation

1. Background information
    a) History
    b) Architecture of reforms
2. The study
    a) Presentation of data
    b) Analysis
3. Conclusions

Background information

Science and higher education in 'real socialism' (1944 - 1989)

- Strong and politically appointed/controlled rectors.

- Delegation of research to Institutes of Polish Academy of Science and industry-related research institutes. Universities of Humboldtian principles, yet strongly teaching-oriented institutions.

- Science and Higher Education as tools for social and economic development. Close relationship between the system and its environment.

- 'Pipeline' model of academic career.

- Quantification of output and developed procedures of evaluation and central planning.

- **1988** - Jan Kluczyński, director of the Institute for Science Policy and Higher Education – by 2000 the system would be able to double the number of students enrolled (with approx. 350 000 at the time to approx. 700,000). Condition: promotion (and a process of hiring in the sector) of 3000 doctors and 1000 habilitations each year.

Higher education reform, 1990

'The radical increase in the number of students [shall be considered] as a basic condition for overcoming the civilizational backwardness of Poland'.

General Council for Science and Higher Education (1992)

- Policy of no-policy: Withdrawal of the state from Higher Education (financially and in terms of control).

- Privatization (internal & external): Emergence of private, demand-driven providers of higher education.

- Uncontrolled market-driven massification of the system.

- Uncontrolled growth of enrolments in the humanities and social sciences. De-institutionalization of research mission. Creation of divided institutions.

- High level of autonomy, including to HEI (academic, appointments, enrolments) in gratitude for the sector's active participation in the 'Solidarność' struggle – development of collegiality.

Higher education enrollments in Poland, 1990-2015
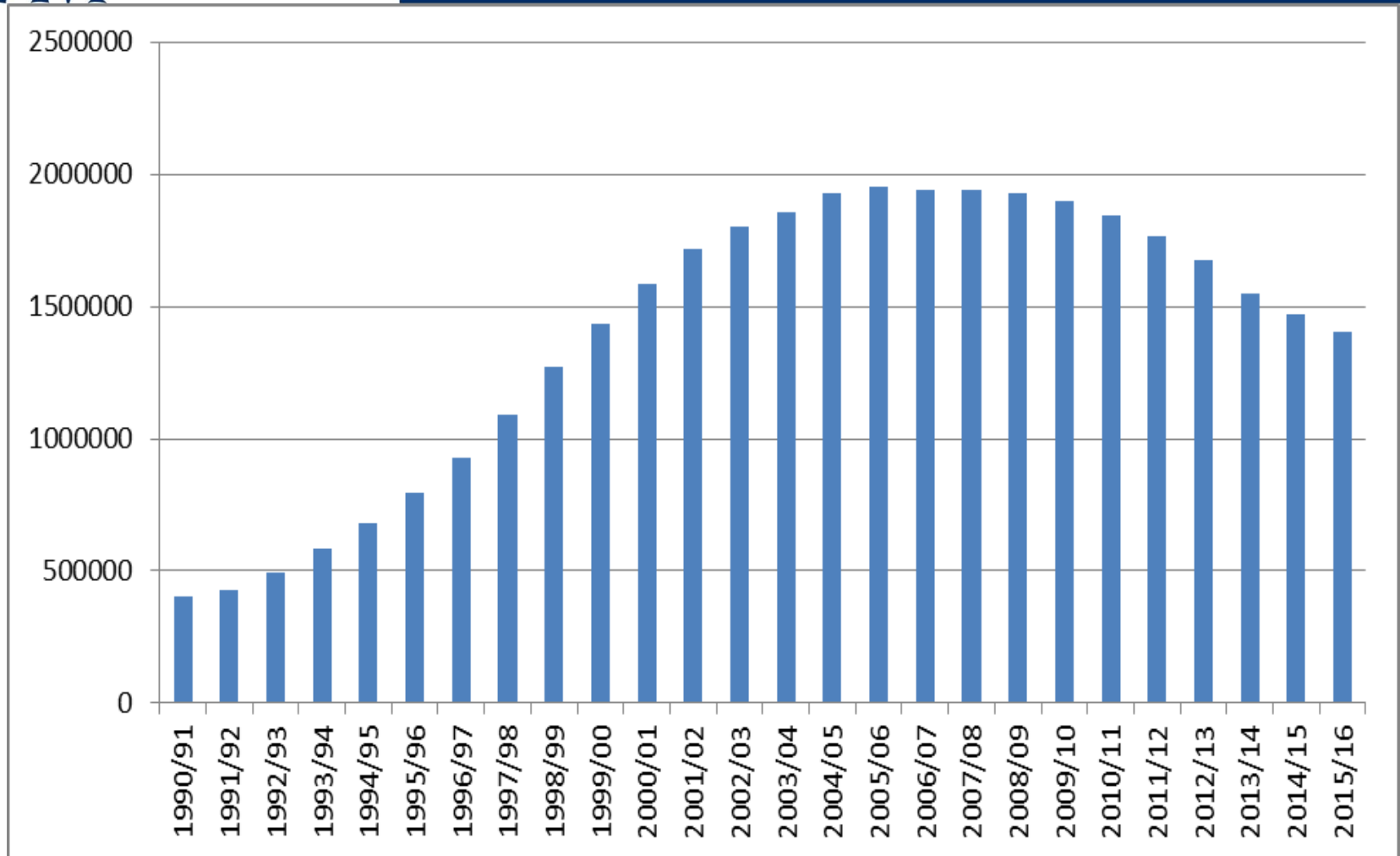
Emergence and gradual disappearance of the private HE sector in Poland

- The reforms of 1990 opened the sector to uncontrolled processes of development of private, formally non-profit, providers.

- At the peak of the massification process, 315 private institutions and more than 660,000 students.

- Fee-based and demand-absorbing institutions.

- The process significantly steered by the academic faculty.

- Strong reliance of the private sector on the public sector employees. Massive sector-wide academic moonlighting concentrated in Social Sciences, Law & Economics.
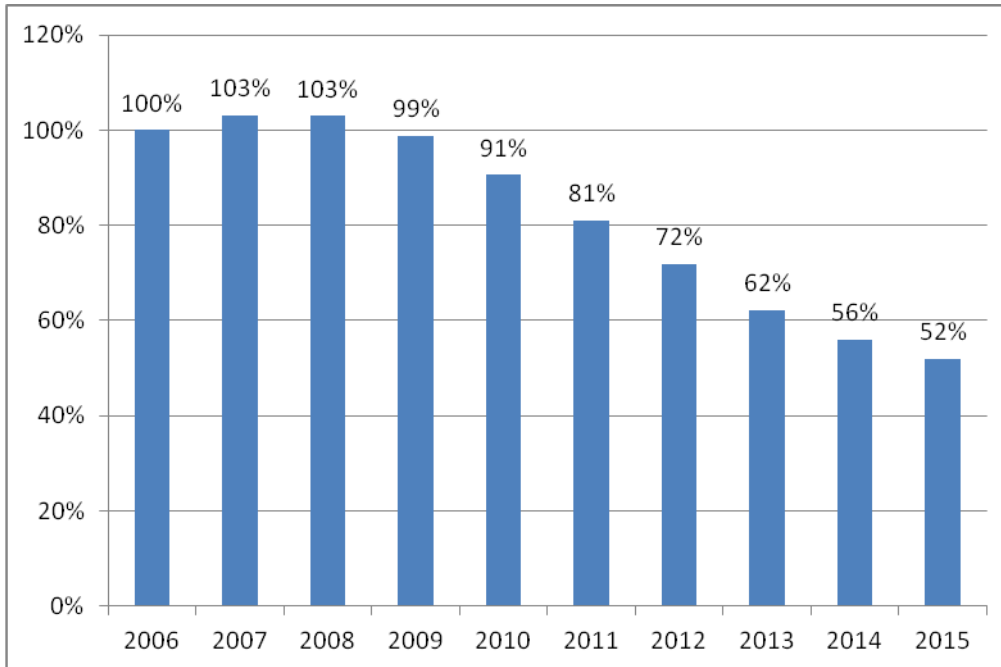
Gradual decline of the private sector

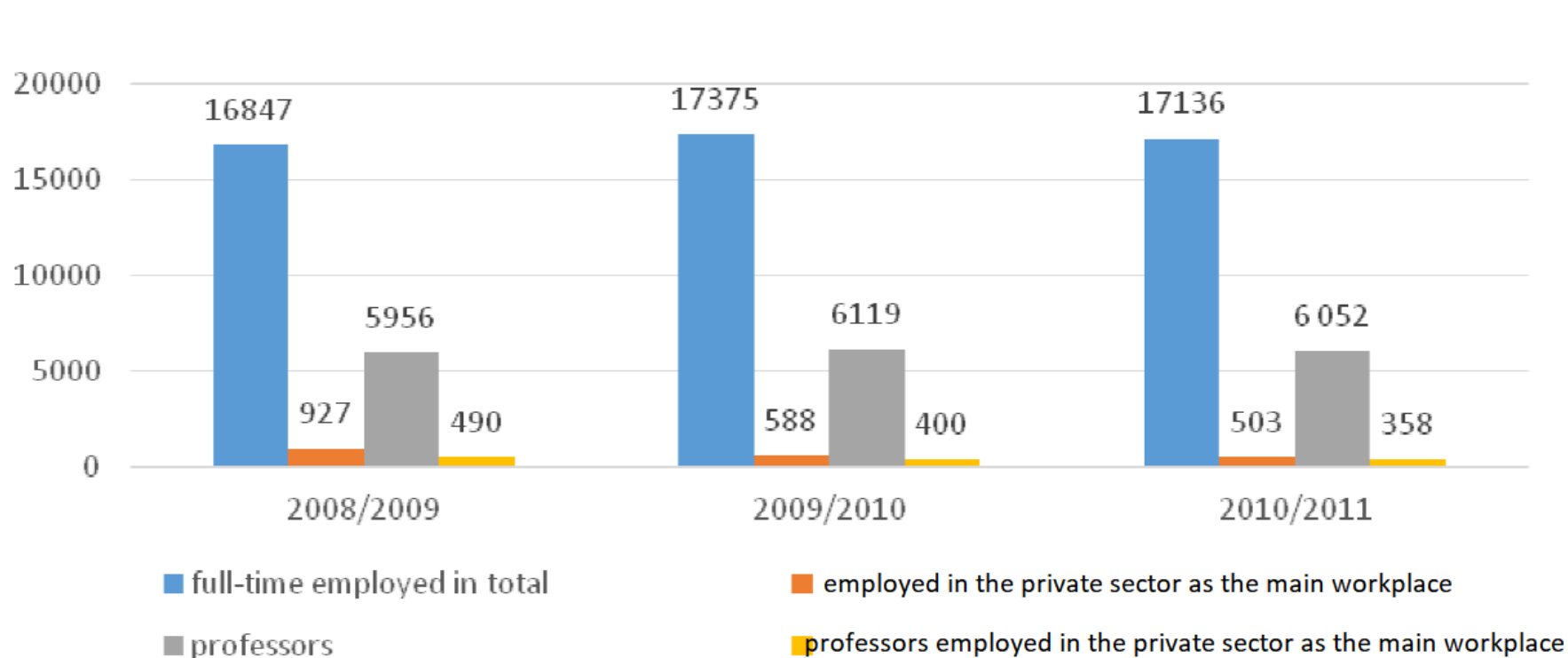Figure. Change in enrollments in private HE, 2006-2015 (in percent; 2006 – 100 percent)

Students' enrollment	Number of PHE institutions	% of PHE institutions
under 500	144	49.66%
500-1000	54	18.62%
1001-2000	52	17.93%
2001-3000	12	4.14%
3001-4000	12	4.14%
4001-5000	2	0.69%
5001-6000	5	1.72%
6001-7000	3	1.03%
7001-8000	0	0.00%
8001-9000	1	0.34%
9001-10000	1	0.34%
10001-11000	0	0.00%
11001-12000	0	0.00%
above 12001	4	1.38%
Total	290	100%

Table. Private HE institutions by student enrollment, 2014

Employment in private sector institutions as the main workplace, 2008 - 2010

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
full-time employed in total	16847	17375	17136
employed in the private sector as the main workplace	927	588	503
professors	5956	6119	6 052
professors employed in the private sector as the main workplace	490	400	358

- ■ full-time employed in total
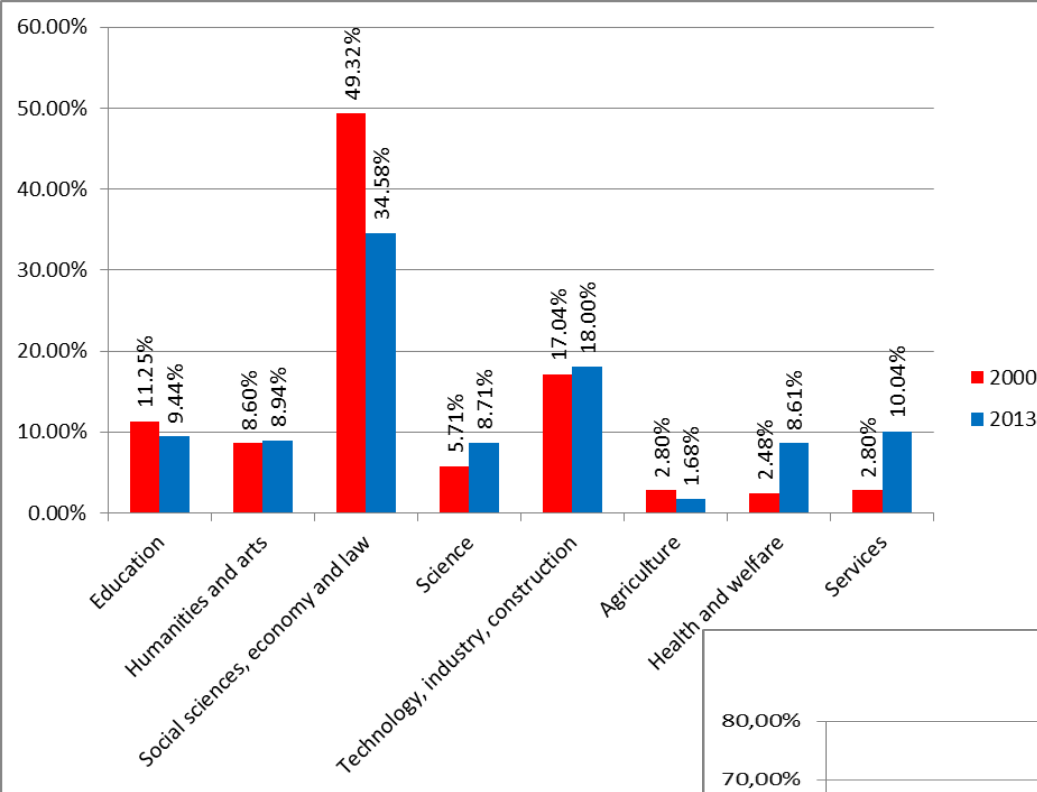- ■ employed in the private sector as the main workplace
- ■ professors
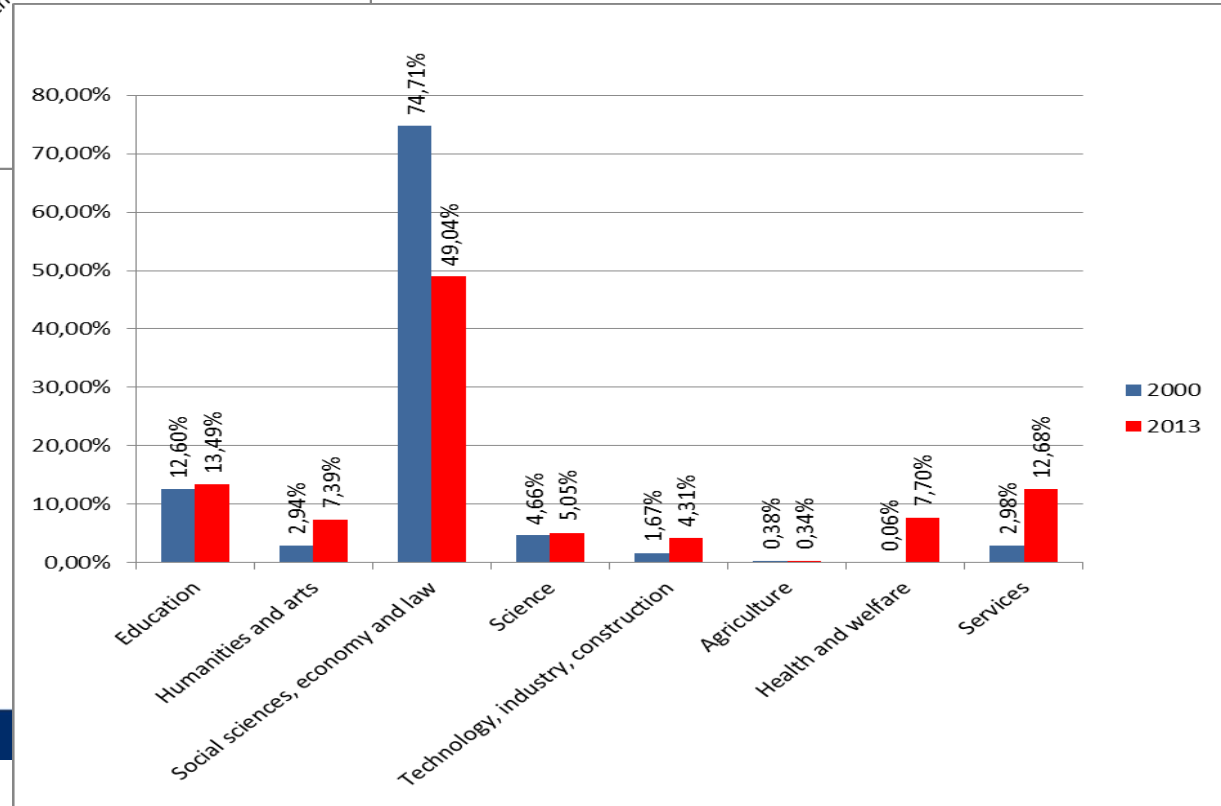- ■ professors employed in the private sector as the main workplace

Disciplinary differences between public and private sector enrolments (2000 – 2013)

Public sector

Private sector

Elements of NPM in the reforms of 2008-2012

State Regulation	Stakeholder guidance	Academic self-governance	Managerial self-governance	Competition
Stress on financial control in state/governmental policy	Higher responsiveness of HEI to economic and social needs	Diagnosis of self-referentiality of HEI (ivory tower)	Enforcement of development of organizational visions, missions and strategies	Commodification of academic activities (emphasis on intellectual property)
Elaboration of explicit measurement, assessment and monitoring of performance in both research and teaching	Inclusion of business representatives to non-executive governing structures of HEI	Diagnosis of the corporate privileges of academic oligarchy	Formalized general formula of allocation of public funding	Equal treatment of public and private institutions in competition for research funding
The Ministry and its agencies attempt to steer the system vertically, through setting explicit targets and performance contracts				Concentration of funds in the highest performing HEI (incentivisation of supply side)

Source: Czarnecki 2013 based on de Boer, Enders & Schimank 2007 and Ferlie, Musselin & Andresani 2008

The Study

Background

Delayed sister project of 'flagship' study realized by the University of Oslo (Maassen, Gornitzka, Fumasoli).

Questions:

1. How have Polish universities over the last ten years (2007-2017) adapted to changes in their political and socio-economic environments?

2. How is universities' institutional autonomy interpreted by actors at the Faculty level?

3. Which factors affect how Polish universities use their autonomy?

Living autonomy: factual autonomy – 'How university reforms are interpreted, translated, buffered, channelled and used internally' (Maassen, Gornitzka & Fumasoli 2017)

Semi-structured interviews (161) and data collection (4 institutional case studies; 15 faculty case studies): March 2015 – April 2017.

Principal Investigator: Prof. Marek Kwiek. Research team: dr Krzysztof Czarnecki, Aleksandra Fedaczyńska, dr Marta Shaw, dr Krystian Szadkowski.

Mission statements of universities in the sample

	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Humboldtian idea of teaching & research integration	YES	YES	YES	YES
Tradition & importance of the past	YES	YES	YES	YES
International scope	YES (European)	NO (European in 2010)	NO	YES (Global)
Regional integration	YES	NO	NO	YES
Service to society and economy	YES (society)	YES (society)	YES (society)	YES
Promotion of openness and tolerance	YES	YES	YES	YES
Academic freedom	YES	NO	YES	YES
Collegiality	YES	NO	YES	YES

Data

University	Interviews (Total)	Deans, Vice-Deans, Directors of Institutes	Faculty	Departments
Alpha	42	12	30	Psychology, Chemistry, History, Teacher Education
Beta	36	6	30	Biotechnology, Chemistry, History
Gamma	46	15	31	Chemistry, History, Biology and Environment Protection, Physics and Astronomy, Geography
Delta	37	16	21	Biology, Chemistry, Physics
TOTAL	161	49	112	

Faculty profiles

	Faculty of Psychology		Faculty of History		Faculty of Geography		Faculty of Biology	
Years	2008	2016	2008	2016	2008	2016	2008	2016
Students (total)	1494	1307	2748	1830	n.a.	657	1509	1042
Doctoral candidates	73	69	163	280	n.a.	19	87	130
Academic staff	80	87	164	175	n.a.	57	189	232
Non-academic staff	49	50	63	64	n.a.	13	111	116

	Faculty of Psychology	Faculty of History	Faculty of Biology	Faculty of Geography
History	Late 1970s - split within the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology.	Early 1990s - split within the Faculty of Philosophy and History.	Mid 1980s - split within the Faculty of Biology and Geography.	Early 2010s – split within the Faculty of Biology and Geography.
Category	A+	A	A+	B
Organizational structure	System of Chairs (8) with departments (6) and labs (12), independent departments (5) and independent labs/research centres (7).	Large institutes (6) divided into departments (40) and labs (4).	Large institutes (4) divided into departments (31) and labs (4). Common facilities structures (8).	System of Chairs (8), labs (2) and centres (2).
Internal Governance	Highly developed collegial, inclusive and participatory structure of governance. Dean and two Vice-Deans (research, students). Multiple commissions and councils (21) and Dean's representatives for specific tasks (22). Faculty council.	Dean and two Vice-Deans (general, students). Faculty council.	Dean and three Vice-Deans (science and international cooperation, students, development). Dual council structure: Faculty Council and Committee of Deans and Directors of Institutes.	Strong Dean's leadership (2012-2016). Dean and two Vice-Deans (students, studies). Dual council structure: Faculty Council and Committee of Deans and Chair-holders.
Strategy	Low importance of formalized strategy (short and isomorphic to the university strategy). Strong social norms.	No importance.	High importance of formalized strategy. Well-known to the faculty. Clearly defined goals, responsibilities and means. Dean's representative for the implementation of strategy.	High importance of formalized strategy. Well-known to the faculty. Clearly defined goals, responsibilities and means.

	Faculty of Psychology	Faculty of History	Faculty of Geography	Faculty of Biology
New study programmes	International programme in English.	Structure of programmes matches the organizational structure of the Faculty. One new programme initiated as a response to local labour market demand.	Multiplication of unsustainable programmes to attract more students.	Sustainable research and labour market-oriented programmes. Initiated to accompany the development of faculty research areas.
Selectivity (students)	High – stable numbers despite the demographic decline.	Low - declining numbers.	Low – declining numbers.	Low – declining numbers.
Selectivity (doctoral candidates)	High - national candidates, in part employed in research projects.	Low – large increase in numbers.	Low – shortage declared by academic staff.	High – national and international candidates, in part employed in research projects.
Employment policies	Dual track – open competition and profiled competition. High-standard requirements. No lay-offs.	Long-lasting and internally legitimized inbreeding. No lay-offs.	Open competition. Recently subordinated to the development strategy of new study programmes. Substantial lay-offs.	Open competition. Active head-hunting strategies in Poland and globally (mainly of Polish academics abroad). No lay-offs.
Funding allocation mechanisms	Internal small grant competition system. Differentiated system of financial stimulation of research productivity. High reliance on external competitive research funding.	Unclear for the faculty. Dean's and Director's allocation. High reliance on external competitive research funding.	Dean's allocation and system based on Ministerial points for publication and internal algorithm supplemented with local criteria.	Internal small grant competition system (suspended). Algorithm based on publications. High reliance on external competitive research funding.

The common and higher education

'Every social institution rests on the common and is defined, in fact, by the common it draws on, marshals, and creates.' (Hardt & Negri 2009, 159)

The common entails a living tie between a thing and the activity of the collective that takes charge of it. (Dardot & Laval 2014)

Normative – the regulative ideal of academic practice – orientation towards the common good.

Economic – common-pool resources crucial for the reproduction of the academic community.

Political – democratic and participatory structures of consensus-based governing.

Corrupted form of the common

The corrupted form of the common imposes a specific blockade to its development, traversing it with multiple hierarchies and reducing the powers of social production. They punish alternative practices by using exclusion or/and division.

- We can easily find the remains of this kind of corrupted form of the common in the forms of collegiate selection procedures when it serves the purpose of reproduction of internal relations of power.

'Of course, all those competitions are supposed to allow you to select the best candidates, but there are situations when amongst the candidates there are good ones 'raised' by the professor who will be employing the winner of the competition. These pupils allow the continuation of tradition, and this is an important tradition - the school, habits and methodology.' (Interview 5, Senior, History, Beta)

- **Inbreeding** (to different degree) and **closure** are the starting negative point of reference of institutional change at the faculties examined.

Escape from the corrupted form of the common

Successful processes of institutional change anchored in shared social norms and values as well as an understanding of the faculty in terms of an organic whole.

'These costs [of transformation] could be divided into individual ones, i.e. for each individual - increased work, more effort, more energy and time spent. But it also meant cooperation, i.e. as if it were about the whole, and so I perceived it, that there was an understanding for individual and collective effort. And the employees knew that they would have to try as individuals and all together as a team.' (Interview 3, Senior, Geography, Gamma).

- Participative creation of institutional strategy.
- Establishing of selection criteria for new staff and the assessment of those currently employed.

The common and the academic resources

'Previously, our Faculty was spread in several places, at least in a few large and many smaller ones, and I am not talking now just about the problem of inhibiting the common flow of thoughts, but also about such technical things. At the moment, we have shared laboratories in which really high-class equipment is kept but used as if it were a common good.' (Interview 6, Senior, Biology, Delta).

- Pooling of material and immaterial resources at the Faculties.
- Establishing agreeable collective protocols for use of common resources (financial and prestige-related).
- Collective sharing of non-remunerated tasks crucial for the reproduction of academic community.

The common and the collegiality

'This whole collegial decision-making model seems to me a very good thing, it is an essence, I mean the faculty council, this is the essence of academic decision-making, yes, it's most effective if we deal with a community of people who are more or less in agreement and they are able to reach [...] With us it works quite well, meaning we can come to common solutions. Now we have proposed program changes, big changes in the study program and I have the impression that the faculty council, it means it will take some time, but the faculty council will make a positive decision at some point about these changes. I see that different reformist ideas find the support of the council, so in this respect I think that this structure for making decisions in a stable institution is reasonably good idea.' (Interview 1, Junior, Psychology, Alpha).

Conclusions

- In Poland, the NPM reforms stopped half-way (low centralization, low top-down formalization, low standarization, but relatively high legitimization, and high flexibility of structures) – resulting in one of the most collegial higher education systems in Europe.

- The processes of institutional change and excercising of the living autonomy are succesful at those faculties where normative, economic and political aspects of the common are in place.

- The new reform – Law 2.0 – that aims at the completion of the processes initiated during the wave of 2009-2012 reforms should remain sensitive for the dimension of the common already present at various higher education institutions in Poland.

Thank you for your attention!

Further reading:

- Kwiek, M. & K. Szadkowski (2018). 'Higher Education Systems and Institutions: Poland', In. *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions,* eds. P. Teixeira et al. Springer: Dodrecht.

- Kulczycki, E. (2017). Assessing Publications through a Bibliometric Indicator: The Case of Comprehensive Evaluation of Scientific Units in Poland. *Research Evaluation* 26(1): 41-52.

- Kwiek, M. (2014). Structural Changes in the Polish Higher Education System (1990–2010): A Synthetic View. *European Journal of Higher Education* 4(3): 266-280.

- Szadkowski, K. (2014). The Long Shadow of Doctoral Candidate Status. Case Study - Poland. *Social Work & Society* 12(2): 1-17.

- Kwiek, M. (2013). Changing Higher Education Policies: From the Deinstitutionalization to the Reinstitutionalization of the Research Mission in Polish universities. *Science and Public Policy* 39(5): 641-654.

- Kwiek, M. & P. Maassen, eds. (2012). *National Higher Education Reforms in a European Context: Comparative Reflections on Poland and Norway*. Peter Lang: Frankfurt.