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The birth of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn and the first attempts at summarising operations of the university

Outline of the issue

The issue of operations of universities in the periphery or the frontier, establishing such universities, their management and functioning is a terrifically interesting issue from the perspective of the theory of management, pedagogy of higher education or science studies. Numerous questions emerge concerning defining significance of a new university for social and economical revitalisation of the region, the political and economical costs related to existence of such institution, didactic and science-research efficiency of a periphery university and, ultimately, a question emerges regarding the academic status of a new university, its place among other didactic and science institutions in the country or its place in international and domestic rankings.

Following several years of functioning of a new higher education institution the first assessments are being made regarding the degree of development and efficiency of material assets and human resources management – successes and failures of the institution are summarised. The mission of frontier universities is defined in legal documents and own academic traditions; frontier universities have own heroes, meaningful examples of characterful and memorable teachers and administrative and service employees. And it is this second aspect of the behind-the-scenes academic life displayed through cultural and social activity of the leaders of university's community which is frequently more influential in terms of the decisions made by candidates selecting between various offers of individual universities. This peculiar student atmosphere, exceptional campus with excellent social and cultural infrastructure, access to extensive sports facilities, tourism infrastructure, wide range of available artistic groups, student scientific associations as well as voluntary activities result in the choice of the future path of education becoming less than obvious. Apart from the knowledge and practical skills necessary for an educated engineer, medicine practitioner or teacher the social environment, natural environment and cultural community of a university are significant.

Various factors are taken into consideration in making a decision regarding location of a new university which consists in a variety of economical and social factors as

well as the projected results of political actions, primarily related to extending term of office for members of parliament or senators – political instigators of establishing a university. Presence of a higher education institution is a factor increasing prestige of a city in which the said institution was established and it constitutes a peculiar root for economic development (Achremczyk, 2009). Employees and students of a university have to live somewhere, buy something, organise something or research something through using costly equipment. The facilities have to be expanded and, subsequently, modernised/overhauled and maintained constantly just like the green areas surrounding the university. Various service points are established in vicinity of a university – cafeterias, recreation areas, sports facilities and venues for cultural and social activity. A university becomes a source of income for various economic entities providing services to university's employees and its students.

Establishment of the UoWM in Olsztyn

The University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn launched its didactic and research activity on the 1st of September 1999. The act on establishing the university was signed by the President of the Republic of Poland on the 18th of August 1999. In turn, on the 30th of August of the same year the government of the Republic of Poland and the Embassy of Vatican Apostolic Nunciature signed the agreement concerning developing the Faculty of Theology in the newly established university.

The very fact of establishing a new university in a region until now considered as “backwater” of Poland, a location attractive in terms of natural environment, landscape and tourism but devoid of meaningful industrial plants and with poor transport and technical infrastructure, was a major event in the history of the region. The rich cultural tradition of Warmia, the Holy Warmia (as it never lost its Catholic character), and beautiful natural environment of Mazury, since time immemorial evangelical and multi-ethnic in character (and multi-creed to a certain extent), was recognised by political authorities of the country – not as much due to material assets but due to its spiritual value.

The academic tradition of Warmia reaches back to the XVI century (Achremczyk, 1997). In 1565, the contemporary bishop of Warmia, cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz, issued an edict regarding establishing the Braniewska Academy, a higher education institution educating the staff required by the Polish king and the universal church. However, this initiative was not fully implemented. Drawing highly-qualified academic staff into Braniew has proven impossible over the next three years. However, an institution was established engaged in teaching young man and providing education on the intermediate school level as well as a theological seminary preparing candidates for the position of a priest. In the following years, following death of its founder, the academy was renamed to “Hozjanum”. This name was preserved until modern day.

In 1772, the region became a part of Prussia and in this period it developed consistently with Prussian and, in the later period, German law. New transport infrastructure was developed – primarily rail carriage and water carriage – the Elbląski canal, swamps and lakes were drained and transformed into new agricultural land and forests. New manufacturing plants and service providers were established in cities of the region.

In the inter-war period, when Warmia and Mazury became a part of Germany as a result of the referendum regarding allegiance of these lands, a number of prestigious cultural institutions was established there, including a theatre, a musical school and an arts school. The first ideas regarding establishing a higher education institution in Olsztyn emerged. The most prominent opinions on this issue were expressed by the military circles and thus a warrant officers' training school was established; however, it was not officers' school and it did not have the status of an academy.

In 1945, the area of Warmia and Mazury was given to Poland. The status of the Kaliningrad Oblast continued to be an unresolved issue. The border between Poland and the Soviet Union has not yet been established. The northern territories of Poland reached far further than currently. The ultimate shape of the border was determined by Stalin only in 1950. A part of the Polish population inhabiting the new territories had to move down south to the Polish territories. Nevertheless, the northern areas of the region were sparsely populated and in 1947 Polish government resettled approximately 100 thousand people of Ukrainian origin from Bieszczady to the north within the framework of the "Wisła Initiative". These people were settled in the current northern districts of Warmia and Mazury.

Here it is prudent to take note of the mission regarding establishing a university in Olsztyn which was one of the postulates presented by the delegation of "Polish residents of Mazury" during the meeting with Stalin in Moscow. Alongside the purely political, economical and social issues related to migration of major groups of people from the eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland towards the so called "Recovered Territories", i.e. the northern and north-west frontier of Poland, the academic and education postulates were presented as well as numerous proposals regarding establishing cultural institutions (Achremczyk, 2019; Łukaszewicz 1999).

Talks with Stalin did not produce the expected outcomes in regards to numerous issues touched upon but, unexpectedly, the scientific employees moving from the areas of former Wileńskie and Nowogrodzkie voivodeships stopped in Olsztyn which was, unfortunately, burned in a large part by soldiers of the Red Army and established the Higher School of Public Administration. The school operated for only 2 years and was on the grounds of the decision made by Polish government in 1947 moved to Toruń and incorporated into the newly established university. However, students of the school received student's books and student IDs of Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń and the received credits were recognised and confirmed by the authorities of the Law and Administration Faculty of the NCU.

Following conclusion of the war the administrative status of the region remained uncertain. For a year and a half the region was called “Mazury Oblast”. Only in 1946 the Olsztyńskie voivodeship was established, with the territory reduced by five north-east districts, which were reassigned to the Białostockie voivodeship.

The region attractive in terms of tourism and landscape, well developed in terms of agriculture but at the same time poorly industrialised, was bolstered by the political authorities in 1950. Two higher schools from Cieszyń and Łódź providing education in the field of agricultural sciences were moved here. On the 31st of May 1950 the Higher Agricultural School was established in Olsztyn. Initially the school had three faculties: agriculture, zootechnics and food and nutrition engineering; a year later the fishery faculty was established. The first higher school had a goal clearly defined by the political authorities. It was supposed to prepare personnel for working in the agricultural region rich in aquatic resources (Faruga, 2010). Olsztyn acquired the status of an academic city.

Four years later the Teacher Training Institute was established. Shortages in regards to preparing teachers for realisation of the grand task of teaching the community to read and write resulted in difficulties with implementing this project. The new institution providing education on the intermediate level was supposed to narrow the gap in the amount of staff. On the basis of assets and staff of the institute the Higher Teachers’ School was established in 1969 and five years later it was transformed into the Higher School of Pedagogy. Initially the academic teaching staff consisted of employees of the Higher Agricultural School. Over time professors and associate professors from other Polish higher schools were transferred to Olsztyn (Górniewicz, Pulińska, Radziszewska, 2018; Chłosta, 1999).

The Higher Agricultural School developed rapidly. New didactic facilities, research laboratories and social facilities were developed on the grounds of the former hospital campus. New organisational structures were also developed. Further faculties were developed: geodetic surveying, veterinary medicine, mechanics and construction, and after political transformation even more faculties were founded: biology, management as well as a separate Education Sciences Institute. Two education profiles were becoming visibly dominant: agricultural and technical. In 1972 the Agricultural-Technical Academy was established (Kozdroń, Sołoma, Wójcicka, 1995), an institution with an academic status higher than before and enjoying significant prestige among the local community. The first initiatives emerged concerning establishing a new university modelled after American universities instead of classical European universities. Both fundamental and applied sciences were to have the same cognitive status. Both the general education, as in the classical university education, as well as the profiled and specialised education, higher vocational education, were to have the same scope and level as well as social prestige.

At that time the project regarding establishing such a university submitted to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education did not receive approval of political authorities. The academic scholars from other Polish academic centres were also against this idea.

Following the political transformation of 1989 further initiatives emerged regarding establishing a new type of a university in Olsztyn. In 1990, the Olsztyn Scientific Forum was established (Krzymowski, Stefańczyk-Krzymowska, 2021). This association brought together rectors and vice-rectors of the higher education institutions in Olsztyn and directors of the research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the ministry of agriculture temporarily holding the office. Various propositions for establishing and organising a university in Olsztyn were discussed during meetings of this body, both organisational and programme-related. Several conceptions were developed. One such conception advocated for establishing a branch of the NCU of Toruń in Olsztyn on the basis of the HPG and the ATA. The other concept consisted in combining ATA and its plentiful staff with both institutions of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Inland Fishery, the third proposed combining both state universities with the Warmia Institute of Technology (WIT) and Wojciech Kętrzyński Scientific Research Centre (SRC). However, none of these propositions was accepted by all the involved parties. In 1996, it was ultimately decided that the new university shall be formed by combining both state universities with the WIT. The SRC did not become a part of this merger but all its scientific employees were employed in faculties of humanities and economy of the newly established institution.

The propositions regarding defining the organisational structure for the new university were also varied. The first proclaimed that scientific schools modelled after American colleges will be established and managed by a Vice-Rectors subordinate to Rector elected by Electoral College. On the basis of the staff of both institutions the following colleges were to be established: natural sciences, humanities, social and legal sciences, technical sciences, art college and theological college. Because rectors of higher education institutions were members of the forum their votes were balanced by other members of this body. The criticism of the organisational model promoted by the authorities of the association was limited to speeches delivered solely during meetings of senates of both higher schools.

The second model promoted by the contemporary rectors and Vice-Rectors of both schools assumed a classical structure based on faculties. There were 10 faculties operating under the ATA, (including 5 faculties enjoying full academic rights which ensured Academy's autonomy in the understanding of the higher education and science act of 1990), there were 4 faculties at the HSP whereas the WIT was a single-faculty institution. In total there were 15 basic organisational units. However, the plan was from the very beginning to establish an autonomous university. Thus it was necessary

to reduce the number of faculties to 10, including the Theology Faculty founded by the Holy See.

Ultimately there were 7 faculties left at the ATA and 2 faculties at the HSP plus the Theology Faculty. Three research institutes of the former Mathematics and Natural Sciences Faculty of the HSP transferred to the ATA. The Institute of Mathematics was incorporated into the Faculty of geodetic surveying and land management of the ATA, the Institute of Biology merged with the Faculty of Biology of the ATA and the Technical Education Institute transferred to the Faculty of Technical Sciences of the ATA established on the basis of the previously combined faculties of this academy: Mechanical and Construction. The Faculty of Art Education of the HSP merged with the Faculty of Pedagogy and formed a new organisational unit.

In 1998, the contemporary Minister of Science and Education, prof. Mirosław Handke, appointed a team for the purpose of developing a conception for establishing the University of Olsztyn and preparing appropriate legal documents including the act. The eight-person team was led by the deputy minister prof. Jerzy Zdrada, the team also included a politician of the Solidarity Electoral Action – a member of scientific staff of the ATA, dr Kazimierz Janiak as well as two representatives each from the three entities comprising the future university, Rector of the ATA – prof. Stefan Smoczyński and Vice-rector of the ATA prof. Ryszard Górecki, rector of the HSP – prof. Andrzej Staniszewski and Vice-Rector of the HSP – prof. Józef Górniewicz, the auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of Warmia, fr. Jacek Jezierski and Rector of the Higher Theological Seminary in Olsztyn, fr. Dr Jan Guzowski (Januszko, Kozdroń, Pilarek, 1999).

In 1999, elections of the authorities of both higher education institutions of Olsztyn took place. In the ATA prof. Ryszard Górecki was elected to the office of Rector, in the HSP – prof. Józef Górniewicz. Both institutions were making extensive preparations for merging into a single organisational structure. Compositions of not only individual scientific units were selected but also of the administrative and economic structures. The economic units were the same in all institutions, the administrative and maintenance units were similar. There were also separate social facilities for both higher schools. Under the ATA assets there were 10 dormitories and an academic cafeteria, the HSP possessed three halls of residences and a cafeteria for students. There were two separate publishing houses, two printing works and two resource and vehicle pools.

Within three months all transfers of materials and personnel were completed. None of the employees of both schools lost employment. On the 1st of September 1999 every researcher, academic teacher, administrative employee and maintenance worker was familiar with his new workplace.

The most difficult task during the first period of university's operations was unification and standardisation of the statute of the university, study and administrative regulations. Until now each higher school possessed separate and, in a sense, specific

regulations. These regulations were adapted to the needs of a given unit. Names of scientific degrees and terms in the field of arts were different. There was the Faculty of Artistic Education at the HSP where teachers possessing the first degree teaching authorisation – an equivalent of the PhD degree – and the second degree teaching authorisation – an equivalent of the habilitated doctor degree – were employed. At the ATA there were research stations, experimental units, agricultural and veterinarian practice centres – each with own regulations. A part of the staff of the Theological Institute of Warmia did not possess documented academic qualifications. Although such members of staff were holding the office of a professor until then they were not required to formally confirm these academic qualifications. Only when the university was established these personnel and promotion matters were sorted out.

The Faculty of Theology had own Great Chancellor. This office was always held by the contemporary Archbishop of Warmia. The first chancellor was Archbishop Edmund Piszcz (1999-2006), the second was Archbishop Wojciech Ziemia (2006–2016) and currently this office has been held by Archbishop Józef Górzyński (since 2016). All academic teachers employed at the Faculty of Theology are bestowed the canonical mission by the Vatican Congregation for Teaching, i.e., the authorisations to teach consistently with the effective Catholic creed doctrine.

Almost 25 thousand students began the academic year 1999/2000. On the grounds of the act on establishing the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn all students and employees of both public institutions of education (the ATA and the HPS) became students and employees of the new university. On the 31st of August, on the grounds of the decision of Rector-elect of the HPS, all employees and students of the Warmia Institute of Theology became students and employees of the HPS. The agreement on this matter was signed by Rector and the Archbishop of Warmia.

As of the 1st of September 1999, the University of Warmia and Mazury employed nearly 3600 employees, a half of which consisted of academic teachers. Among them were approximately 400 professors and habilitated doctors. The assets at the disposal of the new university were sizeable. The former Higher School of Pedagogy contributed little, approximately 1.5 ha of land located in the central districts of the city and 16 buildings. In turn, the Agricultural and Technical Academy was an affluent institution. It possessed 6200 ha of farmland, forests and surface waters, including 500 ha in Olsztyn, and more than 100 civil structures. The majority of these real assets was located within the academic campus in the Kortowo district and thus various faculties of the former HSP were moved there.

The education profile of the new university was diverse. The most numerous scientific personnel and the greatest number of complex forms of education pertained to agriculture, food economy, veterinary medicine and geodetic surveying. The studies in economic disciplines, IT, mathematics and humanities were much less developed.

These discrepancies immediately began to disappear. The structure of the university changed with each passing year. As soon as in 2000/2001 the university secured the rights to confer the academic degree of habilitated doctor for the Faculty of Biology. Thus new structures were developed. The faculties of Law and Administration as well as Mathematics and IT were established. In the subsequent year the rights to confer the academic degree of habilitated doctor were procured by the Faculty of Humanities (in the fields of linguistics and history) and two years later by the Faculty of Pedagogy and Artistic Education (in the field of pedagogy).

A major event in the development of the University was establishing the Faculty of Medical Sciences in 2007 and launching studies in the field of medicine and emergency medical services in the following year. Previously studies in the fields of nursing (the Faculty of Biology in 2002) and dietetics (the Faculty of Nutrition Sciences in 2005) were organised.

Achievements and failures of the University after twenty years of operations.

The analysis of an institution of higher education takes into account hard facts such as the number of students and graduates, the staff capacity, measurable achievements of academic teachers and students (not only in the primary form of activity such as science, inventiveness and education but also in sport achievements, cultural activity and voluntary work, research and education grants). Another factor determining position of a university is the level of satisfaction of people operating as a part of this academic community. This satisfaction is influenced by numerous factors. It consists of professional satisfaction, satisfaction with education, the opportunity to realise own cognitive, artistic, tourism or sports passions, the surrounding natural environment, high level of university campus saturation with service and cultural facilities. There is also the third factor – the sense of fulfilling an exceptional mission in the social world. It is this last element which frequently is decisive for the quality of functioning of people in a given academic community.

Currently, towards the end of March 2022, the University of Warmia and Mazury is a dynamic and buoyant science and education institution. It provides education in 74 fields of study and 150 specialisation. It possesses a robust education and research infrastructure. This infrastructure consists of more than one hundred facilities located in the Kortowo campus as well as several more objects of the former HSP located downtown.

The University submitted 24 scientific disciplines under institutes engaged in science and research activity of high academic level to parametric evaluation of scientific units. A dozen or so other clearly specialised research teams shall be bolstered in the

coming years in terms of personnel and these institutions will be submitted to evaluation at a later date.

Each year scientists and scholars of the UoWM publish their works in the highly scored scientific journals and publications listed in the ranking prepared by the minister appropriate for science. The number of papers and monographs meeting the criteria of the so called publication slots annually exceed 20 thousand bibliometrics units.

The operations and activity in the field of inventiveness, patents and utility designs is also significant. Annually more than 100 applications from the University are submitted to the Patent Office and at least 20% of these applications is granted the status of an invention or legal patent protection.

The expansive education offer of the University is constantly modified. Several factors are taken into consideration during the development or disbanding of study courses. Firstly – needs of the region in regards to preparing highly qualified staff for economy, culture and administration. Thus the existence of the fishery course and its slightly modified version – aquaculture – despite a rather small number of candidates for such studies. Secondly – the expanding competences of the academic teaching staff and selecting new propositions for fields of education. Such fields of studies emerged as mechatronics, geo-engineering, gastronomy – cuisine arts or analysis of the development trends as a synthesis of knowledge from several disciplines of humanities, economy and social sciences. Thirdly – needs of the state are taken into consideration. Here we may use such fields of science and courses as internal security, national security, energy technology and nature and climate preservation as examples. Finally, the health-related needs of the region resulted in launching 5 courses in the fields of study related to medicine.

However, the primary group of study courses is simply a result of the tradition of academic education realised by the former schools comprising the new university. The classic agricultural, veterinary medicine and technical fields of study and courses were transferred from the ATA whereas the humanities, natural sciences and teaching fields of study and courses were transferred from the HSP whereas the theology was transferred from the WIT.

The scientific, cultural and social activities of students are extraordinarily extensive. There are more than 60 students' scientific associations at the University. Each May scientific sessions are held during which students present their achievements in the field of research. Their works are being published as a part of the post-conference materials. Every year several volumes of scientific works of young researchers from the UoWM community are developed. The students' activity can be also observed in several other higher schools in the region (Pitorowski, Górniewicz, Warmiński, 2016).

Every year the authorities of the University allocate approximately PLN 1M to the cultural and sport activities of students. The majority of these expenditures is consumed by organising the largest event, the co called "Kortowiada", an annual student

carnival. Over four days there are numerous concerts, theatre plays, stand-ups and sporting events available to the academic youth on the campus. “Kortowiada” became one of the calling cards of the UoWM.

In the academic districts there are 7 students’ clubs engaged in cultural activity and providing gastronomy service. There are more than 3000 residents in 10 dormitories. These residents have access to and use expansive sports infrastructure – a sports hall seating 700, a track-and-field stadium with tartan running tracks and roofed stands, a horse wrangling facility and a horse riding track. There are 32 horses in stables of Kortowo. On the Kortowskie Lake swimming competitions, canoeing competitions and regatta are organised. In the vicinity of the campus there is also an urban forest – a place to take a walk, engage in cross-country running and bicycle rallies. There is “Przystań [Marina]” restaurant by the lake available for employees and guests of the university.

Sport clubs of the university represent high standard. For at least 60 years the academic sport team of the former ATA, currently the Academic Sport Team Indykpol Olsztyn, has been at the forefront of Polish volleyball. The team won the championship of Poland in men volleyball five times and won the national cup three times. The amateur sport team operating as the AST II takes the leading places in the Spartakiads (sport competitions). The track-and-field athletes of the academic sport team of UoWM in Olsztyn win prominent places in sporting events. For instance – Patryk Kozłowski won the golden medal in the 400-meter mixed relay race during the Tokyo Olympic Games; Konrad Bukowiecki won junior international championship in shot put. Successes of women in horseback riding competitions or participation of Olsztyn students in martial arts tournaments also merit attention.

The campus and the lake border on one side with 26 ha of land rich in natural resources, utilised only partially for realising agricultural studies, horticulture studies, landscape architecture studies, forestry studies or geodetic surveying studies. In this area various species of rare wild animals can be observed such as golden jackal or white-tailed eagle. This area was procured only in 2008 from the Military Property Agency.

Since the beginning of the political and economic transformation the highest unemployment rate and the greatest impoverishment rate have been recorded in the region of Warmia and Mazury. In the period of the greatest crisis, related to the ownership transformation and departure from the centrally planned economy towards the free-market economy in the northern districts of the voivodeship, the unemployment rates of 30% were recorded with the unemployment rate of 20% for the entire voivodeship. The lowest unemployment rate was recorded in the capital of the voivodeship and in the Olsztyński district – 8%.

Owing to the agricultural character of Warmia and Mazury the loss of employment and watching the decline of agricultural and livestock production was particularly

painful for residents of post-communist villages. Great swatches of farmland still remain unattended. A part of this land is subject to afforestation but significant reserves of nutrient-rich post-bog soils remain. Numerous villages lost their agricultural character. The villages located within 25 km from Olsztyn became dwellings for residents of cities moving out from the city and leaving behind housing estates and Old Town tenement houses. Over 25 years the population of Olsztyński district surrounding the city has increased by 110%.

The results of lower secondary school exams, vocational school exams and matura exams correlate with the low income of the population of the region. Pupils of schools in the Warmia and Mazury region achieve one of the lowest pass rates in case of the matura exam and the remaining exams under the education law (Górniewicz, 2018). The best pupils from Olsztyn select higher education institutions located in the neighbouring academic centres: Toruń, Gdańsk and Warszawa. Pupils from the frontier territories select the University of Warmia and Mazury as the public higher education school located the closest to their place of residence and, possibly, also due to the rich cultural tradition and extensive education offer.

Analysis of the results of the matura exam indicates that approximately 4.5% of pupils from the region fall into the highest rating scale, in the 10th centile. It is a result comparable to the national average. However, the percentage of pupils who failed the matura exam is higher, approx. 20%. This result presents a major problem for the education authorities in Olsztyn.

In years 1995–2015 there were 12 private higher education institutions in the region. In 2022 only 6 remain. The demographic decline and economic issues with paying tuition fees led to, initially, higher education institutions merging and ultimately to resigning from this form of business activity. In the period of the greatest development and prosperity of higher education there were more than 44 thousand students in Olsztyn. In 2006 there were 38 thousand students attending full-time and part-time studies as well as approximately 5 thousand students of postgraduate studies and more than 6 thousand students of non-public higher education institutions.

In 2022 there are only 18 thousand students attending UoWM and approximately 2.5 thousand students in the remaining higher schools. Thus we can observe a decline of 55% in the number of students.

Probably the significant unemployment rate in the region, poverty of residents and vast but sparsely populated terrain were among the political and economical arguments decisive for changing the academic status of higher education institutions in Olsztyn. A university was a social construct completely different in terms of quality than three institutions with a distinctly vocational profile. Dynamic material expansion, development of staff and growth of the number of students were an argument confirming validity of this political decision. Government officials, politicians and businessmen come to Olsztyn to commemorate university holidays or inauguration

of the academic year. Every one of them seeks some proof of recognition of his contribution to development of Polish science and culture whereas politicians are fishing for opportunities to bolster political standing of their parties among the electorate.

The University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn is the second largest employer in the region in terms of the number of provided jobs. The biggest employer is Michelin factory producing tires for various vehicles. This French concern employs more than 4.5 thousand employees. The UoWM is second and employs more than 3.6 thousand people. The third employer in terms of provided jobs is the ABB division in Elbląg employing 2.5 thousand people.

Taking into consideration the economical contribution of the University to development of the city and the region it is prudent to analyse revenues and costs of the University in the area of education grants and material assistance fund for students and postgraduate students. A major part of these funds is spent in the commercial and service establishments of the city. The costs of salaries of employees of the University reach more than PLN 280M annually and the material assistance fund for students and postgraduate students exceeds PLN 30M annually. Additional funds from the so called supplemental payroll fund due for the conducted research activity and expert services are PLN 20M. Therefore in 2021 employees and students of the University spent PLN 330M in total. It is major revenue for city's institutions. This amount should be increased by the amount spent by domestic and foreign guest of the university who pay for their stay within the framework of scientific grants, scientific conference participation fees or participation in various forms of cultural activity managed and operated by various structures of the university.

The absorption of the resources from various European Union funds must also be recorded. The University is one of the largest beneficiaries of the aid granted by better developed European countries to regions less developed according to various indicators of civilisational progress. Each year approximately PLN 80M is invested in the scientific and research infrastructure, technical infrastructure and social and sport facilities. In the economically poor region there are few institutions with spare funds for contributing to various investment projects. Therefore the University is extensively utilising various forms of additional support from the European Union resources.

In the period since 2008, the beginning of implementation of grand infrastructural projects, eight new research-education buildings have been erected and 34 facilities have been modernised. The amount of construction investments exceeded PLN 550M and further PLN 300M were allotted towards research investments, equipment, consumables and realisation of numerous scientific projects. It is also prudent to add that representatives of social sciences and humanities have also made use of these financial resources. However, the largest sums of grants were allotted towards nutrition sciences (PLN 39M), fishery (PLN 36M) or improving efficiency of farming (PLN 21M). Within the area of economical, legal and social issues the European Union financing was granted to research on such topics as informatisation of operations of agencies,

the regional demand for highly qualified scientific staff or functioning of the vocational school system in the region. All projects were valued at more than PLN 1M.

Developing prestige of the University

The University of Warmia and Mazury has been recognised by readers of *Gazeta Wyborcza* as the greatest regional achievement since Poland regaining independence in 1945. It is an object of pride for residents of the city and the region. The residents also hear voices of experts expressing opinions of numerous subjects discussed in the local media. The rich education offer and highly qualified staff of academic teachers from numerous fields of science result in the new university being a conglomeration of a plenitude of science and research disciplines until now realised at individual types of higher education institutions and schools such as: agricultural, pedagogical, technical, artistic, medical and, obviously, at universities. Apart from the basic disciplines the applied sciences are also developed.

In other cities of Poland separate universities and technical universities, academies, higher vocational schools, arts and economy academies exists whereas in Olsztyn all of the above are combined within one institution and place.

Since the university has been established the operations of the University were universally assessed favourably. The institution is intensively developing in fields of science, education, culture and sport. In the global rankings it is listed within the twelfth hundred and in the third ten in the domestic rankings. Stable and trustworthy scientific staff, high academic prestige of some of the scholars (12 persons were qualified to the group of scholars quoted the most in their respective scientific disciplines), good assessment of the quality of education confirmed through the certificates issued by the former University Accreditation Commission and the current State Accreditation Committee as well as the prestige of sporting and cultural events organised by students' clubs result in the brand of the UoWM being respected domestically and abroad.

A regional office of the Polish Academy of Sciences operates in Olsztyn. The majority of members of this group originates from the university community. The Olsztyn Science Forum, which brings together highly qualified scholars (according to the bibliometrics evaluation), continues its operations. Their papers are published in the leading international scientific journals receiving the highest scores.

Similarly to other major social organisations also the university has to cope with periods of downfall and periods when its operations slowed down. Conflicts and disputes regarding the strategy for development of academic science and education emerge. The effectiveness in the field of procuring research grants, particularly in the field of humanities and social sciences, is rather low. Despite major activity in the field of applying for funding for implementation of research projects the results of the assessment proceedings regarding these applications are poor.

The number of students and postgraduate students is steadily declining. Under such extensive education offer and due to significant number of academic teachers problems emerge regarding financing individual education and scientific endeavours. The effectiveness and efficiency of education in individual fields of study is declining. Currently, the efficiency of education is merely 65%. It is the highest in the case of social sciences fields of study and the lowest in the case of medical courses. It means that one person in three admitted to the university does not conclude studies within the time frame projected in the act. A part of students transfers to other universities or moves from one faculty of the home institution to the other.

Also the University Library requires upgrading and financing for its operations. The library is in possession of 1.3M volumes but this number is merely a quarter of the resources possessed by the neighbouring university in Toruń. It was impossible to enter the UoWM into the list of libraries receiving a copy of each publication published in Poland free of charge.

A short summary

As a university operating in the frontiers of Poland the University of Warmia and Mazury eludes simplistic assessments. On one hand it is a relatively young university which has operated for merely 23 years but on the other it is an inheritor of the education traditions of educating clergymen reaching 450 years back and of educating students of agriculture and technology reaching 70 years back into the past. The new university was established on the basis of a certain education tradition imported into the Reclaimed Territories. Here the academic teaching staff and students who moved from Cieszyn and Łódź met new candidates for studies from the northern Mazowsze, the area of Łomża as well as the Warmia and Mazury residents resettled from the eastern frontier of the II Republic of Poland. The main plazas of the campus continue to allude to their predecessors. Cieszyński and Łódzki plazas exist and the luminaries of agricultural sciences from Poland appear in names of streets whereas new streets of Olsztyn estates are named after merited professors who came to Olsztyn in 1950.

Since its establishment the University of Warmia and Mazury has been operating as an independent university. This means that development of individual organisational units was effected through procuring the rights to confer the academic degree of habilitated doctor or PhD consistently with the provisions of the effective act on academic degrees and titles and the effective higher education act. Each of the faculties of the university holds rights to confer academic degrees, some in several disciplines, e.g., the faculty of Humanities holds the right to confer academic degrees in four disciplines: history, linguistics, literary studies and philosophy; other units have the right to confer degrees in a smaller number of disciplines. The Bill 2.0 of 2018 reduced the number of these rights because it reduced the number of scientific

disciplines by 40% combining some of disciplines under new names, e.g. zootechnics and fishing, politics and administration sciences, environmental engineering, mining and power engineering.

The University of Warmia and Mazury fits in with the voivodeship development strategy. Professors of the university participate in numerous preparatory works whereas representatives of Rector are members of decision-making groups working on determining directions for the socio-economical development of the region. A major component of university's operation is profiling educational offer of the university in relation to the need of the region for highly-qualified management, teaching and service staff. The funds from the Regional Development Fund were procured for diagnosing the needs concerning graduates of doctoral studies, the level of employability of graduates of the university or for the research concerning targeting the postgraduate studies offer (Górniewicz, Mizerek, 2010; Górniewicz, 2008; Górniewicz, Maciejewska, Mizerek, 2007).

Development of the region is based on several fundamental principles. The first principle concerns preservation of the cultural and natural heritage, the second concerns development of green branches of economy, the third concerns utilising potential and capacity of natural environment for development of medical services and the IT infrastructure, thus the UoWM established the Regional Information Centre – the largest database in the voivodeship. The university adopted a new logo and name “Green University” emphasising its significance for reactivating resources of natural environment and energy sources.

The university adopted the principle of combining scientific research with academic education. Apart from the general preparatory courses required by the teaching standards there is a significant number of education courses based on the cognitive interests of individual employees of the university. This Humboldt model of a research university constitutes a point of reference to both conducting scientific research as well as to utilising the human resources potential of academic teachers for launching new courses and education specialities.

The University of Warmia and Mazury was the second university in the country, following the University of Gdańsk, which introduced regulations of the “Bologna Process” prior to 2005 when the same postulate was entered into the provisions of the new higher education act. However, we must admit that the basic premises of the new system did not fit in perfectly with the practice of education. The reluctance of the so called “merited” professors who did not take into consideration and recognise e.g. the credits received at foreign universities and ordered the most mobile and creative students to pass “their” classes once again was strong. After several years of fruitless cooperation Olsztyn students transferred to other higher education schools. It was so because there the credits and ECTS points obtained at foreign universities were

confirmed. Neither the discussions with University's authorities nor the regulations in these matter influenced stance of said professors (Górniewicz, 2005).

The new two-cycle process of education is also currently commonly criticised. It was assumed that within 5 years of education a student would be able to acquire qualifications in two areas of education. However, representatives of certain scientific disciplines imposed additional obligations on students moving from one course to another second-cycle course and thus some people resigned from this form of education. The absurd requirements of academic teachers quenched spirit and drive of young people for acquiring new professional competences.

The lovely academic campus in Kortowo, the "Kortowiada" recognised as one of the best cultural events for students, the sense of fulfilling a certain mission regarding integration of various ethnicities and creeds effected by academic teachers, strong staff and plenitude of education courses result in the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn being an exceptional university on the map of Poland. The university is a large academic centre with several strong fields of education and scientific research, recognised in terms of sports achievements, voluntary work or artistic activities. It is a well known brand in the region and in the country, a significant employer and the place of condensed economic activity.

Furthermore, the charm of this place is also specific. It has rich traditions. In the past the largest psychiatric hospital of the Eastern Prussia with extensive technical infrastructure operated in Kortowo. Over four years more than 50 facilities were erected where 1200 patients and medical staff resided. In 1944 a military infirmary for 300 patients was additionally established there. In the January of 1945 forces of the Red Army decommissioned the hospital. Approximately 1200 patients were moved westward. The vehicles carrying patients were lost never to be found. In turn the first settlers from other regions of Poland discovered in the March of 1945 corpses of more than 300 persons murdered in the area of the hospital as well as corpses of eight doctors hanged in the largest building.

The largely devastated campus fell out of the interest with city's authorities for 5 years. Only the decision of the government regarding moving the staff and students of two agricultural higher schools to Olsztyn bestowed a new character upon this place.

However, the spirit of the past is still experienced by new residents of this place. The material evidence of the former hospital remain in the form of the overhauled buildings which preserved the style characteristic to the architecture of the XIX century (1882 – launch of hospital's operations) and the remains of the cemetery near the hospital exist. During construction works remains of 3200 persons buried here were discovered. The monuments to the past heroes of this land exist. Near the campus a burial mound can be seen – the place where residents of the area were laid to rest in the VIII century BC. Those people came here soon after the glacier receded.

The achievements and failures of various academic teachers, exceptional students and employees of administration and maintenance are source of numerous tales and anecdotes. The authorities of the university care for great leaders, former rectors of both higher schools comprising the current university. Their dress uniform portraits hung in the Senate Hall. It is also a place full of memorabilia, memento of abroad delegations or exceptional distinctions of university's employees.

In the past Bogdan Suchodolski (1990) wrote on the issue of satisfaction indicators regarding professional activity and social life participation. He declared that the most important indicator is a smile, the sense of satisfaction regarding social activity expressed through positive display of own emotions targeted at other people. This is the case also in the UoWM. Here we can at every turn come across smiling people, satisfied with their work or studies in an exceptional place in Poland, in the Olsztyn university.

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Abstract

In the paper I discuss the history of establishing the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, its potential and capabilities, directions for development, achievements and dangers in the context of transformations in Polish higher education.

Keywords: a university, science-research and education activity of a university, historical and social background of a higher education school