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Transport infrastructure as a link with Kaliningrad oblast in the development strategy for pomorskie voivodeship

Introduction

Kaliningrad oblast was completely isolated from Poland until the early 90s of the 20th century. The collapse of the USSR made it possible to slowly start mutual co-operation but it was only a few years ago when the process was given a boost. Both sides clearly see economic benefits that can be achieved thanks to the transborder co-operation. Under the circumstances one of the crucial problems to overcome is the creation of transport infrastructure linking the north-east regions of Poland with Kaliningrad oblast. If the building of the required infrastructure is not taken up, a chance of forming close social, cultural and political – not to mention economic – relationships will be missed. It might be a sad fact as Kaliningrad oblast is considered to be a Russian gate leading directly to the west.

It is undoubtedly an advantageous opportunity for Poland to make the most of its geographical location in order to create beneficial economic links with Kaliningrad oblast and Russia. Moreover, Kaliningrad oblast is a small Russian administrative region which has to co-operate with its neighbours Lithuania and Poland. If Kaliningrad oblast chooses isolation, then it calls for economic recession and poorer standard of living.

It seems reasonable to modify particular voivodeship's development strategies in such a way so as to include plans of improved transport links between the north-east regions of Poland and Kaliningrad oblast. This paper aims at analyzing the issue with regard to pomorskie voivodeship where the Gdańsk agglomeration may play the most important role in the co-operation with Kaliningrad oblast due to its geographical location.

The transport infrastructure in the strategy carried out up to 2000

After 1989 a comprehensive effort was made to orderly formulate development objectives for the former gdańskie voivodeship. These goals were made acceptable for all decision-making forces in the voivodeship. They showed directions and the development pace as the basis for the

development strategy for gdańskie voivodeship which was finally adopted in 1997 (Województwo gdańskie..., 1997). This document laid foundations for a new strategy towards development for pomorskie voivodeship which was adopted in 2000 after the latest administrative reform (Strategia rozwoju..., 2000).

The strategy paid considerable attention to transport issues. The first objective out of twelve main long-term goals goes as follows: "The development of international transport links for the land and marine junction Gdańsk–Gdynia (A-1 motorway; express road running to Kaliningrad, Via Hanseatica, main railway track TER, Gdańsk–Rębiechowo airport¹, ferry and port infrastructure)". The seventh objective seems to complement the first one: "The integration of Tricity's transport system and doing away with bottlenecks in the agglomeration and its satellite towns (Reda, Żukowo, Przejazdowo, Tczew)" (Województwo gdańskie..., 1997, pp. 53–54).

The strategy for development assumes that the Gdańsk–Gdynia junction will be turned into a logistic centre of the European transport system. It also outlines how this aim can be achieved. What is more, it presents a scenario of possible threats and lists activities to cope with them. The document shows two transport corridors which are thought to be in competition against the Pomorze Gdańskie region. One of them runs from the north to the south of Europe, while the other one is a bypass around the region running along a parallel of latitude from the west to the east of Europe. The first group of threats mentioned in the strategy includes:

- competitive routes running from Scandinavia to continental Europe, especially those going through the tunnel and bridge in the Strait of Öresund²;
- competitive German ports;
- aspirations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to enhance the transit potential of their sea ports which have bigger trans-shipment capabilities than Polish ports;
- the disadvantageous layout of the Via Hanseatica route from Helsinki to Tallin, Riga, Kovno, Białystok and Warsaw coming into conflict with strategic interests of gdańskie voivodeship.

The second group of threats is connected with giving priority to the motorways A-2 and A-4 running along a parallel of latitude. These threats include:

¹ The present name is Gdansk Lech Walesa Airport.

² It was opened in July 2000. When the strategy for development was being formed the Öresund passage was under construction.

- reinforcing the alternative transport corridor North–South running through Denmark and Germany;
- marginalizing the region of Gdańsk in maintaining trade relations between Western and Eastern Europe.

The strategy pointed out that among the main components of the transport layout in the former gdańskie voivodeship both the railway mainline TER and Gdańsk–Rębiechowo airport lived up to the desired standards. It was also assumed that railway connections with the hinterland added to the strength of the land–and–sea Gdynia junction. However, the junction needed some modernization, better equipment and complementary investment layouts to improve its service and repair capabilities.

It was also noted that the bottleneck at the junction railway station at Zajązdkowo Tczewskie as well as the modernization of the railway track were the problems to be solved. To make it possible for trains on the railway track E–65 to do 65 km per hour new rolling–stock was to be purchased. As far as air transport was concerned the need to improve accessibility of the Gdańsk–Rębiechowo airport was mentioned. This was to be done by modernization of trunk roads and increasing the number of international connections, particularly with Helsinki, Stockholm, Riga, Tallin, Berlin and Frankfurt.

The transit system of gdańskie voivodeship was analysed as well as its international situation to show the following priorities of development (Województwo gdańskie..., 1997, p. 62):

- motorway A–1;
- other fast roads;
- infrastructure and port facilities;
- transport accessibility of ports;
- ferry transport.

The strategy for development made further comments on the A–1 motorway and suggested two scenarios: passive and active. Among other main fast roads the strategy paid attention to the need of building Seashore Express Road (Nadmorska Droga Ekspresowa) as part of Via Hanseatica leading to Kaliningrad oblast.

The strategy referred to the sea ports putting forward the following future objectives:

- full application of the so called ‘port law’ which was passed on February 5th, 1997 (it regulates property and ownership changes in Polish ports);
- building up ports’ infrastructure and adjusting it to the requirements of modern technologies concerning trans–shipment of goods and passenger services;
- setting up a modern logistic centre in each of the ports;

- working out a long-term policy for the development of the companies known as “Zarządy Portów” in Gdańsk and Gdynia.

Moreover, the strategy emphasized the need to improve transport accessibility of the sea ports from their hinterland. The most important tasks for the port of Gdynia related to the completion of the Kwiatkowski Route and the rebuilding of the complex structure of Janek Wiśniewski and Polska streets. Numerous objectives were drawn up for the port of Gdańsk, including a new bridge on the Martwa Vistula river, the building of Great Southern Bypass (Duża Obwodnica Południowa), W-Z Route and the link, for example a tunnel, between the left and right banks of the port. Pipelines used to send liquid materials within the port were also given a high priority. Another long-term recommendation indicated the future use of inland waterways navigation along the water route Gdańsk – Elbląg – Zalew Wiślany – Kaliningrad. The strategy for development noted the importance of ferry transport which should be developed to support the A-1 motorway.

The seventh objective for the former gdańskie voivodeship included a recommendation concerning comprehensive integration of the local passenger transport within the Tricity agglomeration (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Rumia, Reda, Wejherowo, Pruszcz Gdański and Tczew). The recommendation aimed at:

- securing attractive conditions of travelling on public transport within the whole agglomeration;
- making public transport more competitive against individual means of transport,
- introducing a unified transport policy in order to optimize maintenance and investment outlays.

The strategy paid a lot of attention to subjective and objective aspects of integration showing possible variations of proposed activities. The investment programme to be carried out in order to enhance the transport system of Tricity was presented in detail. A list of infrastructure investment schemes proposed with a view to getting rid of bottlenecks in the voivodeship was added to make the programme complete.

Transport infrastructure in the strategy after the year 2000

The strategy towards development for pomorskie voivodeship was passed by the local Sejmik on July 3rd 2000. Jan Zarębski, Chairman of Sejmik, compared in the introduction the strategy to a ‘path’ which should have, figuratively and literally, a quality of a motorway (Strategia rozwoju..., 2000). It may suggest that the building of the A-1 motorway and other investments in transport infrastructure should hold a high priority.

The strategy starts with the weaknesses and strengths of pomorskie voivodship as well as its chances and threats. One of the main strengths is the Tricity agglomeration junction, whereas weak points refer to the crumbling shipping trade, limited access to the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia from the hinterland, limited use of the Gdansk-Tricity airport³ and incoherent transport network of the region. The proposed extension of the transport corridors running towards the south of Poland is considered to be one of the chances for the region. The delayed construction of the A-1 motorway in the light of no other alternatives was mentioned as one of the threats.

The strategy is based on the following five development priorities (Strategia rozwoju..., 2000, p. 57):

1. Development of the human factor based on knowledge and activity.
2. Restructuring and modernization of the local economy.
3. Revelopment and modernization of the infrastructure which reinforces competitiveness and the region's cohesion.
4. Striving for a higher standard of living.
5. Development of international co-operation.

The second priority includes such aims as development of services, transport and tourism. These aims are assigned the following tasks:

- creation of a transport network to balance the role of the railway, road and water transport;
- creation of distribution and logistic centres;
- increasing the importance of the Gdańsk-Tricity airport.

The third priority makes a point of speeding up modernization of the Tricity metropolis and stresses the need to work out a strategy towards restructuring the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia so as to form a complementary system with a trans-shipment potential for neighbouring countries, particularly for Belarus and Ukraine. Another aim refers to preventing peripheral areas from being marginalized. That is why the third priority offers to create a regional public transport system (railway and bus connections) with a view to improving transport connections between Tricity, Słupsk and powiat towns lying in peripheral areas. There are also two other aims which solely deal with transport issues. One of them entitled "Development and modernization of the transport infrastructure" defines the following tasks:

- taking the initiative to coordinate activities connected with modernization and construction of transport corridors VI and IA in Central and Eastern Europe (A-1 motorway and ultra fast railway connections);

³ The present name is Gdansk Lech Walesa Airport.

- modernization and increasing the importance of national roads № 6, 7, 22 and 50.;
- making improvements in transport accessibility to the communication junction, especially to the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia, airport and other small ports;
- implementing a fully integrated public transport network in the Tricity agglomeration,
- integrating the transport infrastructure located on both sides of the Vistula River, particularly by means of bridges.

The other aim entitled „Development and modernization of the port infrastructure” recognizes the need to:

- co-ordinate infrastructure investment in regional ports having in mind local interests;
- support, modernize and develop the infrastructure of small ports.

Furthermore, the fourth priority entitled „Improvements in ecological conditions of living” presents one more task related to transport. It makes a point of limiting all transport inconveniences in towns and along main communication routes.

The strategy for pomorskie voivodeship, in contrast with the former strategy for gdańskie voivodeship, does not deal in detail with all sorts of activities required to carry out the described tasks. In most cases it only outlines problems and defines general ways of resolving them. It is therefore a less complex document whose appendixes are to be prepared at a later time (particularly long-term spatial development plans for pomorskie voivodeship). Consequently, there was not much room left in the strategy for transport issues. It does not necessarily imply giving less attention to the discussed problems, although one may feel that transport infrastructure has been played down a bit (perhaps with the exception of the A-1 motorway which is strongly emphasized throughout the document). On the one hand the strategy has become more general and universal or even ‘timeless’ in places, but on the other hand it seems that it has lost its practicability. In other words, the strategy generally defines the directions in which the voivodeship should develop, but does not clearly say what sort of actions ought to be taken. Even the priorities do not indicate any ‘hot points’ which should be dealt with first. The document leaves a lot of room for interpretation – one may say that there is too much of it. Unfortunately, the strategy does not show where to start the improvement of the transport situation. At the same time it cannot be considered to be bad. On the contrary, it is clear that it was prepared accurately. The problem lies in the level of minuteness of detail.

The strategy has been appended with a very important document accepted by Sejmik of pomorskie voivodeship on July 30th, 2002. Called

“The spatial development plans for pomorskie voivodeship” (Plan przestrzennego zagospodarowania..., 2002) it describes in detail directions of development and re-shaping of the local transport infrastructure.

The strategy is not complete if further appended documents are not taken into account. These are scientific papers clearly written for the local decision-makers. First of all the paper by K. Wojewódzka-Król and W. Rydzkowski (2000a) should be mentioned. The authors defined strategic aims (states to be achieved) and directions for the priority transport tasks for the following four variations of development: justice and balance, economic activity and competitiveness, education and co-operation, and innovation and openness. The above mentioned authors (2000b) also indicated ways of improvement in the state of transport conditions in pomorskie voivodeship within the current financial constraints.

Transport infrastructure in the strategy for development as a link to Kaliningrad oblast

In the strategy for development carried out until 2000 gdańskie voivodeship gave a high priority to the link corridor Via Hanseatica – Seashore Express Road (Nadmorska Droga Ekspresowa). The south Baltic shore has never had any link road of a good European quality. The existing road № 6, Szczecin – Koszalin – Słupsk – Gdynia – Gdańsk does not have bypasses around towns and cities and imposes serious traffic constraints on drivers. No wonder, it cannot meet the required standards and therefore cannot become a competitive transit route between Germany and Russia/Baltic countries. According to the strategy for development the link road Via Hanseatica is one of the strategic interests of the Gdańsk region.

The state law “Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów” passed on September 28th, 1993 on „directional layout of motorways and fast roads in Poland” provided a sound basis for the strategy to plan the building of the link road Via Hanseatica. The construction of the road is expected to be carried out in three stages/segments:

1. Elbląg-border crossing in Grzechotki (a link to Kaliningrad).
2. Gdańsk-Elbląg (a link to Warsaw).
3. Gdańsk – Koszalin – Szczecin (border crossing in Goleniów – a link to Rostock).

According to the strategy the Via Hanseatica link corridor is strategically important because of (Województwo gdańskie..., 1997, p. 68):

- transit connections: it is the shortest connection between Russia and Germany corresponding to the construction of the motorway Lubeka – Rostock – Szczecin and the fast link road Elbląg – Kaliningrad;

- tourism: as a seashore route it increases access to the sea resorts lying on the southern Baltic shore;
- providing job opportunities; it has the potential of revitalizing hotel services, the catering business and motor services.

The strategy encourages new investment to enhance the existing network of roads provided it is located within the corridor of Via Hanseatica understood as a link to Kaliningrad oblast. The investment outlay should cover (Województwo gdańskie..., 1997, p. 68):

- Lębork route leading to road № 6 and further to the Tricity bypass where it omits a length of the congested road Wejherowo – Reda – Rumia. As a result new development opportunities arise for the gminas of Luzino and Szemud;
- Great Southern Bypass as a link between the Tricity bypass and national road № 7.

The strategy points out the need to include the local transport network around Starogard Gdański into the development plans. It also suggests doing quality improvement work to the existing segments of the road between Berlin and Kaliningrad.

Apart from land road connections the strategy indicates another long-term aim related to inland waterways on the route Gdańsk – Elbląg – Vistula Spit – Kaliningrad. The strategy assumes that the above mentioned cargo route is more likely to be put into full operation than the inland waterways of the Vistula river.

The strategy for development carried out before 2000 did not incorporate any other needs for developing transport infrastructure on the route leading to Kalinigradskaia oblast. Out of all kinds of transport the strategy paid the greatest attention to land link roads. Inland waterways were merely mentioned whereas other means of transport were omitted. Surprisingly, modernization of the existing railway transport connections was also passed over in silence not only as a practical way of improvement in passenger and cargo connections with Kaliningrad oblast, but also in its broader transport context.

On the whole, there was not much room left for the transport infrastructure linking the region with Kaliningrad oblast in the strategy before 2000. Out of all points only two were directly related to the analyzed issues. The strategy mentions certain initiatives and co-operation of activities leading to the modernization and construction of the transport corridor IA (Gronowo/Grzechotki – Elbląg – Gdańsk), i.e. a segment of Via Hanseatica or, in other words, a branch of corridor I (Warszawa – Białystok – Suwałki – Budzisko/Trakiszki). Besides, two national roads № 6 and 7 were to be modernized and given more priority as a part of the

Via Hanseatica connection. National roads № 22 and 50 running between Berlin and were treated similarly.

It was not until the spatial development plans for pomorskie voivodeship (Plan przestrzennego zagospodarowania..., 2002) were worked out when the detailed plans of the development of the transport infrastructure, including link roads to Kaliningrad oblast, were clearly set out. Corridor AI was mentioned as a future segment of the Transeuropean Transport Network of the EU as well as the northern corridor (Tricity – Słupsk – Koszalin – Szczecin) running along national road № 6 and railway track № 22. Both corridors form the Polish segment of the Via Hanseatica connection. The document notes also the southern corridor (Malbork – Tczew – Starogard Gdański – Chojnice – Człuchów) with national road № 22 and railway track № 203/204. This route partly covers the connection between Berlin and Kaliningrad. The spatial development plans make a remark that the significance of both northern and southern corridors depends on how important the entire south Baltic zone will be in the future. As a future European development zone, called Sapphire Arch (Łuk Szafirowy), it will determine future functions and technical standards of the roads and railway tracks in both corridors. The spatial development plans note that directional assumptions for spatial development should take into account the following remarks:

- the northern and southern corridors which play an interregional role at present, may become international corridors if Baltic countries take such an initiative;
- the northern corridor will become a segment of the Transeuropean Transport Network. The main transport infrastructure in this corridor will be based on the Via Hanseatica road and the railway line Rail Hanseatica (Riga – Kaliningrad – Elbląg – Malbork – Gdańsk – Słupsk – Szczecin – Hamburg).

According to the spatial development plans the Via Hanseatica route between Tricity and Lębork (so called Lębork route) calls into being new development conditions for such gminas as: Szemud, Luzino and Linia. These gminas lie in the urbanized zone of the Gdańsk metropolitan area.

To meet further needs which will arise in co-operation with Kaliningrad oblast the spatial development plans recommend putting into operation a new sea border crossing in Krynica Morska and another road border crossing in Nowa Karczma in the Vistula spit.

Conclusions

Transport infrastructure plays an important role in the strategy towards development for pomorskie voivodeship. There are two groups of entries concerning transport issues there. The first group refers to transport links

within the voivodeship, whereas the second group deals with the outside transport links. Here the most important are north-south transport links which integrate sea and land transport, especially A-1 motorway linking the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia to inland areas. Most transport entries concentrate on this matter. Then comes a broader concept of creating a link between the Baltic ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia and the port of Odessa lying on the Black Sea (see T. Komornicki, 1999; N. A. Mikuła, 1997; T. Palmowski, 2003a; A. Piskozub, 1999, 2000; H. Powęska, 1997; M. Rościszewski, 2001).

It seems that the transport infrastructure linking the region to Kaliningrad oblast was not given enough attention in the strategy for pomorskie voivodeship. The only exception is the Via Hanseatica route which is discussed in detail in the document. This infrastructure axis lacks however a broader approach as it should correspond to the following different transport links (T. Palmowski, 2003b):

- the link road Hamburg – Rostock – Szczecin – Gdańsk – Kaliningrad – Riga;
- the railway link Kaliningrad – Gdańsk – Berlin/Rostock;
- air links within a group of cities lying in the southern zone of the Baltic Sea (Gdańsk, Kaliningrad, Riga, Rostock, Hamburg);
- the inland waterway Kaliningrad – Berlin;
- numerous cycle paths running along the shore;
- the sailing route consisting of a chain of marinas of the southern Baltic shore.

In the strategy for pomorskie voivodeship Via Hanseatica is exclusively treated as a link route. There is no indication of the need to develop railway connections. It is difficult to understand as there is a railway track under operation running to Kaliningrad.

On the one hand Via Hanseatica is of enormous regional importance for the northern Poland, particularly for Tricity and Elbląg (see T. Palmowski, W. Szydarowski, M. Pacuk, 2003; T. Parteka, 2003a), but on the other hand it has no national priority (see M. Rościszewski, 2001). What is more, some authors claim that completion of the route will link the ports of Hamburg and Rostock to ports of Kaliningrad, Riga and further Tallin and St. Petersburg. As a result the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia will be marginalized. This is why the building of the route should be slightly delayed so as A-1 motorway is completed first (see H. Klimek, 1999; J. Wendt, 1998). Consequently, every effort is made to complete the segment of the route between Kaliningrad and Tricity as quickly as possible. This might give an incentive to create a bipolar arrangement of the two agglomerations (see T. Palmowski, 2003c; T. Palmowski, R. Anisiewicz, 2003; T. Parteka, 2003a, 2003b).

Undoubtedly, Kaliningrad oblast has a vested interest in seeing transport infrastructure develop in Poland, especially such transport links as Via Hanseatica, A-1 motorway or road № 22. These link roads may become a bridge between the Russian enclave and the European transport system. Thanks to them regional processes of development will be strengthened. Otherwise Kaliningrad oblast will remain isolated.

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