Chapter 11
Gatekeeping and Regional Knowledge in Poland

WITOLD WILCZYŃSKI

The notion of gatekeeping is somewhat strange among Polish geographers. The history of geography in post-war Poland has usually been presented as a cumulation of particular successes. In order not to irritate the authorities, all the controversial ideas were not allowed to surface, and no breakdowns were reported. But beneath this idyllic surface, a quite different reality was concealed. Polish post-war geography, even if formally referred to the marxism-leninism ideology, remained strongly imbued with pure scientism. The scientism and its indifference in relation to every philosophy fulfilled the role of the geographers' shield against the aggression of the only 'just' philosophy. Polish geographers had to play a double game and sometimes it was a matter of 'to be or not to be'. According to the memoirs of Professor Alfred Jahn, because of faulty selection for academic positions, largely made on the basis of ideological connections, there appeared symptoms of a crisis in geography in the 1960s. At the end of the 1970s, that crisis had assumed 'the proportions of disaster' (JAHN, 1991, 180).

Gatekeeping in Polish geography is mainly of a methodological nature. It results from the attachment of geographers to earlier accepted methodological positions (largely scientific), and the existence of a very influential group of professors, called the 'old guard' (RYKIEL, 1988, 402–03). Alfred Jahn stresses also that the source of gatekeeping could be found in the moral decline among the academic circles themselves.

The Origins of the Polish Regions

The name Poland (Polska) originates from the word 'pole' which means 'field' or 'open space'. A thousand years ago, when Poland showed the first signs of statehood, this word indicated exactly cleared areas, as opposed to the primeval forest which then covered nearly all of modern day Poland. The Polish state was created by Western-Slavic tribes who, in the ninth and tenth centuries, cultivated areas of cleared soil. Their domains gradually expanded and the better the soil quality, the sooner it was cleared. The main centres of consolidation of the Lechite tribes were lowland river basins. River valleys played a particularly crucial role as natural trade routes. In spite of the fact that lowlands offered good conditions for road building, rivers remained the main axes of life; the population concentrated along their banks where main cities had sprung up. Usually these cities started to be built where the east-west land trade routes crossed rivers. At these junctions, castles were erected and urban centres with administrative, production, service, and cultural functions were formed. Around them, particular tribal territories were consolidated, which later became the provinces of a unified Polish kingdom. Between these territories, there existed roadless border areas of swampy forests or sandy soils. They spread latitudinally along the post-glacial sandy outwash plains which accompanied every end moraine line, and meridionally as flat, swampy watersheds. Poland's present-day regions are made up of territories which, thanks to natural coherence, created a network of places that gravitate towards each other. Thus a natural network formed by the hydrographic patterns was the main factor in Poland's later formation of regional structure. Early maps of Polish territory reveal that the origins of every Polish region are in fact rivers (PISKOZUB, 1968). They created opportunities for 'electric sparks' running through particular places, incorporating them into a human communication system, leading to the formation of additional, invisible bonds between these places, and putting them together as territorial entities. Where such a metaphorical electric spark meets insulating, that is, less densely populated areas of large wilderness, outwash sands or swampy watersheds, these regions end.

The present-day territory of Poland consists of several regions, which are functional entities shaped during their history. The location of these regions, which are the reflection of tribal territories consolidated in the early Middle Ages, proves that the fundamental factor of the evolution of regional structure was the natural coherence of areas that embraced drainage basins of main rivers. The area of the Polish state at the end of the tenth century included the drainage basins of Vistula and Odra as well as the territories along the Baltic coast between the mouths of these rivers (Fig. 1). According to historical studies, hydrographic borders were in fact political borders in the early stages of Polish statehood (GLOGER, 1903). Rivers never served as borders of Polish tribes. This view is opposed to that of present-day thinking, in which rivers (as well as mountain ranges) are considered 'natural borders'. The view that rivers served as natural borders in the formation of current Polish regions, advanced by many authors of contemporary handbooks, seems to be groundless historically as well as from the ecological stance.

Regions of Poland as an Expression of the Unity of Natural and Cultural Phenomena

Poland as an independent state was established in the tenth century. According to Zygmunt Gloger, who wrote the classic of Polish historical geography, the consolidation process started in the middle part of the Odra river basin, and in particular, along its main tributary, the Warta. The Lechite tribes first unified their territories and named Poznan as their capital. Today this is Wielkopolska or Great Poland. In the 970s, Mieszko, the Lechite, subdued the upper part of the Vistula river basin. This region contained Kraków, Sandomierz, and Przemyśl, and
was populated by Vistulian tribes which earlier paid tribute to Moravian rulers who came from the south (Gloger, 1903). The newly conquered area then became known as Małopolska, or Little Poland (Polonia Minor), despite its larger size relative to the Lechites' native region. Subsequently, Mieszko's authority was extended over the tribes of the upper Odra (Silesians), lower Odra (Pomeranians), middle Vistula (Masovians), and lower Vistula (Kashubians and Slovinians), and embraced the whole of two big drainage basins.

In the 13th century, when Boleslaw the III divided the kingdom between his sons, the borders of the principalities reflected the ranges or extent of ancient tribal territories. Boleslaw was, however, the first to break up the hydrographic pattern of Poland's regional structure. From the peripheral territories of the Odra and Vistula river basins, he carved out the so-called seniornal province for his oldest son. Since he was to possess superior authority over all of the provinces, his realm was to embrace not only the land of Kraków (then capital of Poland), but also a central
province which adjoined all his vassal’s (at the time, his brother’s) principalities. In this way, between the Great Poland and Masovia, a new province was created with no river, containing mainly watershed areas. It was called Łęczyca-Sieradz Land and Cuiavia, which range from Little Poland and Silesia to the borders of Pomerania and Prussia. The territory of the new province was cut by a major land trade route between the Black and the Baltic Seas. The cities of this province gained significant importance as places where National Assembly meetings, bishops synods (traditionally in Łęczyca), and the national court of justice (Piotrków Trybunalski) were held. Discord among the brothers was one of the reasons for the initial disintegration of the Kingdom. One of the first results of this disintegration was the secession of western provinces of Pomerania and Silesia in the 14th century, which only became again a part of Poland in 1945. The loss of western provinces was compensated later by a union with Lithuania, and by the formation of a system of government that focused its energies toward the east. According to the Jagiellonian concept, Poland was to control an area between the Baltic and the Black Seas, thus creating the eastern borderland of Europe.

The traditional regions survived in Poland’s social consciousness despite the division of Poland by three invaders in 1795. This division was to last for more than a century. But the regional structure with its historical and cultural foundations showed itself to be no less durable than the country’s nationality. These regions of Poland, in spite of their internal physiographic heterogeneity, possess strong ‘natural’ coherence. Each was formed around a central place, having its own ‘core’ and ‘periphery’. The ‘cores’ were located at centres of tribal authority, usually by riverside castles. Rivers served as avenues of communication for these regions and the castles protected the junctions where all roads met. These centres of tribal activity during the Middle Ages are today’s regional capitals: Kraków, Poznań, Wrocław, Gdańsk, and Szczecin. The environs of these cities were the most densely populated and the most intensively cultivated parts of Poland during the Middle Ages. Between these regional centres were vast spaces of roadless; sandy, or swampy primeval forest. These broad zones subsequently disappeared in the course of demographic and economic growth. The most durable zones were those which gained the status of interstate borders (I mean the boundaries of Wielkopolska with Pomerania and Silesia, and Masovia with Prussia). All have survived until today because they focused their energies toward the east. According to the Jagiellonian concept, Poland was to control an area between the Baltic and the Black Seas, thus creating the eastern borderland of Europe.

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The primary, river based regional pattern of Poland was consolidated during the Jagiellonian era (15th–17th centuries) and survived in the contours of Polish provinces until the time of partition in 1795. The regional consciousness survived even in the 19th century in spite of the fact that the borders of invading powers did not respect the traditional divisions. An outstanding Polish historian, geographer, and ethnologist, Zygmunt Gloger, first drew the borders of Polish provinces on the map with an adequate cartographic base in the 1880s. In his work, he used the Middle Ages chronicles as well as quantitative data from the 16th and 17th centuries. Thanks to his publication of the Historical Geography of the Territories of Ancient Poland in 1903, the traditional regional structure could be restored in the social consciousness as of 1918, when Poland came back into existence as an independent state.

Disappearance of Regions in Post-war Poland

In spite of the fact that the regional structure of Poland is clear, explicit, and legible even on the general geographic maps, the names of regions occur neither in geographical handbooks nor in cartographic materials published during the last fifty years. They survived only as adjectives for lowlands, uplands, lake districts and other associated areas. In social consciousness, regional names are associated mainly with folk art: they exist in the names of most folk music groups. Due to its decline in importance socially, peasant folk music and other folklore features are not a factor influencing people’s minds in Poland. After the Second World War, changes of attitudes of teaching appeared. Generally they aimed at a radical break with historical traditions (ALEXANDROWICZ, 1993).

In order to further determine how these different regions of Poland are perceived, I developed a survey of students in different courses and at different levels at the Graduate School of Education in Kielce. The survey tries to determine the understanding of the essence of regions, the names of major Polish regions, and the territory of one’s own region.

Students of geography (I and II level classes) showed far reaching ignorance as far as the very existence of regions is concerned. Some two-thirds identified regions with physiographic units such as the Silesian Upland, Mazovian Lowland, and Holy Cross Mountains. Some saw the Holy Cross Region on the borders of the Palaeozoic core of this mountainous area. About a quarter understood regions as administrative units (voivodships), which in fact have nothing to do with geography. Few students knew the names of their own regions or were able to draw these borders on the map. When asked what they thought of such words as, for example, Silesia, Masovia, and Little Poland, most answered that these words denoted names of ‘historical lands’ which could be of interest to historians and archaeologists. As ‘modern and progressive’ geographers, they did not believe that such regions were important to their science.

The students of history showed quite a different perception of the concept of regions. Most identified regions as geographic entities with traditional names and knew their historical boundaries. Only a few of them realised the regional dynamics and the evolution of regions
against the background of natural conditions. It must be pointed out that regional consciousness among historians in Poland is, in general, much better than among geographers. Also I ascertained that geographical knowledge of history students is at a higher level than historical skills of geographers.

Given the two different results of these two faculties, I then directed the questions towards biologists, who, I thought, would be much more 'neutral' in questions concerning their knowledge of regions. Their knowledge was devoid of both physiographic and historical detachment, which influenced the answers of geographers and historians. Biology students showed a relatively good knowledge of their own regions, and about two-thirds had a smattering of knowledge of other parts of Poland. Of interest, more than half of the biology students identified problems of the regional pattern with geography in spite of the fact that they could not have received such knowledge from their basic education in geography.

The most paradoxical conclusion deduced from the survey results is that both historians and biologists showed a higher level of regional consciousness than geographers, who identified regions either with physiographical or administrative units. To account for these results, I can only say that in the last five years, we can proclaim officially that for the last fifty years, our history as an academic discipline has been false. We also have been given a false, distorted picture of Polish regions by the official geographical academics. Both of these problems are associated in one way or another with gatekeeping.

Gatekeeping and Regional Knowledge

The disappearance of regions in Polish post-war geography has ideological and methodological foundations. There are two particular factors which made geography indifferent to the classical view of regions. The regional concept has its foundations in philosophies which do not conform with the compulsory marxist-leninist doctrine. All kinds of 'metaphysical' thinking, symptoms of joining geography with history, met 'firm repulses', and eventually 'bourgeois' concepts were effectively prevented. Creators of the regional concept, Paul Vidal de la Blache, Alfred Hettner, Richard Hartshorne, and others, were badly criticized in the most important handbooks (Isaczenko, 1975). That critique was in tune with the memorable ideological manifesto accepted during the conference in Gdańsk in 1949. As the document says: 'We should only look for the laws, which rule over the Earth's phenomena by way of reliable empirical research, instead of making efforts in order to create any geographical philosophies' (Leszczynski, 1975). After the conference, the scientific methodology had to conform with the ideological dogmas of the state. The development of geography went by way of strict specialization and a radical separation of its physical and human branches. The classical regional geography had undergone reduction.

Region, as a concept devoid of its philosophical base, lost its importance. Geographers-specialists created lots of categories of regions, but none maintained the unitarian values inherent originally in a classical concept. Geographers proclaimed that geographical regions do not effectively exist. This view has survived in some circles until today (Kantowicz, 1991). Looking for support, their adherents inevitably referred to Western positivism, as well as to the Soviet ideologists, who also emphasized the differences between natural and social phenomena and proclaimed the impossibility of studying them inseparably. Thus today the concept of region has been badly distorted. To the present day, many geographers still deny the possibility of the existence of regions as territorial entities, which can be coherent and unique, without the necessity of being uniform with respect to particular natural and cultural phenomena. The Gdańsk manifesto represented the official document accepted by the political authorities, it also influenced the contents and character of geographical handbooks and curricula. They became more formalized, with physical contents separated from the human according to the Soviet model. They expressed far-reaching indifference in relation to history and, as a result, they lack any regional knowledge in its classical understanding (Mordawski, 1994; Zajać, 1994).

Also the concept of Poland's regions in the social consciousness has been distorted because of the overwhelming predominance of physical geography. The importance of physical geographical areas in the pupils' minds must have been particularly magnified. It must be emphasized that physiographical division of Poland is the only division which is taken into account by the creators of the school curricula. Pupils consider the physical geographical areas as truly general geographical realms.

Typically, in geography, the regionalization trend has been directed towards formal procedures of inductive taxonomy, whose results are hierarchical systems of so-called geo-complexes, as in the physical complex geography and landscape ecology (Richling and Solon, 1993). That allowed John Fraser Hart in his Presidential Address to point out the 'excessive emphasis on the attempts to delineate regions, the sterile regionalizing ritual', which made some geographers forget that 'the purpose of regional description is to understand areas, not merely to draw lines between them' (Hart, 1984, 8).

There is one vivid example in Poland. Its creator is one of the leaders of Polish geography and the author of the well known and reprinted academic handbook. He worked out a stupendously sophisticated quantitative method, and then collected the necessary empirical data in the course of the long, drawn out and expensive field work. When these tasks were completed, he entered the data into the computer, waiting impatiently for the output. And the output of that very labour-consuming procedure appeared to be the infallibility of the statement, viz., that the Holy Cross Mountains do exist and that they consist of several relatively homogeneous parts (Miżyk, 1994). Is it not a revelation? From now on, people in Kielce and neighbouring villages, looking out of their windows in the mornings, will not have to rely on their very deceptive sense of sight. Thanks to this scientific discovery, they can say with unshaken conviction that they live just in the Holy Cross Mountains.

Someday in the future, elaborations of that kind will appear to be very attractive subjects for historians of science, searching for various forms of scientific pathology.
According to this scheme the territory of Poland belongs to three big subareas: Eastern European Lowlands, Extra-Alpine Western Europe, and Alpine-Carpathian Countries. Each of them is divided into several provinces, subprovinces, and macroregions.

**Boundaries**

- areas and subareas
- provinces
- subprovinces and macroregions

Fig. 2. Decimal system of regional hierarchy by J. KONDACKI, 1978

At present in officially accepted handbooks for secondary school pupils, instead of geographical regions one can find the strictly defined and delimited physiographical ‘geocomplexes’ (STANKOWSKI, 1987).

Landscape ecologists have improved upon the old physiographical divisions of Polish territory. Their peak achievement is now regarded as the so-called decimal system of regional organisation advanced by J. KONDACKI (1978). This is the hierarchical system of territorial units assigned on the basis of physical-geographical criteria, mainly landforms. It shows Poland against the background of the physiographic provinces of Europe (Fig. 2). This system is not entirely alien to the traditional regional pattern, but there are some essential incompatibilities. For example, a regional centre such as Kraków belongs in part to ‘Extra-Alpine Western Europe’ and in part to ‘Alpine-Carpathian Countries’. In another regional centre, Łódź, I was told that its main artery, Piotrkowska Street (or exactly the line along the middle of the roadway) is the interregional borderline, and, if so, people living on
opposite sides of this street belong to different geographical realms. Surely, such boundaries had their physiographic importance in the period when in the place where now Łódź stands was primeval forest or even later when the woodland changed to cropland. From the point of view of geography, such a boundary seems rather absurd. In spite of that, the decimal system of regionalisation seems to be the only one which has been adopted by geographical handbooks in use today (MORDAWSKI, 1994; ZAJAC, 1994). And this is the reason why a young generation of geographers respects neither regions in their historically shaped territories nor their historical names.

During current methodological discussions on the problems of regional geography, arguments against the existence of regions in their classical sense are quoted. Most attempts at the reintegration of geography and the propagation of a more ‘synthetic outlook’ initiated by the leaders of Polish geography were made from the methodological stance of positivism and remain, even today, in the sphere of pure theory (KANTOWICZ, 1991). Essential differences between the natural and cultural phenomena are seen as a sufficient argument to discredit the very existence of regions in their classical sense. Published works whose authors show that geographical regions need not necessarily be uniform seem to be neglected in most geographical academic circles (WILCZYNSKI, 1991).

All current widespread geographical handbooks and the larger scientific editions fail to mention a word about the regional pattern of Poland; usually they are satisfied with the decimal system by Kondracki. A more synthetic, unitary approach to the concept of region, as well as to the essence of geography, can be found in the Review of the Foreign Geographical Literature [Przegląd Zagranicznej Literatury Geograficznej] published until 1990 by the Polish Academy of Science. I am referring to the volumes published after the historical events (mainly in Budapest, but also in Poznań) in 1957, which preceded the ideological thaw. In 1957 there appeared a very interesting volume from the point of view of the history of geographical thought, with papers by Soviet geographers V.A. Anuchin and N.N. Baranski. They both tried to provide a basis for the studies of ‘uniqueness’ or ‘peculiarities’ of regional entities that would conform to marxist-leninist ideology (ŻEBROWSKI, 1957). In 1966 another volume had reviews of the American report of the Ad Hoc Committee on The Science of Geography. In it one can also find papers by Pierre George and leading Soviet geographers who ignored their previous fear of getting the natural laws jumbled up with the social; they proclaimed Lenin’s sentence ‘we should take from capitalism what is good in it’ (DZIEWONSKI, 1966).

These publications could not influence the academic discipline or social consciousness as a whole since their distribution never exceeded 500 copies. They seemed to be ignored by most geographers. The only published work on the regional pattern of Poland that reached the broader public and had a chance to spread the concept of region was Regions of Poland by Michał JANISZEWSKI (1959). Reviews written in main geographical journals immediately after the book’s publication created no better atmosphere than the poignant remarks which had been published right after (what most Polish geographers considered) a very troublesome presentation on gatekeeping at Saragossa (BABICZ, 1994). Janiszewski was the only post-war Polish geographer who effectively tried to restore the classical, river-based regional pattern of Poland and to depict Polish regions as natural-cultural entities. In spite of the great educational value of his idea, it has not been accepted by the creators of the geographical curricula.

Exclusion of the regional concept and regional names from school handbooks was only a part of the political line which led to the disappearance of regions in social consciousness. Another cause was the administrative division of Poland. This change, performed in the 1970s, led to the removal of the last relics of regional structure which survived in the contours of the previous seventeen voivodships. The new division of Poland into forty-nine small voivodships imitated the French departments. A. Kukliński and P. Swianiewicz said that in the 1970s, Poland imported from France the obsolete type of buses as well as the inefficient model of administration. But it does not seem to be only the result of the fascination with France of Gierék, then Communist ruler of Poland, and his family. According to Kukliński and Swianiewicz the main reason was the tendency towards centralization and the need of resistance to the growing power of the voivodships’ communist party committees (KUKLINski AND SWIANIEWICz, 1990). There are many curiosities in the new division. For example the little Masovian city of Grójec situated at the fringe of the Warsaw suburban zone is, for the first time in its history, out of the voivodship of Warsaw, and under the authorities of Radom. Citizens of Miechów, the old city some 30km from Kraków, have found that their official business cannot be settled in Kraków but only in Kielce, twice the distance away. Along with the voivodship of Katowice, with a population of more than 4 million, Gierék created several voivodships with no more than 200,000 people.

During this time the word ‘region’ was not excluded from the Polish language. Mass-media and even geographical publications use this term with adjectives created from the names of new voivodships’ capitals. In this way, people could learn about the existence of ‘Region of Ostrołęka’, ‘Region of Łomża’ and so on. It seemed to be a perfect way to create complete confusion, and it will take a long time to restore the true understanding of region in people’s minds.

These gatekeeping practices in the area of geographical education, and public administration led to the loss of the feeling of regional coherence and the weakening of the Polish regional tradition. Their objective was simply to depreciate the meaning of regions and eliminate the feeling of regional attachment. The most general explanation was to adhere to the ideology of that time and to the scientific and editorial policies advanced by communist governments. In marxist-leninist ideology, the concept of region has no positive connotations. According to this ideology, the interregional differences (or even international) should not blind the ‘socialist’ society to the more important problems of class differences and the class struggle in general. Class consciousness was considered much more important than
the question of regional identification. The workers-peasant alliance and the necessity of the fight against the 'bourgeoisie' eventually were to replace interregional conflicts. The great movements of people after the Second World War and then the extensive migration to the cities due to industrial growth were to achieve the great deed of making Polish people a homogeneous mass. Its watchfulness for symptoms of the imperialist sabotage was no longer weakened by any 'regional superstitions'.

The regional pattern of Poland, ignored in the school handbooks and cleared from the map by the new administrative authorities, was also neglected by economic geographers who worked out some concepts of the future spatial organisation of Poland. They concerned the entire country without taking any regional differences into account (Dzięwonski and Malez, 1978; Kołodziejski, 1991). They mainly considered the land not as the composition of existing places and regions, but as a 'space' which is to be formed. Most of them used the new voivodships as basic spatial units. Since voivodships are in fact not geographical entities, a depiction of Poland that uses them as its base must as a consequence be false. For example, the presentation of wooded areas in the form of a cartogram says that the Kielce voivodship is 27 percent covered by forest. In fact there are about twenty-five communes where this index is 35–50 percent, and the same number of communes where forests cover no more than 15 percent of their areas. Only about ten communes are covered by 20–30 percent of forests. The value of 27 percent is the average of two quite different areas. The same situation could be revealed in domains of geology, morphology, demography, and economy (Fig. 3). In spite of this distortion, most geographic phenomena in school textbooks are presented in the form of cartograms. Apparently their authors, using standard methods of presentation, do not realise some of the consequences of their own work. I mean not only the disappearance of the regional consciousness, but also misleading readers as far as territorial distribution of some geographical phenomena is concerned.

Polish Geography and the Challenge of European Regionalism

Polish people for more than a century had no independent homeland, but in spite of this pressure to lose their cultural identity, they maintained it. In the last fifty years, official
science, education, and the entire propaganda effort tried to erase regions from the map of Poland, from school handbooks, and finally from Polish national tradition. All these efforts were inefficient. Why was this? As history teaches, Polish people are often submissive, weak, indifferent, and even blind to the common good, but their attitude becomes otherwise when something important, like national existence, honour and religion is threatened. 'Honour, God, and the Homeland'— these three banner values made Poles ready to pay the highest price. In addition to traditional chivalry, idealism, and devotion, which is typical of the Polish spirit, there is mistrust in relation to all authorities. The result is Polish individualism and independence of thinking.

What could bring forth the greatest spiritual power of the Poles is being in opposition. Also when regional identity was neglected and even suppressed in the official propaganda, the folks immediately created new lines of defence. They range from the antagonisms between regions and cities to the development of regional culture and scientific associations. The feeling of regional identity survived in social consciousness and stereotypes, in the regional landscapes and in ways of living. People and their landscapes are in harmony. People create their places and regions, and every place and region shapes in people different characteristics. It is well known that Silesians are lovers of hard work and usually very persistent, the Great Poles orderly and responsible, the Little Poles rather distrustful and proud, Masovians are merry and sly, while Poles from the Eastern Borderland (now mainly in Silesia, Pomerania, and Masuria) are, first of all, full of Sarmatian fantasies and cheerfulness, lovers of spiritual values. For the last fifty years, people were not told about these stereotypes and cultural interregional differences. Sometimes this information appeared in literature and in mass media. But in spite of that, and in spite of a huge movement of people, these stereotypes remain alive.

Sometimes regional patterns change themselves while the old genres de vie remain undisturbed. One can observe an example of this at the fringes of Little Poland, which lost its coherence due to the fact that particular parts of the region belonged to the three states in the period of partitions (1795–1918). The Vistula river could not function as a regional artery joining various areas situated on both its sides: thus it became a barrier as a state delimitations from the Piast's dynasty period (mainly 12th and 13th centuries) which were founded on the hydro-
Poland
Provinces according to Piskozub 1991

Fig. 4. Provinces of Poland acc. to A. Piskozub, 1991

graphic system. Piskozub also suggests a return to the historical names of provinces (Fig. 4). Such proposals are usually warmly received in society. From the liberal point of view, it seems reasonable to create strong regions and give them broad competencies, moving along the line between centralism and federalism towards the last option. But we cannot be too optimistic. Poland still cannot stop its love affair with democracy, and it is difficult to say when we will calm down after the shock caused by the eruption of democracy, when we will be in a position to use it and to limit it responsibly.

Notes
1. I discussed methodological and moral aspects of Polish gatekeeping in the paper presented during the Saragossa Symposium in 1993, ‘Between Creativity
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Research Interests
Dr. WITOLD WŁOCHYŃSKI 1. Philosophy of geography: philosophical fundamentals of geography which central objective is to synthesize and to reconcile the scientific knowledge and humanistic values. The source of such concepts is first of all: 2. History of geographical thought – with an emphasis on the history of geography in Eastern European countries. Geographical traditions in these countries differ greatly in comparison to the West and the history of geographical thought is there quite dead, mainly due to methodological and ideological situation. This is the result of political conditions. 3. Political and regional geography with the special attention to Eastern European countries, Western Europe, Anglo-America and Far East.
Abstract
Gatekeeping and Regional Knowledge in Poland
In spite of the fact that the ancient, river-based regional structure of Poland is clear and explicit, regional names occur neither in current geographical handbooks nor in cartographic publications. For the last fifty years, the aim of official propaganda was to erase the feeling of regional identity, and to replace it with ‘class consciousness’. Promotion of the Polish regional tradition showed regions to be impossible for analysis by post-war geographers, since the scientific methodology had to conform with state dogmas. As a result, the young generation of geography students shows far-reaching ignorance as far as the very existence of regions is concerned. But the gatekeeping practices in the area of geographic education and the public administration of previous leaders and propaganda aims were not successful. The feeling of regional attachment survived in social consciousness, numerous stereotypes, behaviours, and geographic phenomena (place names). For the last five years, symptoms of restoration of the traditional regionalism have appeared. The greatest adherents of this movement are representatives of regional businesses and activists of politically conservative parties.

Zusammenfassung
Informationsfilterung und Regionales Wissen in Polen

Résumé
Filtration de l’information et connaissances régionales en Pologne
Bien que la structure régionale de la Pologne soit établie clairement et traditionnellement par la structure des cours d’eau, les dénominations régionales ne figurent ni dans les manuels de géographie ni dans les ouvrages de cartogra-