

**Malgorzata Suchacka**

**University of Silesia in Katowice**

[malgorzata.suchacka@us.edu.pl](mailto:malgorzata.suchacka@us.edu.pl)

**Around dilemmas of creating innovative climate in a traditional industrial region  
- conditionings of Silesia's development.**

Silesia region has been perceived as the most industrial for many years; as a result, during the political and institutional transformations in the eighties and nineties a lot of important changes happened. Specificity of this region caused new problems connected with transforming industrial society into the postindustrial one. It is a long process which includes many variations, strongly significant for the best social experts. Such transformations have very dynamic and diverse character.

Considerations on dilemmas of creating innovative climate should start from interpreting the main notion which results are particularly seen in economy. Innovative climate promotes amplification of competitiveness and adaptation into the world's economy requirements, what is the principal goal of the European Union politics.

Innovation as "*genius loci*" of the region has its specific conditionings. They are not universal for all the regions but are obviously connected with the influence of history and region culture on different companies, institutions and people living there. Many contemporary authors pay attention on forming local communities towards cooperation of the local stakeholders and generating the innovative climate. Each time such process is an exceptional one. In the newest studies it was emphasized that it is impossible to differentiate among the regional environmental factors (or even the wider range of them) and the factors connected with the innovative politics which can be included both to regional and general factors.

The main conclusions of the studies will be based on the research from 2009, with the participation of 122 regional actors from the politics and economy. All the in- depth interviews with the regional experts were concerned mainly with the economic policy of the regional companies and cooperation of actors, most important in creating the learning region. Gaining knowledge in an active way, its ordering and sensible usage, searching and integrating of personal connections and institutional actors (mainly in the case of knowledge), their wide participation in the private and public partnership and also skilful

connecting of competence and gained knowledge were the indicators of the innovative climate. Particularly important were the actions of regional politicians working over conditions which promote creative thoughts in each of the fields. The properly functioning infrastructure - to begin with motorways and to end with information superhighways- together with cultivating of the creative class' values are the basis of the innovative climate inventing.

The conducted research show that one can speak of “the Silesian anchor” syndrome which means the group of innovative climate conditionings having fundamental – negative - influence on restraining the positive changes in the region. This “anchor” includes historical conditionings, multiculturalism of the region, economical monoculture, actual political conditionings and the mentality of inhabitants. All these elements may be perceived as competitive advantage but also the political bravery of the region's decision makers. And because politically they are the Achilles' heel of the region, the whole process stops. The state and the quality of the regional elites leave a lot to be desired. They cannot create the stable support for building a vision of a balanced, knowledge - based economy and the basis of “the learning region”. Generally there is an ideological chaos and internally contradictory attitudes which result from striving for ambiguous political and group of interests in connection to individual believes of each of the representatives about the wisdom of their way of behavior. In such a general view of regional elites the exceptions of the dynamically developing boroughs are entered, where such a cooperation is higher that average and the atmosphere is better for the further progress. Unjustified would be the opinion that the whole region is in terms of that factor the monolithic structure. However, the biggest capital of the region are people and their diligence and discipline. Both entrepreneurs and regional leaders show on these values as the most important ones. Still, companies will not be regarded as “the learning companies” till their main goal will be only to gain knowledge or even - training of the workers. The transfer of knowledge and its clever use in favorable conditions is also needed in the innovational climate. Only then it will be possible to stop or even bringing the creative class to inspire to further innovations. In the meantime many young and talented people leave to other regions, in Poland or abroad. Also the multiculturalism of Silesia - which could be the source of the inspiration for the creative class - seems to be an additional load for the region, weakly integrated after the administrative changes. National animosities with the political origin are put on the multicultural tradition. Without the innovative climate full of agreement on the basic ways of development the concept about creating the learning region cannot be discussed. Only the external factors - availability of natural resources, industrial infrastructure, neighborhood with Germany and the

Czech Republic, well developed transport network and ICT, quite a large number of universities and R&D institutes (not always the high quality) cause the region to be still in the first five of the most important in Poland. What is necessary, is to integrate the innovative atmosphere and the development of the atmosphere on the level which would go beyond the district. With the agreement of all the political and economical groups and by the cooperation of inhabitants of the region the “Silesian anchor” might become the strong grounding of Silesian values, which boost energy for the further development of the whole Silesian area.