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### **My Fulbright Experiences 1994-2008**

Dear Distinguished Guests, dear Colleagues,

I was invited to this conference as a representative of those who had a unique experience of being Fulbright scholars. I am a social scientist, social philosopher and public policy analyst, a specialist in higher education research and higher education policy. I have been involved in two dozens of international research and policy projects in higher education worldwide, funded by almost every global, international and European agency active in higher education research. And on a policy plane, I was involved in reforming higher education in 10 transition economies. I link these professional successes to 3 years spent in the last 15 years at North American universities.

I am a founder and director of the Poznan University's Center for Public Policy Studies, opened officially 7 years ago by my distinguished colleague, my current Rector, Professor Bronislaw Marciniak. Mr. Rector, dear Bronek, thank you again for this opportunity!

I understand that inviting me to speak here today is related to two facts. First, I had the pleasure to participate in two distinct Fulbright programs: a traditional Fulbright exchange program (which lasted one year fifteen years ago) and a new, innovative, global and most prestigious Fulbright *New Century Scholars* program which lasted a year in 2007-2008. I will speak about the latter in a moment. Second, I have the feeling of representing an extremely successful young generation of Polish social scientist who travel across the globe, publish

books mostly in English, are networked to numerous international research and policy communities, both in academia and in the policymaking bodies, and enjoy all the privileges of being a part of a European research community.

My first Fulbright experience was in 1994-1995, at the fabulous, Jefferson-designed University of Virginia at Charlottesville. I was completing my second book on the greatest living American philosopher, the late Richard Rorty. I had the unbelievable honor to spend with Dick Rorty one full year, being his research assistant, working with thick volumes of typescripts of whatever he had written in his lifetime. I got to know the world-leading scholar, my intellectual guru, and an extremely hospitable, caring man. My stay at UVA (and I was below thirty then), I strongly believe, formed my ideas of what research-intensive university is; what global thinkers are and how they view their academic business; how academics work and they view their social roles; how their research gets funded; and what they view as an academic success. Also, not less importantly, I got to know the USA and its founding social myths: that hard work and passion is everything; that people can accomplish their goals if they strongly wish to; that good education is a key to success of individuals and prosperity of nations.

It was an absolute shock to me. I did not know that university libraries (Clemons and Alderman libraries) can be open and all seats can be fully-booked until 1 a.m. in the morning every day. I did not realize that a library in modern philosophy can be counted in dozens of thousands of volumes, available at fingertips, and in the narrow areas of my expertise – the stock was about one thousand. Modern technology – a xerox-copying machine fully funded by Professor Rorty – became my closest friend. Remember, it was 1994, and academics were much liberal in thinking about copyrights, especially for young scholars from poor ex-communist countries. I came back with 500 books, in English and French, copied and shipped to Poland in 15 huge containers (Polonia Parcel Service was the name of the surprised company). In purely technical terms, I owe this Fulbright stay my huge habilitation book finished in three years, 11 years ago. My professorship took me ten more years but in the meantime I have substantially changed my research interests: I moved away from studying American and French intellectuals-academics and their social theories, and focused on institutions that produce them – namely, modern universities, and their changing relationships with the modern state under globalization and demographic pressures.

Ten years of my multidisciplinary research into the university and the state, globalization and the welfare state, demographic and technological changes and the nation state led me to my second Fulbright experience, the unique one: the Fulbright New Century Scholars Program.

In the meantime, frankly speaking, I kept returning as a scholar to North America and spent there another two years, at McGill in Toronto, at University of California at Berkeley (as a Kosciuszko Foundation scholar), and at the National Endowment for Democracy, as the only Polish *Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow*, in Washington DC. From a perspective, I can clearly say that my academic life was formed by my American experiences, including American friends, American books (or their xerox-copies) and American universities as institutions. It is quite probable that my long-term combination of involvement in both higher education research and higher education policy (via various policy-making communities) led me to the second, New Century Scholars, program. Since 2001, there were five rounds of the program. The crucial advantage I had for this program was that I was combining my research with extensive international policy work. Needless to say, my long-term projects with the World Bank and USAID, but also with the Council of Europe, OECD, the European Commission and several governments in Europe and Central Asia was exactly the experience expected from academics specializing in higher education sought for the NCS program. At the same time, my international research projects were funded by Ford and Rockefeller and Open Society foundations. All my American and European gurus in higher education research share this specific feature: both researching and reforming educational systems worldwide.

The idea of the program is to bring together for one year a group of about twenty global leaders in research and policy in a given social area, and get them cooperate on specific themes of global relevance, under a Distinguished NCS Leader, and with about ten American scholars. My leader was D. Bruce Johnstone, former chancellor of the State University of New York system and president of State University of New York in Buffalo. A great scholar, world-leader in cost-sharing, fees, and loans research area, and a great, inspiring, caring man. The theme was a fascinating one for a higher education scholar like me – *Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Equity and Access*. For me, the program proved a great success. We were all coming from different countries (4 Europeans only) and we were combining different perspectives in viewing higher education. We represented mostly economics, sociology, and political sciences, as in my case in the last ten years. As a multidisciplinary team, we have produced several books of global ambitions, numerous individual papers, we attended three

Fulbright seminars, two in the US and one in Mexico City, and we had a chance to spend 3 months at a US university of our choice. We were working together in three distinct working groups. I was in the “Financial Resources and Policies that Enhance Access to Higher Education” group, and our book is forthcoming next month from Sense Publishers.

Comparing the two distinct Fulbright experiences: working alone for a year in the US in your late twenties is one thing; working together with other scholars and policymakers on a selected theme for a year in your early forties is a different thing. The first program opened my mind to the academic enterprise as it should be carried out. It provided me with a template what being an ambitious academic actually means: for instance, never lose your time in multiple employments and try to base your life chances on significant research. I had a unique chance to be working with my intellectual guru, the best American social philosopher, for one year, completing a monograph on his theories (published in English). To the second program, I came as an already quite successful academic, already involved in international, global and EU comparative research and policy projects, already knowing HE systems in two dozens of countries. The best experience was that all the other scholars selected globally were equally successful! We were a great team of individuals working together with a global authority, D. Bruce Johnstone, in one of areas of our expertise.

And the cooperation with NCS scholars lasts beyond the project’s lifetime. In a new bid to the European Commission, to the Seventh Framework Research Program, which I coordinated and submitted to Brussels last week (by the way, supported by a Ministerial grant), there are two other NCS scholars among the seven partners. And D. Bruce Johnstone kindly agreed to serve in its International Advisory Board. The title for this 1.7 million EUR project is *Public-Private Dynamics in the Knowledge-Society: Matching Higher Education and the Labour Market*, and it uses some themes I have developed during my Fulbright year: cost-sharing and cost-recovery mechanisms in public and private higher education institutions, academic entrepreneurship in, and privatisation of, public sector institutions, quasi-markets in higher education and new income-generating patterns, and matching between higher education supply and labour market demand in selected areas. We can win, we can lose, and I can re-submit the project next year. But if funded, that would be another three years of NCS scholars working together!

I am grateful to numerous sponsors of my research in the last fifteen years, including the Polish State Committee for Research, but certainly the impact of two different Fulbright programs on my academic development has been of critical importance. Also on a private plane, especially the first one, was mind-opening; the first nice apartment we rented was in Virginia, as was the first car with air-conditioning, first banking cards (not credit cards yet), first year ever, spent on reading Monday through Saturday, with no other commitments of any kind (our daughter Natalia was born later) was spent there; first Barnes and Noble kind of bookstores where I could be spending hours just browsing through books etc. Today, all these life privileges are standard in Poland – but in 1994 they meant a new, better world to which I got an entry (on a competitive basis). I hope I used all opportunities given to me by the Fulbright Program, and probably inviting me here today to speak to you is one of proofs that the US taxpayers' money was well spent.

Thank you very much for your attention.