

## IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY FORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DETERMINISTIC CHAOS: THE CASE OF GRUPA AZOTY

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**Purpose:** This article addresses the challenge of creating an excellent strategy under nonlinear conditions, focusing on understanding the unique features and values of the 2021-2030 strategy. The framework for shaping the organization's future is presented through the case of Grupa Azoty Capital Group's strategy.

**Project/methodology/approach:** To achieve this goal, a literature review and examination of the selected strategy were conducted. Grupa Azoty served as an autotelic case study. The research method employed allowed for a depiction of the analysed unit. The case study offers potential for adequately achieving the set boundaries of knowledge, which is particularly important in an era of nuanced phenomena. The choice of research methodology was dictated by the need to examine a specific group of organizations and the subject of interest, enabling the identification of unique features and values of the analysed Capital Group. The conceptual elements of the case were diagnostic (how is it?), symptomatic (why is it so?), and intervention-related (what to do?).

**Findings:** It was recognized that the challenge of today's world lies in the constant redefinition of fundamental truths, given that the era of continuity and high predictability of the environment has ended. The importance of social, technological, and environmental determinants and their impact on organizational strategy formation was acknowledged. The case study revealed several changes that needed to be implemented for the Capital Group's development. Grupa Azoty's 2021-2030 strategy confirms the priority of climate and energy transformation, the necessity for investment in innovation, and the importance of environmentally friendly solutions and products.

**Limitations/research implications:** Future research on the influence of the environment on organizational strategy formation seems justified. Efforts to verify the level of achievement of intended goals also appear appropriate. Moreover, it is valuable to explore the performative dimension of the strategy on Grupa Azoty's employees and stakeholders.

**Practical implications:** Individuals responsible for improving organizational strategy should continue to monitor emerging development perspectives in the environment. Regulatory changes resulting from the European Union's intentions, which aim to achieve beneficial social effects through establishing a set of sustainable development goals, warrant particular attention. The actions of the EU (the directives and regulations it creates) can significantly influence the strategy of a specific enterprise.

**Originality/value:** The article allowed for the identification of unique features and values embedded in Grupa Azoty's strategy, serving as a starting point for further explorations. The analysis of the content may be helpful in formulating strategies for other organizations, particularly those operating in the dynamically changing landscape of the chemical industry.

**Keywords:** organizational strategy, future of the organization, case study.

**Category of the paper:** Case Study.

## 1. Introduction

*A true explorer's journey is not about seeking new landscapes,  
but about gaining new eyes.  
Marcel Proust*

The world creates conditions in which humanity is compelled to engage in a discourse concerning the redefinition of fundamental truths. The basic premise of metaphysical essentialism points to the existence of two worlds. The first one constitutes a reflection (Platonic shadow) of the immaterial world of ideas (a kind of embodiment of the existence of apparent phenomena). The second world comprises ideal forms, i.e., objects containing essential features (essences), which determine their nature in an immaterial reality. In turn, the premise of pragmatism leads to the rejection of this dualistic world view, with human beliefs serving as the basis for such a stance. In other words, the truth is what best fits the realities of human life and most accurately meets its needs.

The discourse regarding the challenges for the future of organizations in the face of turbulence is fuelled by both essentialists and pragmatists. Similar to literary scholars, this friction seems endless (Markowski, 2001). Reflections on the future of organizations are developed within the framework of research oriented towards exploration (in line with the European tradition) and practice (in line with the North American tradition), with quantitative and experimental research taking precedence. Questions arise concerning the shaping of tomorrow's organizations in the context of new challenges. Representatives of various schools agree that the period of continuity and high predictability has come to an end. The world that proceeded according to a traditional and well-understood direction belongs to history. In today's reality, humanity is grappling with tumultuous social, technological, and economic changes. All these aspects are concerning, especially as they are overlaid with threats posed by the state of the natural environment.

In this uncertain reality, organizational managers design and implement strategies. Disasters that have befallen society in recent years (the Covid pandemic, Russia's aggression in Ukraine) further complicate this work. The change in raw material supply routes for Europe, caused by current geopolitics; the "chocholi dance" of raw material prices with the prices of manufactured

products, among other things, result in market collapses, downturns, and loss of competitiveness. All of this has a probabilistic character and further disrupts the proper formulation of strategies. The strategy then transitions into a phase of scenario management. Nevertheless, times of crisis must eventually come to an end. Moreover, these changes do not reverse green megatrends; at most, they slow them down. Therefore, a properly formulated strategy, as a document, paradoxically gains even greater significance.

## 2. Literature Review

The mentioned circumstances make planning (assuming a high degree of continuity) difficult. Managers of most organizations face this situation daily. In this context, the position of one of the most outstanding management thinkers, Peter F. Drucker, seems interesting. He believes that managers traditionally started planning based on yesterday's trends and made projections for the future based on various possible combinations, but with many of the same elements and configurations. Since the 1980s, as he claims, such planning is no longer possible. One can assume or predict the occurrence of an exceptional event, but it is impossible to plan for it. Drucker proposes implementing strategies that anticipate the probability and content of the most significant changes (Drucker, 1995). In other words - taking advantage of new realities and disturbances, and then transforming them into opportunities. Paraphrasing a quote by Vivian Green: "It's not about waiting for the storm to pass, but about learning to dance in the rain". When a person has no control over what will happen in the future, they can influence their behaviour. This, in turn, gives them a sense of agency. A similar situation occurs in the case of organizations. The manager can, wants to, and should reformat their current way of thinking. Their knowledge (incompatible with modern times) can be symbolized by an anchor. Throwing it in a storm allows for floating on the waves, moving in their rhythm. It is a promising strategy for ships in a safe bay, marina, or port. Using the anchor, we will not tame Mother Nature; we will only allow for safe preparation for new realities. This is a time to give meaning to our future actions. The situation is entirely different for boats in the open sea. Here, survival requires openness, manoeuvring, overcoming fear, faith in success, seeking shelter. There is no template. It is the least comfortable option but also the safest. Paradoxically, the anchor (like the manager's knowledge) can be the "weakest link in the chain" or, using Wojciech Czakon's metaphor, an expression of strategic short-sightedness (Czakon, 2020). Drucker would consider a ship floating on the surface as a strategy of "blissful mediocrity", which cannot ensure survival and even predicts the middle class moving to the margins. He believes in market leadership (which requires recognizing one's strengths). Drucker, thinking about the managers of the future, is blunt, stating: they cannot be passive custodians of the past. He expects managers to engage in rigorous calculations and intellectual honesty to

confront the real results of their actions. It is worth returning to the sentence attributed to Socrates: "I know that I know nothing". It strips the manager of megalomania and encourages freeing oneself from one's beliefs because "it is foolish to think that one knows what one does not know".

Attachment to knowledge and experiences built in realities that do not ensure predictability can be very detrimental. People need humility towards their own beliefs. Beliefs affect the perception of reality. In essence, it may happen that the assumptions made by an individual will reinforce their error. People have a tendency to favour information that confirms their beliefs or ideas and reject those that do not (Lack, Rousseau, 2022). Scientific research shows that reasoning is based on assumptions and beliefs (George, 1995). During decision-making, the so-called confirmation bias (or confirmation effect) emerges, resulting from the existence of beliefs and stereotypes (Nickerson, 1998). This bias can be defined as people's tendency to interpret information in a manner consistent with their expectations (Koehler, 1993; Markovits, Nantel, 1989; Méndez-Sánchez, 2023). Beliefs about the world influence projection, both at the individual and group levels (Degen, Tonhauser, 2022).

Bearing in mind the existence of the "confirmation effect," a manager (understood as a single person or a group of people representing management) should exercise due caution when formulating predictions of exogenous changes in the social, geopolitical, and technological architecture surrounding the organization, as well as endogenous (internal) determinants. Vertical thinking should give way to lateral thinking. A proactive manager's attitude can be equated with their ability to create a stream of ideas transformed into processes that create new values (understood as anticipating changes in the environment and creating unique differentiators) (Bartnicki, 2009; Bartnicki, Kordel, 2002). The modern manager seeks to extrapolate and anticipate the future, not only through their specialized knowledge, experience, but also intuition (Janasz K., Janasz W., 2014). They also cannot do without broad intellectual horizons, a holistic perspective, and emphasizing humanistic attributes understood as the application of a worldview doctrine in management such as happiness, dignity, brotherhood, and freedom, which have a real impact on the organization's effectiveness (Goranczewski, 2018). During proactive development path creation, there may be a need to redefine the mission, define the organization's purpose and position (Shoemaker et al., 2018; Brown, Eisenhardt, 1998; Huy et al., 2014; Martinsuo et al., 2022).

This process of building is referred to as "organizational renewal" (Janasz K., Janasz W., 2014) and is increasingly based on the joint work of many people (especially in the case of significant innovative changes and network organizations – multiple entities) (Dougherty, Dune, 2011; Klessova et al., 2020). The prevailing trend has become to define a new strategic direction that takes into account aspects of sustainable development (Nowisielski, Spilka, Kania, 2010; Balogun et al., 2015; Zarębska, 2017; Zarębska, Żabińska, Zarębski, 2019; Brostoöm, 2021) and corporate social responsibility (Chojnacka, 2013; Wojcik et al., 2021). Pursuing values (appreciated in unstable and uncertain times) encourages the implementation

of strategic transformation through, among other things, new goals, concepts, programs, methods, or guidelines (Stensaker, 2011; Czarniawska, 2018). The challenges of strategic management (along with their advantages and disadvantages) have been widely described in the literature on the subject (Hamel, Breen, 2007; Nag et al., 2007; Artto et al., 2008; Ketchen et al., 2008; Lehtonen, Martinsuo, 2009; Willems et al., 2020). Researchers carry out scientific projects characterized by high academic values, as well as pragmatic ones, which provide managers with specific guidelines (Graebner et al., 2023). Studies within this domain have focused on, among others, strategic determinants inside and outside the organization. R. Scott Livengood and Rhonda K. Reger drew attention to the changes taking place within the organization (specifically in its identity). The authors examined the impact of organizational identity (understood as a cognitive space of psychological value for managers; embodied in capabilities such as motivation or responsiveness) on competitive activity (Livengood, Reger, 2010). Another researcher revealed that the layer of organizational identity constitutes an element of strategic change programs, thus recognizing the importance of mental and social aspects of business transformation (Harikkala-Laihinen, 2022). Other researchers argue that today it is particularly important to align strategic goals with the expectations of external stakeholders (being part of the partnership network) (Haniff, Galloway, 2022). The aspirations of individual players may be important. For example, striving to strengthen the innovation effect can lead to the integration of inter-organizational knowledge within a joint project (Nisula et al. 2022). Urgent challenges include short product life cycles, co-creation with customers and partners, and the need to absorb scientific and technological knowledge (Fjelstad et al., 2012). Shaping the organization of the future requires enthusiasm when undertaking real actions and passion in their implementation (Chojnacka, 2021). The strategy must include a goal and a development problem, as well as guidelines. These three elements (goal, problem, guidelines) determine its effectiveness. A strategy without a goal is unguided, one that does not contain a problem is confusing, and one without guidelines is unrealistic (Yu, 2021). For years, the relationship between strategy and outcomes has been analysed, but due to conflicting results, the discussion on this issue is diminishing (Luoma, 2015).

Shaping the future trajectory of an organization represents striving to ensure continuity and durability of the entity. It allows building a bridge between the unknown and the expected. For those involved in strategy development, it also provides a sense of agency (which seems deeply justified). Strategies also open up perspectives for creating a high degree of mobilization of all stakeholders in actions for social order. Strategies also serve a performative role, as noted by Barbara Czarniawska (2010), and may be responsible for creating organizational identity. Paradoxically, it is successes that can lead organizations to the already mentioned organizational short-sightedness (Czakoń, 2020). This is not the only paradox. W. Czakoń notes that it is straightforward to fall into the trap of "simplified thinking" and put forward not only naive but even harmful proposals. The set of these recommendations is abundant. It includes, among others, a recommendation dedicated to strategists, pointing to the need to see the bigger picture,

its complexity, and its reciprocal impact on the organization. The seemingly harmless proposal could prove harmful if the strategist understood this as an unforgiving error of broad scanning of the competitive landscape or perfect market situation recognition, resulting in decision paralysis, information overload, and consequently, a worse competitive response. Another example concerns the suggestion to have a long-term planning horizon, reaching far beyond daily needs. A seemingly innocuous proposal, if misinterpreted, could mean losing sight of customer needs or disappointing investors due to loss of short-term profitability and neglect of current issues. The demand for seeking partners with whom strategic ventures can be implemented may also appear risky. Here, the risk lies in the possibility of strengthening the partner at the expense of the organization. The proposal encouraging collegiality in management (Sahlin, Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016; Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2019) or digitization in management (Kriegel, Rissbacher, 2022; Brönneke et al., 2021) without considering the organization's context and limitations could also cause many problems. Short-sightedness is, therefore, a multidimensional issue that can bring contrasting effects. The existence of paradoxes in management has received due attention (Smith, Lewis, 2011; Gruszczyńska, Malec, Waligóra, 2017; Schad, Lewis, Smith, 2019; Polowczyk, 2022). Antinomic pairs are referred to as dualisms (Putnam et al., 2016). They can concern adopted perspectives, approaches, requirements, identities, goals, or practices (Lewis, 2000). These peculiar contradictions share a characteristic which is universally recognized as very interesting. The issue concerns the mutual interdependence of their extreme poles (Clegg et al., 2002). This may lead to the conclusion that managing paradoxes requires creating a whole in between the extremes (like a coin with heads and tails). The golden mean is balance, oscillating between the two opposite poles of the same image. This attitude enables meeting both needs, balancing them, and recognizing them as equivalent. Development requires recognizing the interdependence and coexistence of opposites. The emergence of tensions has intensified the search for other actions to eliminate paradoxes. In addition to the mentioned synthesis (i.e., an attempt to find a broader context and develop creative solutions allowing for the combination of contradictions), the following types of behaviours (reactions) have been distinguished:

- acceptance - coming to terms with their occurrence and assigning meaning,
- spatial separation - separating contradictions by conducting an analysis that allows identifying places of their occurrence,
- temporal separation - separating contradictions by choosing one variant and then changing it over time.

Managers responsible for shaping strategy in organizations should approach propositions with particular caution, as their origin lies in routine and established patterns and mechanisms of action. In a changing environment, it is essential not to fall victim to cognitive inertia.

Taking the above into consideration, it seems justified to establish (as the goal of this study) unique features and values in the strategy of an organization that is shaped under the illuminated circumstances.

### 3. Research Method

The study presents part of the research that constitutes a larger project. At this stage, an insight into the strategy of the selected organization was conducted, which serves as an example of an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2009). The choice of research methodology was dictated by the need for an in-depth examination of a specific organization and the subject of interest (Lisiecka, Kostka-Bochenek, 2009). It was recognized that the case study, as a bridge between traditional research paradigms (Luck, Usher, 2006), offers the potential for adequately achieving the delineated boundaries of knowledge. The objective was to appreciate the unique features and values of the strategy developed for the years 2021-2030. This is particularly important because most phenomena are nuanced (Lee, Saunders, 2017). The distinguished elements of case conceptualization were the following formulations: diagnostic (what is it like?), symptomatic (why is it so?) and intervention-related (what to do?). The work of Len and Jonathan Sperry (2020) served as an inspiration for presenting these components, applying the documentary method (Baran, 2021). The basis was the Company strategy, a document developed between 2020-2022 by teams of employees (specialists), then organized by the Corporate Strategy and Development Department, and approved by the Management Board of the Grupa Azoty S.A. capital group (CG). In the future, an instrumental approach to case study is planned to deepen the knowledge of the phenomenon from a broader perspective and draw more general conclusions. The choice of the target organization was purposive: in connection with the conference entitled: *Innovation Management and Artificial Intelligence in the Chemical Company*, organized by GA Zakłady Azotowe Kędzierzyn S.A. in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University, which took place on February 17, 2023, its participants, including the author of the text, were asked to verify the newly created and approved strategy from the perspective of their scientific interests.

Awareness of the potential weakness of the research methodology, described as the "researcher's interpersonal expectations effect" (Brzeziński, 1997), prompted the author of the study to appoint two independent reviewers (who wished to remain anonymous). The mentioned effect is related to the researcher's personality, attitudes, values, knowledge, and information they possess on the subject. Neglecting such (preventive) measures could result in, among other things: lack of tolerance, authoritarianism, rigid thinking, seeking social approval, resistance to information, which Agnieszka Wojtczuk-Turek (2012) warns against. The subjectivity of the expert is not the only problem. Another weakness of the case study is

the possibility of succumbing to cognitive illusions, and as a result – the possibility of a one-sided interpretation of reality in an unjustified way. To eliminate this aspect, the author consulted the content (facilitation) with anonymous experts through structured discussion.

The methodological flexibility of the case study is one of its advantages, manifesting, among other things, in the approach to designing tasks. What seems to be an asset may remain uncertain regarding the appropriate procedural steps required to ensure methodological rigor. This aspect is addressed, among others, by Rosenberg and Yates (2007).

#### **4. Case Study**

Grupa Azoty S.A. is an undisputed leader in the fertilizer and chemical industry. The dominant entity in the group is Grupa Azoty S.A., based in Tarnow, however, it comprises several dozen business entities, among which the four most important are: Grupa Azoty Zakłady Azotowe "Puławy" S.A, Grupa Azoty Zakłady Chemiczne "Police" S.A., Grupa Azoty Zakłady Azotowe Kędzierzyn S.A. An inherent feature of the Group is its continuous development. Innovations are one of the pillars of Grupa Azoty's strategy. The values it adheres to revolve around responsible business principles. It is worth noting that it is the first Central European organization to be included in the list of the forty most influential entities of the global chemical market ICIS TOP 40 Power Players in 2015. Additionally, the international strategic consulting firm Boston Consulting Group placed Grupa Azoty on the list of the most attractive chemical companies for investors worldwide. Grupa Azoty's offer includes a diversified portfolio of products, including: Butt fertilizers, multi-component, mineral, sulphur-containing, as well as other products mainly manufactured in raw material connection with fertilizers, such as polyamides, OXO alcohols, plasticizers, titanium dioxide, and melamine.

In accordance with the declarations included in the CSR Policy of Grupa Azoty Capital Group companies, the entity wants to be perceived as an ethical and socially responsible organization. This approach leads Grupa Azoty, among other, to engage in local community initiatives and projects aimed at learning and popularizing the history and traditions of the Polish chemical industry. Moreover, a comprehensive implementation doctorate program is being carried out, which significantly raises the level of identity and self-awareness. The Group also has its research and development centres that serve as a basis for product, development, and environmental research aimed at protecting the natural environment and counteracting the degradation of natural resources. In its ethical code, Grupa Azoty declared adherence to values such as thrift, professionalism, cooperation, respect, and transparency. Table 1 presents a synthetic representation of the strategy conceptualization elements.



**Table 1.**  
*Capital Group strategy for 2021-2030*

Subject	Elements of Grupa Azoty's (GA) Case Conceptualization		
	What is it like?	Why is it so?	What to do?
Introduction	The context, key points of the strategy, and challenges faced by GA have been presented in a synthetic manner.	The introduction is an important element outlining the entire content of the study. It draws attention to GA's priorities. The message was made public on behalf of the Board by the President.	Maintain.
Key challenges of the contemporary world	The most important environmental and social issues were identified.	The study refers to climate change and environmental degradation, which are considered significant threats to civilization. Ambitious goals have been set to limit the negative impact on the environment. Sustainable development and responsible business were recognized as priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic was taken into account as an important issue affecting global supply chains, the need for changes in the approach to employees and customers.  Food production and sustainable agricultural development were recognized as priorities. Land is a public good and has economic, ecological, and social value.	Continuously diagnose phenomena, trends, mechanisms of the contemporary world and their interdependencies, and respond to them.
GA Mission, Vision and Values (MVV)	The Mission, Vision, and Values were defined for the 2030 perspective. Mission is as follows: in harmony with the environment, GA produces fertilizers, materials, and chemical products, improves the quality of life for Europeans, and effectively participates in building food security for our continent. Vision: GA is a provider of effective solutions, a reliable producer of fertilizers, materials, and green chemistry. Values: people, development, environmental protection, energy.	GA is recognized as an efficient and flexible, integrated and divisional CG, focused on production in Europe. In its mission, GA identified the needs it intends to meet. Through the vision, GA defined the image it will strive for in the perspective of implementing the 2030 strategy. Four key areas were outlined in the context of values, namely: people, development, environmental protection, and energy. In relation to people, values include: active participation of CG in meeting their food needs; addressing needs related to increasing agricultural efficiency; solving the challenges of modern agriculture. Values related to development are associated with the implementation of new environmentally friendly and climate-neutral products. In relation to the natural environment, values include: intensifying actions for the protection of the natural environment, as well as the realization of the "Green Azoty" project. In the energy area, actions aim to reduce energy consumption.	Conduct an analysis of the extent to which the indicated values correspond with the values of GA's internal and external stakeholders. Investigate whether the Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV) have a performative impact. Diagnose whether cooperation is based on shared values and goals. Determine the level of co-responsibility for climate, environment, and society. Examine the co-responsibility for shaping the value chain. Continuously build awareness of the Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV) among employees.

Cont. table 1.

Business segments	Focus on segments within three areas of activity – Agro; Plastics; Chemistry.	In line with its assumptions, GA is implementing a new organizational model, as it expresses hope for achieving full synergy due to the integration of management support functions. The key development directions defined within individual business segments will be elements of the implementation of the strategic program "Green Azoty".	Determine the level of achievement of key objectives for each segment. Identify the values offered to customers in the segments. Indicate the level of synergy achieved. At the same time, it is essential to maintain space for independent actions within the entities that are part of the Group (internal flexibility).
Energy sector	It was pointed out that there is a need for an energy transformation to achieve improved efficiency.	The need to ensure diversified energy sources necessary for conducting chemical processes was addressed. The importance of moving towards decarbonization of energy generation sources was highlighted. It was considered reasonable to undertake actions in the field of internal energy transformation, understood as saving energy consumption and improving energy efficiency in chemical installations.	It is necessary to limit the expansion of fossil fuels and balance it with renewable energy sources (RES). Work on increasing energy yields. Implement the conclusions of the Best Available Techniques (BAT).  Consider further steps on what to do and how to process the energy obtained from RES.
The „Green Azoty” project	It was recognized that the climate and energy transformation in GA is a priority. The project assumes the activation of actions in favour of: green products, green technologies, and a green organization.	Changes in the regulatory environment were seen as an opportunity to introduce the "Green Azoty" project. This is conditioned by the possibilities of implementing technical solutions in the field of alternative, ecological renewable energy sources (RES), such as: photovoltaics, wind power, green energy production from biomass, and waste heat from production facilities. Changes result from the intentions of the EU, which aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (intermediate goal - reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990). Environmental policies, such as the European Green Deal, directives and regulations, are systematically being implemented, which intensify the "Green Azoty" project. The EU's hydrogen strategy corresponds to research and development work related to the production and use of green hydrogen.	Expand photovoltaic and wind farms. Produce energy from steam derived from technological processes, using synergy between energy and chemistry. Build gas sources. Construct biofuel incineration plants.  Participate in the implementation of the EU Hydrogen Strategy. Engage in the development of the hydrogen energy sector.

Cont. table 1.

Financial Strategy	GA aims to further consolidate its financial functions to provide active support for management at the level of individual business segments. This goal is supported by the existence of the SAP competence centre, which includes financial and accounting systems (S4HANA, SAP BUSINESS), data warehouses (BW4HANA), and planning and budgeting systems.	The adopted financial strategy enables the implementation of key investment projects. The financial structure aims to provide short- and long-term financing sources on competitive terms, sufficient to finance operational activities and implement the investment program. "Green" financing allows for investment in "Green Azoty". The possibility of obtaining funds from the National Reconstruction Plan and other support mechanisms for investments is intended to activate technological transformation. An integrated platform for reporting financial and operational data allows for serving as a database system (both in static and dynamic terms) and continuous monitoring of operational and strategic goals.	Ensure the long-term development of the company (by taking into account exogenous and endogenous factors and creating strategic goals based on them), while also paying attention to financial analysis at the operational level (such as profitability, return on investment, liquidity). Design and analyse key performance indicators.
ESG strategy E – environment, including climate S – social domain G – corporate governance	These pillars and goals of ESG correspond to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include: 1. Climate and Environment (decarbonization and emission reduction, energy transformation); 2. Sustainable Products (closed-loop economy, sustainable agriculture and green products); 3. Sustainable Supply Chain (collaboration based on shared values and goals, responsibility for climate, environment, society, and shaping the value chain); 4. Local Community (partnership key to organizational and regional development, responsibility for the local community, dialogue with stakeholders);	For CG, ESG provisions refer to the basics disclosed in legal acts and international initiatives directed at businesses. They respond to market and stakeholder expectations and support preparation for the challenges of the upcoming decade resulting from climate change. The regulatory area includes the European Green Deal, directives on non-financial disclosure (NFRD->CSRD and SFRD), taxonomy, and the "Fit for 55" package. Key international initiatives refer to the Paris Agreement, SDGs within UNGC, guidelines on disclosing financial information related to climate impact (TCFD), and the Carbon Disclosure Project. The pillars of GA's ESG strategy fit into SDGs, i.e.: zero hunger, quality education, clean water and sanitation, economic growth and decent work, innovation, industry, infrastructure, responsible consumption and production, climate action. With regard to ESG goals, CG should strive to increase positive impact on the socio-economic environment. This can manifest itself, among other things, through engagement in issues important to the local community, as well as taking extraordinary actions appropriate to the circumstances.	ESG reporting should be provided, including the average reduction in CO2 emissions compared to previous years. The GK should be aware of the number of severe and fatal accidents on the premises and strive to eliminate them. Ensuring pay equity between women and men is also important. There should be a focus on the succession planning of key positions. Data on achieving the energy mix should be analysed to ensure that the share of electricity from coal is less than 50% of the total electricity produced. Analysing risks and opportunities, such as regulatory or technological ones, is also important. It is necessary to translate and raise awareness of the importance of ESG among the GA stakeholders.

Cont. table 1.

	5. Friendly and Safe Workplace (equality, diversity, openness, employee safety, and professional development).	Examples of good practices may include actions such as: educating farmers in sustainable agriculture, supporting scientific centres in organizing internships and training, engaging in dialogue with future staff through organizing courses and training, and establishing cooperation with regional authorities and associations acting in accordance with ethical values.	
Raw Materials Strategy	GA is highly dependent on external suppliers, so the key goal is to ensure security and continuity of supply. In accordance with the purchasing policy, raw material procurement should be carried out with respect for the environment and natural surroundings while maintaining efficiency.	GA plans to continue cooperation with reliable suppliers during natural gas procurement while monitoring the regulatory market situation and proactively optimizing the supply portfolio. When procuring strategic chemical raw materials, GA plans to take actions aimed at maximizing the internal production potential of raw material assets and streamlining raw material management at the group or business segment level. It is also open to joint projects with state-owned companies. Procurement of energy raw materials in the group will involve seeking competitive pricing conditions due to the scale effect. GA will strive to increase the volume of green energy procurement.	The recommendation is to study the carbon footprint of products and manage it accordingly. This requires primarily operationalizing the strategy of obtaining information on the level of carbon footprint of raw materials and semi-finished products from suppliers, and ultimately setting reduction criteria for them for 2030 and 2050.
Strategy of Innovativeness	GA is focused on seeking innovations, which it perceives as investments. GA's activities encompass 4 areas: innovative projects, support for corporate projects, innovation system development, and innovation focused on minimizing the effects of regulatory risks.	The Proactive Innovator strategy enables stable development and maintenance of the position among the leaders in current market segments. It allows for retaining key customers and markets by providing constantly improved products. Such an approach strengthens the competitive advantage, which undoubtedly involves flexibility in reacting to market trends in terms of offered products and creating trends related to niche technologies.  The strategy involves moderate risk, acceptance of failures, high financial costs, and tremendous organizational effort, but at the same time is a chance for long-term maintenance of technological advantage over the competition.	Monitor the costs of conducting R&D projects (including costs of maintaining employees and infrastructure), establish measurable indicators of acceptable results with their stage verification, and implement a digital tool for monitoring R&D projects. Determine the feasibility of launching new projects and their direction based on qualitative analyses. Explore niche opportunities in products and markets and effectively utilize them to gain a competitive advantage in this area.

Cont. table 1.

Strategy of operational excellence	Includes logistics, asset management, and IT.	The logistics area is an integral part of the supply chain in GA. It relates to planning, managing, and controlling the structure of material flows and related information and capital flows. Asset management focuses on the energy and production efficiency of manufacturing assets. The IT area will obtain a unified, coherent, and integrated architecture and IT solutions for all business segments of GA to increase its efficiency and quality of services provided. Implementations will allow, among other things, transparency of logistics processes, management of logistics processes across the entire company, improvement of operational efficiency, and standardization of IT solutions.	To monitor possible regulatory restrictions that may affect the scope and cost of transportation processes related to the goals of the European Green Deal. Also, to explore the possibility of diversifying transportation methods in favour of intermodal transport.
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CG – Capital Group; GA – Grupa Azoty; MWiW – Mission, Vision and Values; ESG – strategy, environment including climate, social area and corporate governance; SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals; NFRD – Nonfinancial Disclosure Reporting Directive; CSRD – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive; UNGC – United Nations Global Compact; TCFD - Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures; R&D&I - research, development and innovation.

Source: own elaboration based on Azoty Group materials.

The elements of the strategy presented in Table 1 demonstrate the efficiency in recognizing the perspectives that lie ahead of Azoty Group. This may stem from the experience and intuition that the creators of the strategy possess. It contains all the elements that together create a coherent whole, indicating Azoty Group's expansiveness expressed through investments, ambitions to increase market share, and expanding the product portfolio. The strategy addresses threats to civilization, including climate change and environmental degradation (Kądziałowski, Goranczewski, 2022). This context led to the development of ambitious goals to reduce the negative impact of its own activities on the environment. Furthermore, it recognizes sustainable development and responsible business as priorities. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perception of global supply chains was also acknowledged. Azoty Group identified food production and sustainable agriculture as key issues. Much attention was paid to new technologies and innovations, which are seen as opportunities to maintain an advantage over competitors. However, little attention is given to employees, their engagement, and motivation, as key factors in effective management (Goranczewski, Szeliga-Duchnowska, 2021). While employee competencies were mentioned alongside excellent service, timely deliveries, and product quality as important attributes in maintaining a solid business partner position, such reference to employees can be considered insufficient. The strategy also referred to the idea of a friendly workplace, where Azoty Group declared its commitment to the employee safety and equal treatment, adherence to diversity principles, and professional development. It also mentioned the assessment of employee engagement and satisfaction, as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle. Such an approach compensates for the aforementioned shortcomings.

## 5. Summary

*Strategic management is a great challenge and a fascinating intellectual journey.*

*Wojciech Czakon*

The constant challenge facing modern managers is building bridges between the unknown and the expected to ensure continuity and sustainability of the managed organization. This task is and should be seen as a priority. The complexity and multidimensionality of the environment present a significant obstacle for those involved in shaping strategy, as changes in the organization's environment are not so much turbulent as they are hurricane-like. As numerous authors have pointed out, the existing methods for predicting the future (necessary for determining development strategies) are inadequate. They have relied on quantitative methods. "Contemporary research methods increasingly need to employ qualitative research methods to describe and explain changes in economic life" (Dylewski, Marek, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, there is a need to present a strategic framework for development that anticipates the organization's future using a case study method, as presented in this article.

Grupa Azoty is characterized by a high level of expectations from various stakeholder groups that it must meet. The presented research results will allow for the identification of unique characteristics and values of the organization. Grupa Azoty's strategy refers to contemporary conditions in accordance with the general segmentation of the environment into socio-cultural, technological, environmental, political, legal, and economic spheres. The strategy also shows the impact of these determinants on the organization's development. Grupa Azoty's strategy for 2021-2030 confirms the priority of climate-energy transformation and the need to invest in innovative solutions.

One of the areas that show a lack of adequate interest in the strategy is the area of people. People are the organization's greatest and most valuable capital. Given the proportions resulting from the structure of the presented document, the share of social potential is only represented symbolically. Every organization is made up primarily of people, and therefore this aspect should be taken into account in the next strategy review (iteration).

The presented strategy, like most of this type of document, is flexible. In the case of dispersed entities such as Grupa Azoty, this efficiency should be two-pronged. The first is internal flexibility. It involves leaving dependent entities the possibility of carrying out local tasks with the reservation of non-contradiction with the Group's goals, as well as prioritization of group tasks in the situation of making such choices. The second efficiency is external flexibility, understood in a classical way as the ability to quickly adapt to the changing environment. In the author's opinion, this postulate seems so significant because there was no mention in the presented document regarding the current geopolitics and the related change in the direction of raw material supplies, which is likely causing enormous perturbations that the organization is facing. It seems justified to conduct further explorations allowing for:

1. Examining the strength of the influence of the dynamically changing environment on shaping the organization's strategy.
2. Showing the evolution of values included in strategies in the context of changes occurring in the environment.
3. Verifying the level of achieving intended goals revealed in the organization's strategies.
4. Showing the performative impact of the strategy on employees and other stakeholders.
5. Identifying the biggest difficulties of predicting the future when creating strategies.

The proposed research proposals may concern the Azoty Group, but also other organizations.

This article is a prelude to further in-depth research on the shape of created strategies in conditions of high complexity, variability, instability, and ambiguity of the environment.

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