



## BOTTOM-UP INTEGRATION OF POLISH METROPOLITAN CITIES

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### ABSTRACT

The subject of the article is the analysis of bottom-up metropolitan integration activities on the example of five Polish metropolitan areas (*obszary metropolitarne*). By using the available instruments of incorporation as well as the published information on the activities of the metropolitan associations, the author analysed in what legal form these entities function, what is their subject, what are the instruments of activity and the sources of funding of the indicated associations (*stowarzyszenia*).

### ARTICLE INFO

Available online: 11 December 2016

Keywords:  
metropolitan cities,  
public governance,  
cooperation of local government units.

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### INTRODUCTION

For many years, the cities have become the destination of migration of millions of people. These processes occur not only within regions and countries, but also within continents. As a result, the level of the world's urbanisation is currently the highest in history and it seems that this process will deepen. In consequence, the cities are becoming the subject of interest of the representatives of many sciences and are getting more and more important in the public debate. Over the last year, the urban-related issues have also ranked high in the agenda of many international institutions. In October 2016, the United Nations organised the third HABITAT conference (UN Resolution 67/216), at which the representatives of the Member States adopted the New Urban Agenda. In the first half of 2016, as part of works of the Dutch Presidency, the representatives of the European Union Member States adopted the Pact of Amsterdam (Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam) under which the representatives of European cities will be involved in the decision-making processes of the European institutions. International organisations grouping the cities within the European Union, such as Eurocities, have also been very active in promoting the urban issues. It can be expected that in the near future interest in the issue of urban management will be increasing, since it is hard to imagine

a solution to the major problems of migration, sustainable development, environmental protection, social exclusion, better quality of life, without including cities and metropolitan areas in the public policy space. At the same, this issue poses many problems to the representatives of various sciences, people managing the cities as well as the residents. As noted by C. Merriam, one of the American political scientists, the issue of the metropolis still remains an unsolved problem of sciences on public policy (Merriam, 1942).

#### THEORETICAL APPROACH

The issue of management of metropolitan areas is analysed from three various theoretical perspectives. The first one is the so-called traditional school of reform of metropolitan areas. Its “traditionalism” resulted mainly from the proposed possibilities of solving the problems arising from the dynamic development of the largest cities, namely a direct annexation of gminas (communes) to the core city. The proposed solutions within the analysed paradigm include the annexation of neighbouring administrative units within the metropolis or establishing a two-tier system, in which the higher level will cover the entire metropolitan area. The indicated solution has many benefits related to, for example, the integration of the management of the metropolitan area, or greater transparency in terms of responsibility. However, this solution also has weaknesses that have been pointed out by critics of the solution. The most important ones include direct interference with the essential territorial division of the country, which is always causing many conflicts, and the lack of certainty whether the solution will not prove, in retrospect, to be inadequate due to the continued urban spill over effect (Hamilton, 1999).

The second theoretical approach to the analysis of the reform of metropolitan areas is the so-called Charles Tiebout’s hypothesis often associated with the public choice theory. The author presented his work in a book titled *A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures* (Tiebout, 1968), which is considered today as the most important work on the reform of metropolitan areas based on the assumptions of the public choice theory. According to Tiebout, there are no grounds to interfere with the fundamental structure of the country’s territorial division. Public services performed by the public administration can be compared to commercial services provided by private entities, which compete with each other in a competitive market. While customers in the commercial market are individuals who have decided to purchase a given service or goods, customers in a “public market” will be citizens who choose to live in a given local government unit, which provides, in their opinion, the best level of public services. The “compensation” will be paid in taxes. The fragmented local government units operating within the metropolitan area should compete among each other for new taxpayers. However, this research approach has yet to be proved in practice. There are still no studies that would confirm the validity of the indicated solution. Proponents of the Tiebout’s hypothesis are also criticised from the perspective of assumptions of the rational choice theory, which underlies the municipalists’ theory. The highly popular for over 50 years hypothesis has permanently inscribed in the debate on the functioning of the public administration. When introducing the assumptions of the public choice theory, the municipalists used the achievements of political economy and related sciences, which certainly enriched the debate on metropolitan issues.

The last and currently prevailing in the public debate theoretical perspective is the new regionalism (*new public governance*). It appeared in the 1990s in connection with emerging problems of public governance resulting from the globalisation, the development of new technologies in communication, leaching of national sovereignty or mass migration of population. The above phenomenon meant that the state was too small to solve big problems and, at the same time, too big to deal with small ones (Wnuk-Lipiński, 2004). This was particularly evident in the case of global metropolises performing functions at intercontinental level. Their potential and resources exceed the capabilities of many medium-size countries. The characteristics of the new regionalism include: (1) cooperation between the public administration, residents, non-governmental organisations and the representatives of the commercial sector in the metropolitan area; (2) establishing institutions flexible in the horizontal, and not vertical dimension; (3) building informal relations between the participants of the public life as opposed to formal administrative procedures; (4) decentralisation of public tasks to the local units, and not the concentration of powers at regional level; (5) the main value is the principle of cooperation, and not of competition (Kübler, Schwab, 2007). However, reforming the urban policy in the manner described above requires, on the one hand, the involvement of the public administration, which has to reduce its administrative power and, on the other hand, a considerable social effort. As noted by Ł. Mikuła and T. Kaczmarek, it is evident that the construction of a new territorial-administrative system of the metropolitan area must correlate with the degree of education of the civil society, as well as the creation and, more importantly, a wide recognition by this society of rules of the market economy and democratic standards of political and social life. The new regionalisation covers a broader range of entities, not only strictly administrative, and is implemented in cooperation with private and public sector entities (Kaczmarek, Mikuła, 2007). The assumptions presented above are a theoretical basis for many legal changes and reforms in the field of public governance of metropolitan areas. Despite many difficulties in their implementation and the need for the involvement of many entities in the process of urban management, it is difficult to indicate some other alternative to the new regionalism. The traditional public governance, which was based on the monopoly of activities of public officeholders and officials, has irrevocably ended. Changing the paradigm of government in the direction of governance is now the basis for the functioning of public policies in all European countries (Gawłowski, 2014).

The subject of this article is to present the bottom-up metropolitan integration of five Polish metropolitan areas. Gdańsk, Poznań, Kraków, Szczecin and Bydgoszcz are cities that decided to develop a voluntary metropolitan cooperation within their metropolitan areas. In the current situation, it is the only ability to coordinate the carried out public tasks, whose needs and scale exceed the administrative boundaries of the indicated local government units. The lack of alternative activities stems from the fact that despite the adoption by the Sejm of the Act on Metropolitan Unions<sup>1</sup> (*ustawa o związkach metropolitalnych*), the Council of Ministers has not decided to issue implementing regulations, which are the basis for their establishment. The subject of the analysis will be determining the scope of activities of core cities (the number of entities cooperating within the metropolitan area), the legal form of cooperation, the material scope of the cooperation, the adopted strategies of actions

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<sup>1</sup> The Act on Metropolitan Unions of 9 October 2015 (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1890)

as well as the method of funding the metropolitan cooperation. The analysis will cover the instruments of incorporation of metropolitan initiatives, the substantive documents as well as the information contained on websites concerning the conducted actions<sup>2</sup>.

#### BOTTOM-UP INTEGRATION OF POLISH METROPOLITAN CITIES

The legal formula of cooperation of local government units within the framework of analysed metropolitan areas is an association (*stowarzyszenie*) whose rules of functioning are laid down in the Act on Associations<sup>3</sup> (*ustawa o stowarzyszeniach*). The indicated legal form is characterised by the fact that it is appointed on the basis of the bottom-up initiative of interested entities who voluntarily decide to cooperate to pursue common objectives. The local government units, as entities having judicially protected legal personality, have a constitutional right to form or join associations, which was established in Art. 172 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland<sup>4</sup>. In each of the analysed areas, the initiator of actions aimed at establishing the associations were core cities being the core of the metropolitan area, which initiated the metropolitan debate and then the founding meeting. An exception to the specified rule can be seen only in the case of Bydgoszcz. The city authorities, before they decided to establish an association, pinned high hopes on the possibility of establishing a metropolitan union envisaged by the Act on Municipal Unions. However, due to the government's position and the adopted policy not to issue regulations establishing the unions, they decided to adopt a bottom-up metropolitan integration. On the other hand, in the case of Kraków, an inspiration for the creation of the association was the implementation of the perspective of a new regional policy 2013-2020 within the framework of which the so-called Integrated Territorial Investments activities intended to form a financial incentive to start cooperation by local government units within the metropolitan area were envisaged. It is also worth noting that the core cities deciding on a certain level of institutionalisation of the metropolitan cooperation did not have wide possibilities of choice, because the only remaining legal tool of cooperation would be a municipal union (*związek komunalny*). In accordance with the provisions of the Act on Gmina Self-Government (*ustawa o samorządzie gminnym*), they are appointed to jointly perform public tasks and they have a well-defined internal structure<sup>5</sup>.

In connection with the adoption of the same legal form of cooperation of the analysed local government units, their internal structure and the method of decision-making are the same. The bodies of associations include: the General Meeting of the Members (referred to as the Council or the Meeting), the Board and the Audit Committee. However, the issue of the Chairman of the Association's Board was regulated in a diversified manner. In the case of the Poznań Metropolis Association, under provisions of the statute, the Mayor of the City of Poznań is the President

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<sup>2</sup> The most important instruments of incorporation analysed as part of the analysis of the activity of metropolitan associations will be: the Statute of the Poznań Agglomeration Association available on <http://www.aglomeracja.poznan.pl/>; the Statute of the Szczecin Metropolitan Area Association available on <http://www.som.szczecin.pl/>; the Statute of the Kraków Metropolis Association available on [www.metropoliakrakowska.pl](http://www.metropoliakrakowska.pl/); the Statute of the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Association available on <http://www.metropoliagdansk.pl/>, and the Statute of the Bydgoszcz Metropolis Association obtained in the mode of access to public information.

<sup>3</sup> The Associations Law Act of 7 April 1990, Journal of Laws of 1989, No. 20, item 104

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 78, item 483

<sup>5</sup> The issue of formation and functioning of inter-gmina unions is regulated by Section 7 of the Act on Gmina Self-Government of 8 March 1990, Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 16, item 95

of the Board, while the Poznań Starost is one of the Vice Presidents. The adoption of such a solution significantly strengthens the leadership role of the mayor of the city, thus holds him responsible for the functioning of the Association. In the case of other associations, the chairman is elected at the General Meeting of the association's members. Despite this diversity of situations, the head of the association is each time the mayor of the biggest city. This solution seems to be natural given the importance of the core city for the functioning of the metropolitan area. The issue of functioning of the boards of associations was also regulated in a diversified manner. Their number varies from 5 (in the case of Poznań) up to 12 (as in the case of the Tri-City). Their role in each case can be defined as the ongoing management of the association's actions, the implementation of decisions taken by the members' meeting, initiating programs and the management of the association's property and finances. The tasks of management were specified in varying degrees of detail, but ultimately they boil down to the above presented functions. It is also worth noting how the issue of frequency of meetings of the boards was regulated. The board meeting most often is the board in Poznań, as the meetings must take place there at least once a month. In other cases, the meetings are held once a quarter or at mid-year.

Very converging objectives of the functioning in all metropolitan associations, which are the subject of analysis in this paper, indicate that local government units located within the metropolitan area have similar problems. The aim of all associations, which are presented in the statutes of these organisations, is to coordinate ongoing public tasks, jointly implement the projects co-financed from structural funds, protect the interests of the association's members, initiate and support actions for sustainable development, exchange good management practices and expert support for all members of the association. The accompanying actions include promoting the issue of local government as well as of the EU integration by the possibility of belonging to international associations of the local community.

However, the members of associations intend to carry out the common sounding goals differently. The strategic and long-term approach is particularly evident in the case of the Poznań Agglomeration Association. This is indicated by references to the implementation of the strategy or expert and advisory actions contained in the statute. In other statutes predominant are characteristic of this type of local government organisations statements regarding joint ventures, the implementation of EU projects, coordination of activities, promotion, giving opinions on the actions of the public administration, and the cooperation with other associations, such as the Union of Polish Metropolises (*Unia Metropolii Polskich*). These actions are to be taken in such areas as public transport, roads and road infrastructure, spatial planning, environmental protection, water supply and sewage services as well as the promotion of the metropolitan area. What is worth noting, these services are characteristic of the management, which are most common among local government units located on the metropolitan areas<sup>6</sup>.

Undertaking initiatives by metropolitan associations as well as coordinating the implementation of public tasks would not be possible without the organisational and financial support. The basic form of organisation of each of the analysed associations is the Association's Office. As part of its works, tasks are carried out aimed at the ongoing functioning of the association as well as the organisation of meetings

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<sup>6</sup> This is indicated by the recent report prepared by the OECD – Governing the city, in which the authors pointed out that 80% of the entities constituting the various forms of institutionalised cooperation of local government units within metropolitan areas, the transport and spatial planning are often subject to intervention. See more Governing the City. Policy Highlights, Paris, 2015.

of the statutory bodies. Each of the statutes of the organisation takes into account the possibility of acquiring the assets derived from contributions, donations, loans, grants, and from the assets of the association and other forms. In practice, however, membership fees have the utmost importance for their ongoing functioning. The amount of membership fees is adjusted on a regular basis every year by the General Meeting of the members. The basis for calculating the fee is, in each case, the population of a given local government unit determined based on the data of the Polish Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*). In the case of the solutions adopted by the members of the Poznań Agglomeration Association – Poznań has committed to pay twice the base amount, which is then multiplied by the number of inhabitants.

In addition to financial resources, it is also worth noting the substantive base of individual associations, which is to provide research and analyses as well as to evaluate the conducted actions. A specific example of the expert support is establishing the consortium of Poznań universities and its close cooperation with the Poznań Agglomeration Association within the framework of the Metropolitan Research Centre. It implements expert and analytical works on an ongoing basis on the functioning of the Poznań metropolitan area, which stand behind the decision-making base to make decisions by the authorities of the association and the representatives of various local government units. In this case, however, holding a systematic debate and providing technical expertise on the metropolitan area is of particular importance. It serves to build metropolitan awareness and evidence-based policy, which is particularly difficult to achieve within the metropolitan area, where the interests, ideas and concerns about the loss of the influence among the representatives of local authorities intertwine. The role of the Metropolitan Research Centre is therefore to provide the factual knowledge about specific areas occurring within metropolitan areas. On the other hand, in the case of the Tri-City, the operating think tank – the Metropolitan Institute – may be of major substantive support. It is a unit conducting analytical and advisory works on the metropolitan issue. However, it should be remembered that this is not an entity directly cooperating with the Association, as in the case of the Poznań Metropolitan Research Centre. An important initiative in the field of substantive activities undertaken by the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Association is the annually organised “Smart Metropolis” conference, which is devoted to issues related to the problems of governance in metropolitan areas.

The analysis of the current activities of associations, which are the subject of the article, allows to specify two groups of activities undertaken by these entities. The first of them is directly related to the implementation of actions associated with the pursued EU regional policy, part of which are the Integrated Territorial Investments. In order to achieve the possible financial support, local government units belonging to the associations prepared a strategy for action until 2030 and projects to be co-funded from structural funds. The sustainability of the ongoing initiatives and the willingness to cooperate in the long term will be seen after the end of the ongoing perspective. The dominance of the actions related to the EU’s regional policy is particularly evident in the case of the Kraków Metropolis Association. The second group of actions results from the needs of members of the association and the idea for joint actions. Particularly evident here is the initiative of such associations as the Poznań Agglomeration and the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Agglomeration. These entities participate in joint ventures of substantive nature that support

the coordination of public tasks. For example, the Transport and Mobility Strategy or the Practices Platform launched in the Tri-City can be indicated here. In the case of Poznań, it is worth to point out the cooperation activities at the level of spatial planning and public transport. These activities are carried out in addition to those associated with the implementation of the ITI.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the absence of the appointment of the metropolitan union by the Council of Ministers, the only form of coordination and cooperation between local government units in the metropolitan area are bottom-up initiatives. They can operate both in the form of associations and municipal unions. When analysing the bottom-up metropolitan integration initiative on the example of five Polish cities, it can be noted that the generally chosen legal form are associations. They function in a form prescribed by the Associations Law Act. The most important area of cooperation is the public transport, environmental protection and joint implementation of projects co-financed from structural funds. The most institutionalised association is the Poznań Agglomeration, which beyond the typical organisational support of the Office, cooperates closely with the Metropolitan Research Centre being the expert and scientific base for the actions taken. Associations have very similar structure of financing its actions, which is mainly based on membership fees, the amount of which depends on the number of inhabitants. In none of the associations members decided to introduce a common board of public services. Thus, associations are only the forum for debate and consultations on carried out public tasks. The common area of cooperation in the field of public tasks is the issue of payment for public transport in the form of a combined metropolitan ticket. The current activity of actions of local government units within the framework of the analysed associations does not indicate that it would lead in the near future to further institutionalisation of activities. The experience of foreign countries shows that this impulse could be additional financial incentives or creating a mechanism for the joint implementation of public tasks. The above examples of cooperation of local government units indicate that metropolises are a particular kind of local government units. Their specificity is conditioned by several factors. The first one is related to the complexity of the territorial structure. Metropolitan areas cover a vast geographical area, which is entirely functionally linked, mainly in the form of migration, to economic and transportation relations, etc. As a result, in these areas the units created on the basis of the basic territorial division are incompatible with the entire metropolitan structure, its tasks and principles of functioning. Therefore, within the framework of the existing inability to form metropolitan unions, which would constitute a tool to coordinate some public services, creating of associations of local government units is the only way to improve the quality of public governance and the pursued public policies.

Table 1 Bottom-up metropolitan integration of Polish cities

Metropolitan area	Area size	Legal form of cooperation	Adopted strategy documents	Financing of actions
Poznań	23 LGUs, inhabited by about 1 mln inhabitants 2.9 thous. km <sup>2</sup>	Association	the Poznań Agglomeration Development Strategy; the Poznań Agglomeration Transport Plan; the study of conditions of the Poznań agglomeration spatial development	The amount of fee determined based on the number of inhabitants; Poznań pays the double base amount
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot	57 LGUs, inhabited by 1.5 mln inhabitants, 5.5 thous. km <sup>2</sup>	Association	the 2030 ITI Strategy; the Transport and Mobility Strategy; the Metropolitan Bike System; the Practices Platform	The amount of fee determined based on the number of inhabitants
Szczecin	15 LGUs	Association	The 2030 ITI Strategy; the Low-Carbon Economy Plan	The amount of fee determined based on the number of inhabitants
Bydgoszcz	21 LGUs, inhabited by 0.6 mln inhabitants	Association	-	The amount of fee determined based on the number of inhabitants
Kraków	15 LGUs	Association	The 2030 ITI Strategy; P&R recommendations; the Concept of Cycling System Development; the Low-Carbon Economy Plan	The amount of fee determined based on the number of inhabitants

Source: Own study



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Legal acts:

- UN Resolution 67/216 adopted at the HABITAT III conference on 17-20 October 2016 in Ecuador.
- The Act on Metropolitan Unions of 9 October 2015 (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1890).
- The Associations Law Act of 7 April 1990, Journal of Laws of 1989, No. 20, item 104.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 78, item 483.
- The Gmina Self-Government Act of 8 March 1990 (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 16, item 95).
- Urban Agenda for the EU. Pact of Amsterdam adopted during the Dutch Presidency in 2016.
- An open letter of presidents of European cities to the representatives of EU institutions and the prime ministers of the member states of Rethinking Europe of 17 November 2016.

Netography:

- <http://www.aglomeracja.poznan.pl/>
- <http://www.som.szczecin.pl/>
- [www.metropoliakrakowska.pl](http://www.metropoliakrakowska.pl)
- <http://www.metropoliagdansk.pl/>