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From doing nothing to metropolitan government institutions? Governing metropolitan areas in Poland

At the moment in Poland there is no specific form of regulation related to governing metropolitan areas. There is also no official definition of metropolitan areas (not even an official recognition of their existence). The only example of specific legal regulation for big cities is the Law on Warsaw Local Government (which has undergone a couple of very significant changes during last 15 years), but it is dealing only with organization of government within central city limits, not touching the relationship with surrounding suburb areas, and therefore will not be discussed in this paper. Moreover, until recently there was also no vital discussion on the metropolitan governance issue in Poland.

For several years the only organization raising the issues related to the importance of metropolitan areas has been the Union of Polish Metropolises (*Unia Metropolii Polskich*). Although the Union's members are only 12 central cities of the largest Polish agglomerations, the organization has tried to identify and recognize wider "metropolitan areas", which boundaries have been defined in a very controversial way (covering very wide area)². For a long time it seemed also that the issue of co-operation within the wider metropolitan area was pursued mostly by Union's office rather than undertaken spontaneously by its individual members. However the situation has changed significantly during the last year or two. Some of the expert discussions in Union of Polish Metropolises resulted in more concrete policy papers including recommendations for legal regulations. The first draft of National Development Programme for 2007-2013 has tried to define Polish metropolitan areas (based to a large extent on earlier ESPON studies) and this attempt met with a high enthusiasm of some and heavy critics of other interested local governments. Regional, county and municipal governments in some of metropolitan areas decided to sign co-operation agreement. And although it is too early to say whether these agreements will be followed by more concrete jointly undertaken actions, the fact of reaching a "verbal agreement" itself is very meaningful. As we will explain in further parts of the paper, the change has not occurred without an influence of the exogenous factor, namely of the European Union and debates on the disbursement of Structural and Cohesion Funds in 2007-2013. Nevertheless, the atmosphere around governance of metropolitan areas in Poland has changed dramatically from a largely

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² For the discussion of metropolitan boundaries in Poland see the earlier paper prepared in the IMO project (Swianiewicz, Klimska 2005).

unnoticed issue to one of the hottest debates among local government politicians, administrators and experts.

This paper tries to summarize subsequently:

- Allocation of functions between tiers of government, analysed from the point of view of management of metropolitan functions and services;
- Present forms of ad-hoc or bottom-up co-ordination existing in absence of formal regulations of metropolitan government structures. Apart from the general discussion, this part includes also a brief description of two cases in which co-ordination processes are perhaps the most advanced in Poland, and which represent two different modes of regulation;
- On-going discussion of possible solutions which might be implemented in the future.

1. Demand for metropolitan co-ordination

The main reason for which some forms of metropolitan organization in Poland are required, is an effective management of several public services within the metropolitan area as a whole. There are two main fields in which this demand for co-ordination is clearly visible. The first one is related to the social services and to the under bounded administrative jurisdictions responsible for the service, which are smaller than the actual catchment area of the service. Provision of secondary schools may be a very good example of this phenomenon.

The other case is related to physical infrastructure services which require co-ordination in a wider metropolitan space, either due to economy of scale (for example in solid waste management) or due to optimal catchment area (for example in case of strategic and land-use planning, public transport, or network services such as water and sewage systems).

In Poland there are three tiers of government³ which function in metropolitan areas:

- Municipal – each of central cities is a separate municipality. In addition the suburban area is divided into several small local governments, which number is sometimes close to 100 within one metropolitan area;
- County – typical central cities are cities of county status, i.e. they are responsible both for municipal and county functions. But these are separate from one or a few of county governments which cover the suburban part of the metropolitan area. Consequently the suburban part of the metropolitan area is covered by totally separate county governments;
- Regional – there are 16 regions, and each metropolitan area is just a part of a much wider area covered by this tier.

Table 1. presents a summary of the fragmentation of the government structure of Polish metropolitan areas.

³ In addition to these, there are also 18 boroughs of the City of Warsaw.

Table 1. Fragmentation of government structures in Polish metropolitan areas.

A. As defined by the Union of Polish Metropolises

Metro Area	Population (2004)	% or region's population living in the metro area	Number of local governments in the metro area		Number of population per municipality			
			County (including cities of county status)	Municipal	mean	Median	minimum	maximum
Warszawa	2,776,520	54%	10	67	41,440	10,900	3,140	1,689,560
Łódź	1,148,370	44%	5	28	41,010	8,840	3,440	779,130
Kraków	1,964,770	60%	11	84	23,390	10,050	2,580	757,690
Wrocław	1,165,200	40%	9	44	26,480	10,300	2,960	637,550
Poznań	1,106,040	33%	6	38	29,110	12,860	2,150	574,130
Gdańsk	1,230,350	56%	8	41	30,010	9,890	1,320	461,010
Katowice	2,893,940	62%	22	73	39,640	10,800	2,980	322,290
Szczecin	724,390	43%	6	27	26,830	6,570	1,570	414,030
Lublin	715,420	33%	5	41	17,450	6,880	3,040	356,560
Bydgoszcz	756,450	37%	5	19	39,810	9,020	3,680	370,250
Białystok	548,010	46%	4	33	16,610	5,550	2,070	291,930
Rzeszów	603,500	29%	6	38	15,880	10,660	5,780	159,090

B. As defined in the "IMO-1 paper".

Metro Area	Population (2004)	% or region's population living in the metro area	Number of local governments in the metro area		Number of population per municipality			
			County (including cities of county status)(*)	Municipal	mean	Median	minimum	maximum
Warszawa	2,605,110	51%	9	52	50,100	15,070	3,810	1,689,560
Łódź	1,124,180	43%	5	22	51,100	11,280	3,580	779,130
Kraków	1,378,840	42%	8	41	33,630	10,820	5,790	757,690
Wrocław	958,904	33%	6	23	41,690	13,220	3,000	637,550
Poznań	855,055	25%	2	18	47,500	15,290	5,170	574,130
Gdańsk	1,221,740	56%	9	31	39,410	15,560	1,320	461,010
Katowice	2,682,730	57%	21	51	52,600	17,360	4,600	322,290
Szczecin	675,970	40%	6	13	52,000	11,260	1,590	414,030
Lublin	565,140	26%	4	19	29,740	9,230	4,980	356,560
Bydgoszcz	752,150	36%	5	22	34,190	8,730	2,050	370,250
Białystok	427,290	36%	3	13	32,870	12,470	4,170	291,930
Rzeszów	347,660	17%	3	14	24,830	14,020	6,030	159,090
Częstochowa	390,850	8%	2	16	24,430	10,120	4,890	248,030
Radom	346,120	7%	2	12	28,840	10,460	6,350	227,610
Kielce	347,830	27%	2	13	26,760	12,720	6,910	209,460
Bielsko Biała	326,350	7%	2	11	29,670	12,170	5,810	176,990
Olsztyn	244,190	17%	2	8	30,520	8,690	4,990	173,850
Rybnik	503,580	11%	5	19	26,500	12,390	3,610	141,760
Wałbrzych	253,030	9%	3	12	21,090	7,580	4,110	127,570
Opole	211,020	20%	2	8	26,380	10,010	6,640	128,860
Tarnów	224,250	7%	2	8	28,030	13,600	9,710	118,270

(*) – in some cases only parts of counties is a part of metropolitan area.

Problems related to delivery of services in metropolitan areas of Poland are stressed by the fact that most of decentralized functions are provided on a municipal level. Over half of the volume of sub-national budgets is spend by municipalities, few times more than by Polish

counties and several times more than by regional governments. It is the lowest tier of local government which is responsible for such services as technical infrastructure networks (water and sewage, gas provision), solid waste management, city public transport and land use planning.

From the point of view of our discussion, the most important function delivered on a county level is provision of secondary education. "Metropolitan" functions delivered on a regional level include management of regional roads and provision of regional railway services. According to 2000 Law on Planning and Spatial Management, regional spatial plans must also include sections on metropolitan area's development (*Ustawa o planowaniu i...*, 2003).

This brief overview shows that metropolitan services are delivered in a multi-level and - at the same time - geographically fragmented context.

The fact that central cities of metropolitan areas are usually cities of a county status (providing both municipal and county functions) is not very helpful, since such a situation cuts off cities from their surrounding. It is quite common that majority of pupils living in the suburban zone receive their secondary education in the central city, i.e. in the different county level jurisdiction than that in which they live. This situation produces accountability deficit, since the service is provided by local authority on which the users of the services (or their parents in case of schools) have no influence through regular democratic procedures.

A similar issue occurs for example in public transportation, which is typically organized by central cities, also for citizens of surrounding municipalities. No wonder such an organization often produces conflicts, for example on sharing costs of subsidies for city buses servicing the suburban settlement units. Negotiations on frequency and costs of bus services conducted between transport companies owned by central cities and administration of suburban towns are typical issues reported by local press at the end of each calendar year. A very recent example of such a conflict in the Warsaw metropolitan area has been recently widely commented in press (Osowski 2006). One of suburb municipalities refused to pay the bills for suburban buses provided by the Warsaw city, what resulted in the liquidation of the bus service provided by the central city. This led to the wider debate with participation of several mayors of suburban municipalities, who complained about the lack of real partnership relations and non-transparent rules of calculation of required subsidies by the Warsaw transport authorities (Śmietana 2006).

In addition to accountability deficit described above, the present situation may produce also fiscal horizontal imbalance. In practice quite a few services are provided by central cities for citizens of surrounding municipalities who work or visit central cities and benefit from public services there. It concerns for example secondary schools, public transport, roads, parking spaces, green areas etc. With some small exceptions (like in case of – often contested - agreements on co-financing city transportation) these expenses are not compensated by local governments whose citizens are service users⁴. Neither is the issue properly addressed by the inter-governmental finance system. In theory, spending on secondary schools is covered by the special part of the general purpose grant calculated on the basis of the number of enrolled

⁴ Recently, we witnessed a serious of conflicts between suburb municipalities and central cities (for example in Warsaw and Lublin agglomerations) over co-financing of pre-school education for suburb children attending kindergartens in central cities ("Długi za przedszkolaków...", 2006).

students⁵. But in practice, the grant covers usually just a part of actual spending, so students from suburb towns are subsidized from taxes paid by tax-payers in the central cities. This problem of free-riding is illustrated by data in the table 2. As Swianiewicz and Herbst (2002) calculate, typical central city spends on secondary education over 60% more than receives in a form of education grant, while in the surrounding counties the burden is obviously much lower.

Table 2. Attendance rate in secondary schools in 10 selected central city and suburb counties in 2000

<i>County name</i>	<i>County type</i>	<i>students in first class of secondary schools/ population of 15 years old</i>	<i>students in first class of secondary schools/ graduates of local primary schools</i>	<i>students in secondary schools/population of 15-18 years old</i>
<i>Toruń</i>	City	1,61	1,49	1,31
<i>Toruński</i>	surrounding	0,20	0,21	0,21
<i>Rzeszów</i>	City	2,28	2,11	1,9
<i>Rzeszowski</i>	surrounding	0,31	0,32	0,28
<i>Kraków</i>	City	1,45	1,38	1,28
<i>Krakowski</i>	surrounding	0,34	0,35	0,33
<i>Wrocław</i>	City	1,30	1,29	1,19
<i>Wrocławski</i>	surrounding	0,18	0,20	0,17
<i>Olsztyn</i>	City	1,64	1,60	1,35
<i>Olsztyński</i>	surrounding	0,42	0,49	0,38

Source: Swianiewicz, Herbst 2002.

Moreover, the method of spending needs estimation used in the equalization system ignores actual number of users of public services, which in central cities is significantly higher than number of residents. It also ignores higher unit costs of some public services delivered in the central cities, for example related to higher salaries or cost of land purchase for public investments. The issue is not a very burning one at the moment, since – as explained in IMO1 paper (Swianiewicz, Klimska 2005) – Polish central cities are usually more affluent than most of suburban municipalities and therefore such a horizontal cross-subsidizing is still affordable and leads to very modest protests only. However in the long-term this situation limits capacity of spending for development functions in central cities. What is more taking into account recent migration trends within metropolitan areas (progressing migration of affluent citizens from central cities to suburb municipalities) situation may become relatively even more complicated soon.

2. Solutions

Goldsmith (2005) identify four typical answers to challenges related to the demand for metropolitan co-ordination:

- **“Do nothing”**
- **Annexation** (incorporation) of surrounding areas by the central city, which leads to one-tier metropolitan government;
- **Voluntary co-operation** of fragmented local governments in the metropolitan area;
- **Two-tier government structure.**

⁵ The school grant is formally a non-targeted grant, which means it may be spent on any purpose, not necessarily related to education. However in the vast majority of municipalities actual current spending on education is higher than the received grants.

The question is which of these solutions are applied in Polish practice and how can we assess their effectiveness? Figure 1. provides a framework for analysis. In following sections of this paper we will try to refer to specified contextual variables in order to explain and assess present forms of managing public services in metropolitan areas.

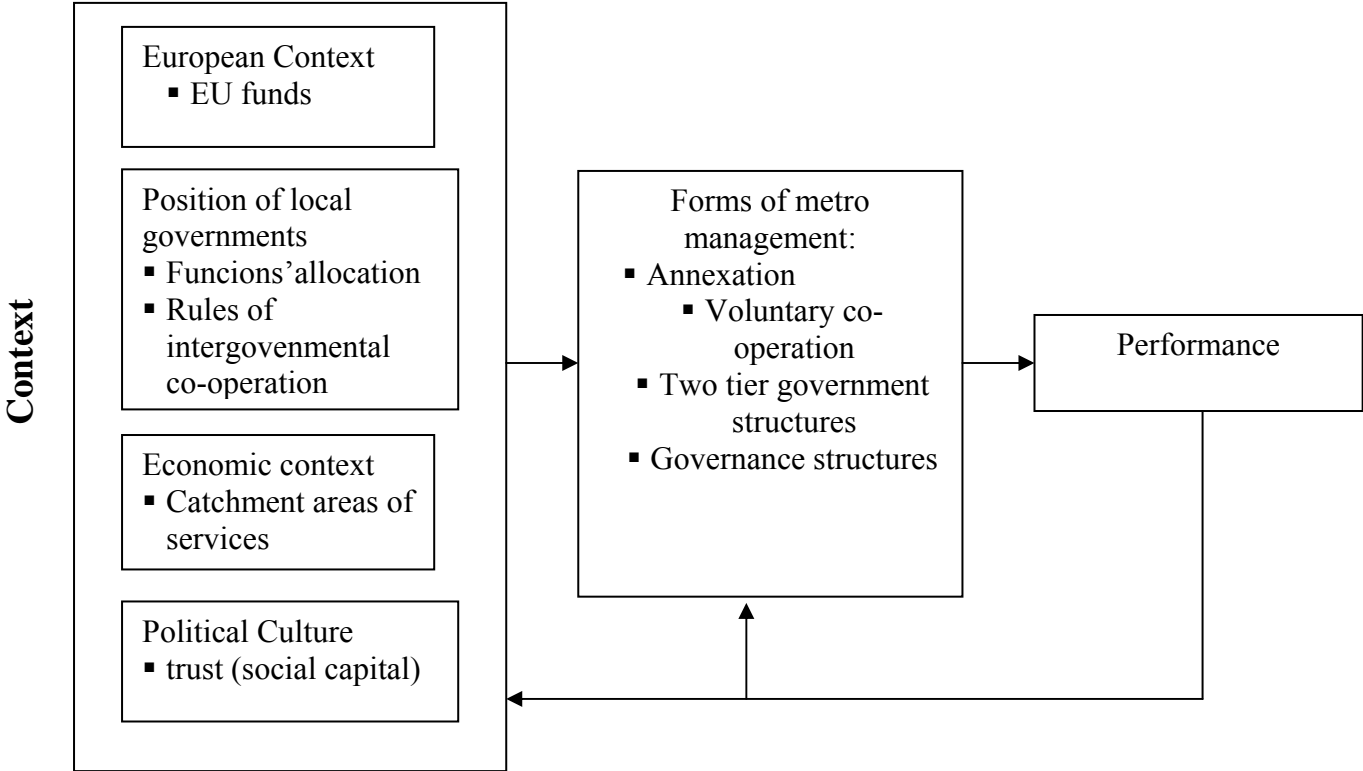


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for analysis of metropolitan government structures

Until now the dominant situation of Polish metropolitan areas might have been described as a combination of first two solutions. It was quite common that the necessity for reform remained unnoticed by politicians, so there was no attempt to improve the management structures. Annexation, which was a typical solution in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in many countries, is still a very popular answer for pressing problems in metropolitan co-ordination. There are at least two disadvantages related to this solution. The first one is related to creating “over-bounded local authorities” (as opposed to under-bounded boundaries described in the previous section) – size of the central cities exceeds the optimal scale, producing dis-economies of scale and the actual catchment area of several services is seriously smaller than area of the jurisdiction providing these services. The other, is that a growing territorial unit is hard to defend on democracy ground, producing – as Heinelt and Hubert (2005a, p.2) state - *tensions between the building of metropolitan governance capacity and democratic legitimacy*. The annexation process hampers identity and self-governing character of smaller communities existing in the metropolitan area.

Table 3. shows how the areas of Polish central cities have been expanding in recent years. A good example of expanding city boundaries is provided by Warsaw, which was annexing new territories several times during last couple of dozens years. The Warsaw territory more than tripled over last 50 years. The last changes was in 2002, when the suburb town – Wesola – became a part of Warsaw. In 2004 and 2005 there were new discussions on annexation of further currently separate municipalities (of Sulejówek, Raszyn and Izabelin) and such a

solution had a support of several Warsaw city politicians. The most recent expansion of the Polish central city took place right in the beginning of the 2006, when the territory of Rzeszów was enlarged (Mościcki 2005). The incorporation included two neighbouring settlements comprising together a territory of 14,4 square km (so the city area reached 68 sq km).

But in general, while incorporation was very easy to apply and often used option under the undemocratic communist regime, it has become much more difficult after political turn-over and decentralization reform of 1990. Autonomy of municipalities is now protected by the European Charter of Local Governments as well as by Polish Constitution, and annexation requires a more complicated procedures than before, including obligatory consultations with local community. Although the final decision is made by central government, who is not bound by the results of consultations, the decision which would be clearly opposed by local community is politically very difficult. As a result, the number of cases of expanding central cities territories has dropped. As we see in the table 3., all but two major cities expanded their territory between 1950 and 1971. In 1971-1985 period it was a case of all but one cities presented in the table. In 1985-1993 there were still nine central cities (out of 21) which gained new territory, whereas in 1993-2004 period there were only four such cities (see table 3.).

Table 3. Expanding area of central cities in Polish metropolitan areas

	1950	1971	1985	1993	2004
Warszawa	141	446	485	485	517
Łódź	211	214	214	295	295
Kraków	165	230	322	327	327
Wrocław	175	229	293	293	293
Poznań	220	220	229	261	261
Gdańsk	107	153	262	262	262
Katowice	42	100	165	165	165
Szczecin	302	282	300	301	301
Lublin	30	94	119	148	148
Bydgoszcz	66	119	175	175	175
Białystok	49	74	90	90	90
Rzeszów	8	40	54	54	54 (*)
Częstochowa	47	93	156	160	160
Radom	22	66	112	112	112
Kielce	41	55	109	109	109
Bielsko Biała	10	50	120	125	125
Olsztyn	41	58	75	88	88
Rybnik	NA	40	135	135	148
Wałbrzych	21	64	85	85	85
Opole	31	53	96	96	96
Tarnów	NA	72	72	72	72

(*) 68 from 1 January 2006.

Sources: *Rocznik statystyczny GUS 1950*, *Rocznik statystyczny GUS 1971*, *Bank Danych Regionalnych GUS*

The enlargement of Rzeszów territory, mentioned above, provides a good illustration of the changing environment for the annexation policy. Originally Rzeszów suggested annexation of much a wider area covering the parts of territory of 6 of surrounding municipalities. This would result in almost doubling the area of the city (from 54 to 103 square kilometers). Nonetheless suburb municipalities opposed the idea of annexation. Instead they suggested creation of the Inter-Municipal Association “Rzeszów Agglomeration” which would take over responsibility for delivery of some functions (Mościcki 2005b). But this idea was not supported by the Rzeszów city, who was afraid of losing control on some functions.

Eventually, the central government has agreed on the annexation of an area which is much smaller than initially planned (two settlements of a joint area of 14,4 sq km instead of parts of 5 municipalities and three times larger an area).

It is silently expected that municipalities would undertake voluntary co-operation in service delivery, when necessary. Polish law provides a legal framework for creation of both single-purpose and general-purpose associations of local governments. The Association (*Związek*) created in that way may be a separate legal entity, financed and managed jointly by several local governments. Currently, there are 248 such associations, although only 168 were active in 2004 (they submitted financial reports on their activities). Not all associations are examples of successful co-operation. There are many examples where the initial attempt to establish the co-operation failed, because local governments involved could not agree on some principles of co-operation. Aziewicz (1998) gives also some examples of devastating conflicts in existing associations. Another form of voluntary co-operation is communal company established jointly by few local governments. Such a solution has become more popular at the end of 1990s, when some local governments noticed that under the association arrangement the decision making process was too slow (because delegates of individual local governments needed frequent consultations with their local councils) and that the position of executive boards was too weak. The form of a company form is less vulnerable to such negative phenomena.

Indeed, there are examples of attempts of various forms of bottom-up co-operation in several metropolitan areas, nevertheless, as we show in our case studies, this provides only a partial and very imperfect solution to the existing challenges. Why are the examples of voluntary inter-municipal co-operation not applied frequently and why don't they always bring satisfactory results? One should remember that there are several potential problems to overcome before the co-operation becomes fruitful and operational. It requires compromises on the particular interests of the individual municipalities involved. Local leaders need to agree on co-operation which may sometimes affect their personal ambitions. The joint provision of the functions requires transaction costs, which may be identified with a complicate organizational-managerial setting. The co-operation is therefore complicated also due to the organizational and political costs. And the experience of European countries suggests that the development of co-operation needs to be stimulated by incentives provided by the central government, which is not the case of Polish metropolitan areas.

The ideas of the two-tier structure of metropolitan government in Poland have been formulated relatively recently, and will be discussed in the following section of this paper.

Heinelt and Kuebler (2005b) discuss one more solution – *new regionalism* – which goes beyond *government* structures and concentrates on *local governance* in metropolitan areas. Annexation or metropolitan two-tier government structures refer to the American tradition of the reform theory and *a somewhat Weberian trust in the rationality and planning capacity of large public bureaucracies* (Heinelt, Kuebler 2005b, p. 9). Voluntary co-operation of small municipal governments is rooted in the public choice paradigm (Tiebout 1956, Ostrom 1972). New regionalism goes beyond these traditional solutions and calls for voluntary but very strong, horizontal (non-hierarchical) co-operation among various public and private actors. Governance often supplements structural reforms. Fuerst (2005) suggests, that effective management of Stuttgart or Hannover metropolises in Germany has been achieved both due to reform of local government institutions and *paradigm change* by local politicians. Heinelt and Kuebler (2005b) indicate several metropolitan areas (including Barcelona, Helsinki,

Rotterdam, or Swiss metropolises) in which governance structure play more and more important role and – in a way – substitute traditional government structures.

However, Heinelt and Kuebler (2005b) formulate three conditions, which – according to them – have to be fulfilled in order to enable effective functioning of governance structures. These are:

- **Cooperative actor behaviour** rather than confrontation or imposed reform. *New regionalism relies on voluntary entries and the compliance of the involved actors* (p. 190). One may notice that this requires a sufficient level of social capital and, in particular, of the level of trust among the actors.
- **Adequate incentive structures** set by upper-level governments. The most obvious examples of incentives are based on financial subsidies, grants or competencies. This role can be played by central government, EU institutions or “big events” (such as Olympic games) organized in the metropolitan area.
- **Territorial political leadership.** Also in this case level of trust among actors plays a vital role.

Assuming that Heinelt and Kuebler are right, we may ask whether these conditions are fulfilled in Poland. One may have very substantial doubts on each of them:

- Culture of co-operation among the actors of metropolitan arena. Of course situation differs from one place to another, but a general low level of trust is a characteristic feature of Polish social life. It concerns both trust among citizens and trust towards politicians and political institutions. According to Eurobarometer 2004 survey (62.2) Poland had the lowest (among all EU states) proportion of respondents agreeing that “most people can be trusted”. In Poland this proportion was 10%, while average for 25 EU countries was 30%, and for 15 “old member states” even 33%. Similarly, the European Social Survey from 2002-2003 shown the lowest level of trust in politicians. The average score for Poland was 2.7 (in 0-10 scale) while average for 15 “old EU member states” was 3.7. Similar data are quoted by Domański (2005), who stresses that the low trust level is interrelated to the fact that democratic mechanisms in Poland are often limited to democratic elections (there are not alive mechanisms of participation in periods between elections). As Grabowska and Szawiel (2001, p. 158) quote, according to the international surveys Poland has also the lowest membership in voluntary organizations among all OECD countries. The recent (2004) Eurobarometer data provide similar results – in Poland proportion of members of voluntary associations was 25% (21 place among 25 EU countries), while average for all EU countries was 48%, and for 15 EU old member states, even 51%. There is no doubt that these facts are underlying factors influencing the atmosphere of co-operation among municipal governments, co-operation between tiers of public authorities as well as partnership building between public and private or NGOs actors. In contacts among public authorities additional complication is related to political (partisan) difference between actors and low level of pragmatism of contacts between politicians of different political colour. Paradoxically, this problem is not sufficiently reduced by the low level of partisanship among Polish local authorities (which is the lowest among European countries – see Fallend, Ignits and Swianiewicz 2006). It should be also stressed that the temperature of partisan conflicts in metro areas, and especially in central cities, is usually higher than in the rest of local governments (Swianiewicz, Klimska 2005). From earlier studies we know also that it is difficult to legitimize co-operation of local governments with private sectors. Co-operation with small business does not lead to required outcomes

due to the low level of resources of the potential partner. At the same time, collaboration with big private investors would be politically difficult, because it would expose them to accusation of corruption raised by political opposition and a part of the public opinion (see Swianiewicz, Klimska, Mielczarek 2004). Consequently, it is not easy for metropolitan local governments in Poland to find *governance partners* among private sector representatives.

- There is a total lack of any external incentives (other than general verbal declarations) for co-operation of local governments. It concerns both potential central government incentives and those which might be potentially produced by the EU supported programmes.
- It is hard to find examples of strong, and widely accepted leadership in Polish metropolitan areas. A high turn-over among central city mayors and – consequently – short “track record” of the most of current mayors, contribute to their low capacity to provide leadership which would be accepted by suburban local governments. Among current central city mayors there is no one who would have hold his/her post for more then two terms (8 years), and most of them took over their position as recently as after last 2002 election. This situation is significantly different from situation in French agglomerations, where most of *mers* have kept their position for several years (see examples quoted in Hoffmann-Martinot 2002). Such a long leadership record supports personal prestige of a leader and helps in building position of a “metropolitan leader”. As data from the international “Local political leader”⁶ project suggest, the average time in office of a Polish mayor is usually significantly shorter than in case of West-European countries (Swianiewicz 2005). Of course situation differs from one city to another. Among Polish metropolitan areas on the one extreme we have a case of Poznań with just two mayors since 1990 (moreover the current mayor was a vice-mayor between 1990 and 1998). On the other extreme there is Warsaw, where there have already been 6 mayors after 1990 and their position has been additionally weakened by the frequent changes of laws on Warsaw local government and by conflicts between city-level and individual borough’s authorities. The second factor which weakens potential leadership of central city mayors is related to the frequent political (partisan) differences between local governments within one metropolitan area.

All these factors support the claim that it is hard to expect sufficient effectiveness of the self-regulation mechanisms by the means of governance structures, as suggested by the new regionalism approach.

3. Bottom-up co-operation of local governments

One of the first cases of bottom-up co-operation of local governments in the metropolitan area is related to Warsaw agglomeration. The first association of Warsaw (which was then divided into 7 separate boroughs-municipalities) and suburb local governments was created already at the beginning of 1990s. In 2000 a group of local governments established The “Warsaw Metropolis” Association. However one can hardly quote the Association as an example of the success. According to recent research (Zegar 2003) interest in co-operation is expressed mostly by some of the suburb municipalities, with a very little interest of the Warsaw city

⁶ International research project involving survey of mayors in 17 European countries, co-ordinated by Annick Magnier from University of Florence, and Hubert Heinelt from Darmstadt University (see Back, Heinelt, Magnier 2006).

itself, which stays beyond co-operation networks revealing almost no relations at all with the neighbouring municipalities. No wonder, that in such a situation it is difficult to find successful initiatives and political importance of the association is very low.

Moreover the lack of leadership stability in the core city also aggravates problems with the co-ordination of Warsaw MA policy and strategies. Since 1990 till spring of 2006 there have been 7 mayors deriving from the different political orientations, which impedes the consequent policy. What is more, as has been stated above, the main city of the metro area seems to be very passive actor in the partnership network comparing with other central cities. It can be subscribed to the fact that Warsaw, being the capital of Poland, occupies a very privileged economic position and thus additional actions attracting investments and encouraging surrounding municipalities to cooperate are not considered to be necessary. The most appealing sign of this “neglecting attitude” is the fact that the city of Warsaw isn’t a member of the “Warsaw Metropolis” Association which leads to a peculiar if not an absurd situation.

This negative picture is sharpened by the fact that few habitants have heard of “Warsaw Metropolis” Association. During the February 2006 training course for municipal, county and regional government officials from Mazowsze Region (region in which the Warsaw city is located) we conducted a small semi-survey in which we asked who has ever heard about the Association, and we could hardly find someone.

One more long-lasting example of co-operation is related to Katowice metropolitan area, which has no clear central cities, but it consists of around a dozen of cities of comparable size. Since 1991 a large part of public transport has been delivered there by the Inter-Municipal Transport Association of Upper Silesia. There are 23 municipalities which are members of the Association. More recent integration initiative in the same region is Upper Silesian Metropolitan Association established by 16 municipalities at the end of 2005 (“Mega-Katowice” 2006). So far, the main focus of the Association seems to be placed on planning, joint promotion and joint applying for EU development funds, but not on joint provision of services. Obviously at the moment it is far too early to assess the results of its functioning.

Another recent initiative of co-operation within metropolitan areas is related to the wider phenomenon of Europeanization of Polish metropolitan areas, and especially to the growing importance of EU funds for local development programmes. According to several experts and city politicians metropolitan areas, and especially central cities, have been unfairly treated by regional authorities who were co-deciding upon the allocation of investment funds from pre-accession assistance and first tranches of cohesion and structural funds (Mościcki 2005). Union of Polish Metropolises has calculated that metropolitan central cities has obtained only 7% of all funds from the Integrated Operational Programme of Regional Development, which were allocated by regional governments (“Europejskie projekty...”, 2006)⁷. The bias of the decisions was in favour of less affluent peripheral areas. That was one of the important reasons why the Union of Polish Metropolises started to lobby for the creation of a separate “metropolitan operational programme” for 2007-2013, which would function in addition to 16 regional development programmes. Initially, the idea gained support of the central government working on the draft of National Development Programme for 2007-2013. The first draft of the NDP identified 8 metropolitan areas in Poland (following ESPON classification). This produced an immediate reaction of the four excluded cities being the members of the UMP which started to lobby for their inclusion on the list. Their lobbying was

⁷ It should be added together that the share of metropolitan cities in some other EU funds (such as pre-accession ISPA fund) was much higher.

supported by the UMP office, who suggested they sign agreements on co-operation within metropolitan areas. 20 April 2005 such an agreement was signed in Bydgoszcz and was soon followed by almost identical documents signed in Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów (all four were not included on the list of planned metropolitan areas). Each of the documents was signed by the leaders of relevant regional government, central city mayor and leaders of involved counties. The agreement has not included mayors of suburb municipalities. The case of Bydgoszcz agreement is especially worth stressing. Bydgoszcz metropolitan area has in fact two centres – cities of Bydgoszcz and of Toruń. Traditionally, both cities competed with each other rather than cooperated. Convincing mayors of Bydgoszcz and Toruń that their co-operation is the only chance for achieving formal status of metropolitan area has been considered an unexpected success of the Union of Polish Metropolises' experts. The willingness to undertake the effort of co-ordination and to sign the agreements was very clearly stimulated by the potential financial incentive in form of the special EU funds. It is worth to stress that "the European factor" as an incentive for metropolitan co-operation has been also stressed by other studies both in Poland and throughout Europe (Heinelt, Kuebler 2005, Kubiak, Pietraszewski 2005). The willingness to co-operate materialized in some concrete project proposals. For example, Bydgoszcz and Toruń developed jointly a project of the fast-train between two core cities of the metropolitan area and plan to submit it for EU funds support. However, signing a formal agreement not always meant the end of devastating conflicts. In some cases (like in Białystok) a conflict between core-city and regional leaders, both of whom would like to play a role of the "leader of an integration" provide additional brake for the co-operation.

The UMP lobbying has been at least partially successful. The newest version of the Spatial Management Policy (*Koncepcja Zagospodarowania Przestrzennego Kraju*) – from March 2005 – in addition to 8 metropolitan areas recognizes three potential metropolises – namely Bydgoszcz, Białystok and Lublin (Rzeszów remained the only UMP city left behind the list). The revised version of the NDP draft adopted the same logic.

On the other hand, the lobbying on behalf of metropolises was only partially successful, because the government has changed its mind and the present plans do not include a special programme for metropolitan areas. It has been substituted by the special programme for five regions of Eastern Poland, which belong to EU regions with the lowest GDP per capita (in each of them GDP is below 80% of Polish average). Although the present government admits that "investing in metropolitan areas may be an engine for the growth of the whole regions", but it does not want to declare its willingness to prepare the special programme of support for metropolitan areas ("Metropolie to lokomotywy...", 2006).

In the next section we present the more detailed picture of the metropolitan governance structures in two Polish cities being the results of a preliminary study carried out in those metropolises.

3.1. The case of Wrocław

Among Polish metropolis Wrocław is seen as one of the most successful cases in terms of both metropolitan co-ordination and a general governing organization. A preliminary insight in Polish situation allows a statement that this metropolitan area is relatively very advanced in developing and functioning of metropolitan governing structures.

Wrocław MA counts with more than a million habitants and definitely, just like in case of Warsaw MA, the whole region is strongly dominated by the core city. Still this center is at the

same time the main initiator and stimulator of the co-operation project which seems to pose a huge difference between these two metropolises.

This difference may be partially subscribed to the fact that the leadership of the core city is much more stable there than in Warsaw – within last 17 years there have been 3 mayors (comparing to 7 in Warsaw), all following the same political orientation, what implies stronger continuation of the leadership style and strategic priorities.

The beginning of the metropolitan wide co-operation initiative dates back to the end of 90s' when the debate on the economic and spatial integration of the whole agglomeration took place. The main participants were the mayors of the municipalities and counties interested. As a result of the debate in October 1999 in Oleśnica (one of suburb towns near Wrocław) the Committee for Strategic Plan for the Wrocław Agglomeration was established. It gathers the political leaders of the municipalities (including the city of Wrocław) and counties the agglomeration area consists of. On the same meeting a group for the strategy of the Agglomeration Development was established within which works a consulting team that consists of the representatives of the relevant administrative entities. All those bodies were to be served by the unit within the Wrocław City Hall - Wrocław Development Office - which seems to act as a main coordinator of the co-operation. This Office played an important role in development of the common strategy for the whole metropolitan area. The staff of the Office stresses that the mere idea of such co-operation was prior to the policy of the EU concerning the metropolitan areas supporting. The Committee was first established in relation to the agglomeration of Wrocław. Now, due to the discussions on metropolis status, UE policy and the project of National Development Plan it's become necessary to shift from agglomeration to metropolis ideas. Still the notion "agglomeration" is used as a synonym of the area covered by Committee members whereas the Wrocław MA covers a wider territory.

The rhythm of the works connected with the implementation of the Strategy is strongly related to the agenda of the Wrocław Development Office as this is in fact an unit that initiates and coordinates to a high degree the whole metropolitan co-operation (as we will see in the next case described in this paper, a similar occurrence is noticeable in case of the Gdańsk metropolis where this role is played by the Regional Government Office). For instance, the end of 2005 was a period of finalizing the Spatial Development Plan for the city of Wrocław which is why works related to the spatial plans for the whole MA were somehow neglected. Nonetheless the Plan for the core city was presented on the background of the whole MA and discussed on the Committee session in December 2005.

The meetings of the Committee are usually held every 6 months. There is no formal leader of the Committee, nevertheless the municipalities of the agglomeration themselves see the city of Wrocław as an initiator and a leader (perhaps both due to the dominant role the city plays in the metropolitan area and due to the stability of political leadership in Wrocław, mentioned above). As a result the core city is a *primum inter pares* member of the Committee. It is stressed that all these actions are a bottom-up voluntary initiatives that have no legal status.

Agglomeration of Wrocław (local governments members of the Committee)

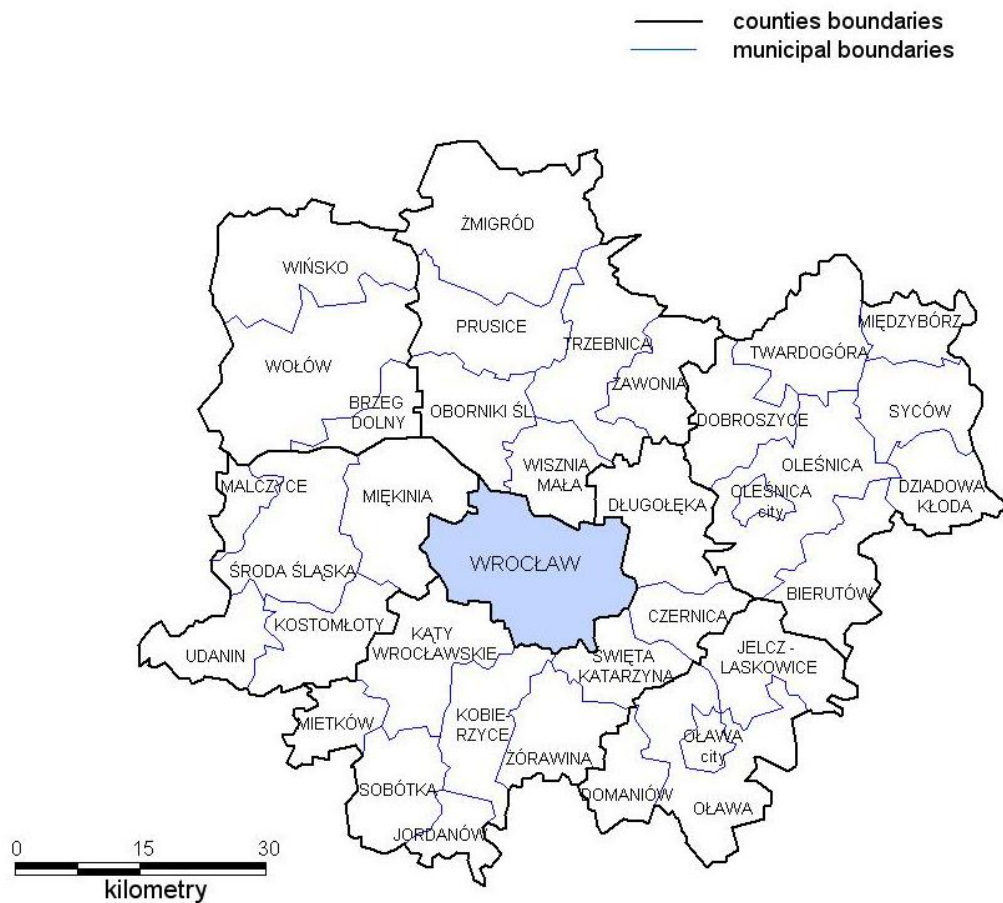


Figure 2. Agglomeration of Wrocław

In 2001 Strategy of Socio-Economic Integration of the Wrocław Metropolis Space was adopted. In February 2002 the document was accepted for implementation. At first respective local governments approved the Strategy. The last to ratify the Strategy was the city of Wrocław, the fact that had quite a big political meaning. Wrocław being the main initiator and performer of the document did not want to put much pressure on other entities to accept the document. The Strategy has been accepted by the members of the Committee, but the way of access to the initiative is still open for other local governments.

It is interesting that before 2002 local elections there was a project of establishing the Association of the municipalities and counties of MA but finally the agreement wasn't reached and the potential participants withdrawn. To what extent it might be explained by the fact that the changes of local leaders after the elections caused temporal change of prior policy directions is difficult to judge.

The frame of the Committee implies that the actors involved in the initiative are the local governments of the agglomeration region. It might be seen as a threat to the sufficient level of resources being necessary for the performance of the initiative – the lack of non-government actors (private, NGOs, groups of citizens etc.) limits the resources available. Even if it is disputable whether we decide to call the Wrocław initiative a governance-like case or just a voluntary co-operation of the sub-national governments, some observations on governance still seem to be relevant for this case. According to Blakeley (2005) strong dependency of the metro-body on the local governments is a threat for the multi-actor decision making.

Governance becomes just a new tool for the administrative institutions and their goals. “*In short, while the state continues to steer it is now the citizens who are doing all the rowing*” (p.163). We may easily draw a conclusion that in case of Wrocław both steering and rowing are still being done mainly by the core city with a kind of accompaniment from the side of other local governments. Another disputable issue is the lack of direct legitimacy stemming from direct election of metropolitan authorities, problem widely discussed also in relevance to many other European metro-solutions of that kind (eg. case of French associations discussed by Boraz and Le Gales 2005 or Dutch metropolitan areas discussed by Denters and Klok 2005).

On the other hand it must not be forgotten that within such informal structures it would cause a lot of complications to involve entities other than administrative units. Just to name the most obvious issue – projects implemented in Wrocław metropolitan area are financed mainly by contributions from municipal budgets. In this way the strategy grants financial participation and responsibility of the partners and as a consequence obliges them to have a legal status and a budget. Were there any other entities involved the financial rules would require more rigid institutional regulations.

The financial dimension of the initiative remains a vague and delicate question. The informal status of the Committee makes it difficult to decide upon big, money-consuming projects. As a result up till now there are mostly small, inexpensive projects which are implemented in practice. They are financed mainly by contributions from the municipal budgets and EU funds. Other financial sources named in the Strategy are: central budget, off-budget public funds (such as Environment Protection Fund) and private means. Generally the metropolitan partnership manifests by the sharing of the responsibility for the undertaken projects also when it comes to the financial co-operation. For instance the combined public transport between Wrocław and neighboring municipality Św. Katarzyna is being financed from the Św. Katarzyna budget, as it is its community who is the main beneficiary of the project. In general, the co-operation scheme relies on *ad hoc* montage of financial resource rather than on an attempt to develop a joint, stable financial mechanism.

The Strategy itself has relatively low formal status. It clarifies and specifies the informal co-operation within the MA Wrocław without being a binding legal document. What is more, the authors underline that the documents is not supposed to shape the agglomeration but is aimed at mere co-ordination and arranging the processes occurring in the MA in such a way that it would mitigate the negative ones and support the positive ones.

As one of the positive effects of the Strategy their authors mention the “*shift towards the higher level of the common consciousness*” (Strategy..., 2001) that is towards being ready to admit that the smooth co-operation brings the benefits both for the whole region and for each administrative entity. It is interesting though to check if such a sense of common identity emerges among the residents of the regions that are the final stakeholders of the policies implemented by the integrated body. It seems to be a weak point at the moment. The Strategy itself mentions a threat related to the insufficient promotion of the metropolitan initiatives among the citizens and the weak participation of the local communities. But the strategy does not include any ideas on incentives for building a more participatory mode of policy formulation and implementation.

The Strategy declares that the implementation of the specific goals should be performed by the task groups that would be possibly formalized and would work on solutions for specified

problems. As a direct consequence the set of operational programmes has been elaborated with eight relevant working groups dealing with those issues. There are following working groups operating at the moment:

- spatial planning and housing,
- education,
- public transport and communication (with separate sections for rail, air and road transport),
- financial issues,
- labour market,
- tourism and recreation,
- health service and social policy,
- environment protection and agriculture.

At the beginning of 2004 members of those groups were appointed in such a way that each of involved local governments has its representative in every working group. Municipalities and counties themselves pointed out their representatives. The last stage of the process was the approval of the groups frame by the whole Committee.

Each group has a leader, elected on the first meeting of the Committee. The structure of the whole organization reveals the elements of the multilevel governance, as the members of this informal initiative are the representatives of two sub-national tiers. Meetings of the groups are open to the public. Frequently it happens that somebody who is not a member of the Committee is present, either invited or from his/her own initiative (eg. representatives of the companies interested in a discussed project). The meetings take place in different parts of the agglomeration (so they have no fixed base) and are held irregularly. At the very beginning the city of Wrocław insisted on the regular and often assemblies, but then gave up this policy and pays more attention just to the progress in projects being implemented. The group that remains under a stronger pressure of the core city is a financial one, that is supposed to chose a few most urgent projects and provide frame for their financing. The groups' meetings are supposed to facilitate co-operation by providing the possibilities for the experience exchange (also on matters that extends out of the direct interest of the metropolitan area) and improving informal contacts among involved local authorities. The Wrocław Development Office claims that in this way the team-work helps avoid conflicts and reach the policy consensus.

In February 2004 each group was presented a list of the suggested projects related to their field, still the priorities of those are in ability of the groups themselves. Moreover the groups can also deal with the issues not mentioned in the lists.

The Strategy aiming at the integration of the entities within the metropolitan region wants to assure their independence, stressing their strong position and above all, the equal status of all the entities regardless the tier. Usually co-operation within metro area is treated rather suspiciously by the non-central municipalities as it is associated with giving up a part of the municipal competence and power on a benefit of de facto core city. Such a policy quoted in the Strategy is thought to eliminate the hesitation or even bias of the municipalities against tightening the metropolitan co-operation. Additionally the partnership of the co-operation of all the entities located in the MA is underlined. The Strategy admits the need of the integration of the policies within the area of the metropolis and a tightening of the spatial structure towards a more formalized one. Already we may find some formalized elements (mainly related to the task groups) within the Committee. The final result of the co-operation

is supposed to be the creation of the institutional dimension of any organizational form (association is being mentioned as a possible solution).

One of the main objectives of the Committee is to assign a defined set of functions and consequently also tasks to each member-entity. It is believed to prevent the misunderstandings in a decision making process and unclear division of the competence. On the other hand though it may pose a problem that the benefits of the projects are unequally distributed on the whole area, so that some municipalities might feel dissatisfied with their cost-benefit balance. A very clearly missing item of the whole initiative is its marketing side – that is promoting and advertising the idea of a MA both within a region and out of it. The association has no web site and no official promoting materials which is the case also in other investigated metropolises. A positive sign though is a fact that the Wrocław Development Office is aware of a need for creating web site of the Committee and claims to start work on it in the nearest future⁸.

This brief description of the process of the forming of Wrocław Metropolis Space shows that the main actors responsible for its creation are the members of the Committee (thus municipalities, counties and city of Wrocław). Unlike in Gdańsk, the regional government is not directly involved in the initiative.

On the whole the governing formula in Wrocław presents quite a weak formal structure. A lot of attention is being put to the partnership question, so that no member-unit would feel endangered or deprived of its rights and autonomy. The efforts to establish mutual trust among the partners are clearly visible. These attempts are to a large extent successful. During the recent conference of the Union of Polish Metropolises (March 2006), the Minister for Regional Development – Grażyna Gęsicka – quoted Wrocław as a “good practice example” of the metropolitan programme in which suburb local governments do not feel dominated, but smoothly co-operate with the central city. Appealing failure is a lack of the stable financial basis of the initiative. Nonetheless we notice a few successful projects (mentioned underneath) that have already been put into progress.

Projects being carried out at the beginning of the 2006

Taking into account the division of the Committee into eight working groups we may easily identify the main scopes of the interest of the organization. However one can discern sectors of a higher concern and activity. These are definitely transport, spatial planning (both fields emerge also as main scopes of interest in Triple City), labour market (economic development) and education. In general these are the scopes that are usually of a metropolitan concern as they cause most problems and require metropolis-wide co-ordination which quite often occurs difficult to achieve.

Most of the projects and ideas comes from the city of Wrocław, but some initiatives related to the road infrastructure come from other municipalities, for instance the road connecting Wrocław with Strzelin being discussed at the 2005/06.

Committee in a co-operation with Main Architect Office and Wrocław Development Office, has delimited the metro area basing on the counties boundaries being equal to this of the two

⁸ It is in a sharp contrast with the next case described in the paper. This issue has not been mentioned at all in the interview with the employee of the Pomorski Region Office, which co-ordinates metropolitan co-operation in the Gdańsk metropolitan area.

relevant NUTS3 (city of Wrocław and the surrounding one) and wider than the agglomeration understood as the entities involved in a Committee initiative. For this area Wrocław Development Office elaborated the **Integrated Spatial Development Plan** which allows the whole image of the MA to emerge. The workers of the Office mention that basing on the elaboration one can detect some positive structural aspects emerging in the MA. according to them there is a certain specialization and complementarity of functions among the local governments.

One of the most advanced projects, if not the most advanced one, is an already mentioned **“integrated public transport ticket”**- the project that from January 2006 is already in phase of performing. It is a part of the metropolis-wide project aiming at developing the communication network (integrated ticket being a part of it) that would cover the whole metropolitan area. Negotiations are under progress about combining public rail transport with the road one (at the end of 2005 this service was only available for the users of the monthly-travel-card). This co-ordination requires involvement of additional actors, as the rail regional services are provided by the state-owned company and co-financed by regional government. As a result a „governance-like” partnership structures are necessary to deal with the issue effectively. The first stage of the project implemented by the Wrocław City Hall unit responsible for public transport is a bus connection between Wrocław and suburb municipality of Św. Katarzyna. It required a new tender for delivery of buses and operation of regular bus connection. It has been Św. Katarzyna municipality who necessary costs, as a main beneficiary of the project. From the beginning of the 2006 two new bus lines operate between Św. Katarzyna and Wrocław, being integrated with the public transport system in the Wrocław city. The talks are in progress to extend this initiative to other three neighbouring municipalities (Kały Wrocławskie, Miękinia, Długołęka).

The **group for education** is working on an internet registration network for the secondary schools (for children over 12 years old) that will provide parents with an access to the information on the places available in schools in the whole MA. Already some municipalities have started to carry out the initiative.

Similar initiative emerges for **the labour market** County Employment Offices are to present joint offer of jobs available in the MA. As a first stage there was a labour market diagnosis (*Rynek pracy aglomeracji wrocławskiej*) carried out by a Wrocław County Employment Office in co-operation with neighbouring counties and co-financed from the EU Social Fund. Labour market investigations stretch much wider. City of Wrocław has recently started a new promotion strategy that aims at encouraging young and well educated people to move to Wrocław. It is worth to stress an innovative character of this promotion campaign. Interestingly enough, the promotion is based on advertising not job opportunities in Wrocław agglomeration (as it is usually a case in similar campaigns in other Polish cities), but stresses quality of life instead (see www.terazwroclaw.pl). The main slogan is “a good place to live in”, and many arguments used in the promotion strongly remind those formulated in T.N. Clark theory of the “City as an Entertainment Machine” (Clark 2003).

Quite obviously the co-operation intensity differs not only in function of various projects but also in the spatial one. Some governments are more active than others. A general rule is that most active municipalities are those located in the direct neighbourhood of the core city (called inner agglomeration) whereas those more distant remain passive. Still this is a case in many of Polish MAs.

On the whole in spite of some vague points and the co-ordination of the management of the Wrocław MA present a relatively successful picture of co-operation, if we compare it with cases known from another Polish cities.

3.2. The case of Gdańsk (Triple City Region)

Quite a unique case in Polish metro space is Gdańsk. Not only is the location on the sea shore very significant for the city development but also specific regional relations influence the urban policy. Gdańsk is the main city of the so called Triple City which consists of Gdańsk, being of comparable size Gdynia, and much smaller Sopot. Triple City creates one of a few multi-centre metropolitan areas in Poland⁹. Taking into account the special character of this metro area, urgent need of convergent network of infrastructure services is by no means surprising. The most pressing is need for co-ordination in transport, secondary education, cemeteries and land use planning. What is more, this agglomeration lies within the European Baltic Development Axis, which pose the next argument in favour of its coherent governing providing for the increase of its competitiveness.

The co-operation between three core cities was initiated just after the second world war by building the Fast Urban Rail which provided convenient transport among the three centers. However, the railway function has never been provided by city government. For a long time it was a service delivered by the Polish Railways nation-wide state-owned company. Now the situation has become more complex as the regional rail transport being still delivered by the state owned company is financed to a large extent by the regional government as well.

Decentralization reform of 1990 has not made co-ordination easier. Competition among the three cities (and especially between Gdańsk and Gdynia) has become to impede the proper co-operation (Kubiak, Pietruszewski, 2005). Nevertheless a few years ago at least a partial agreement has reached and a form of metropolitan wide co-ordination has emerged in a form of “Metropolitan Council of Gdańsk Bay”. It is a body created in 2003 as a result of the initiative of a mayor of Gdańsk and the leader the of Pomorski Region government (marshal). Formally, it is an agreement of 11 municipalities (3 of them - core cities of the metro area – are the cities of the county status) and 5 counties. The head of the Council is the leader (Marshal) of Pomorski Region, other members are the mayors of relevant counties and municipalities. The council was created mainly to tighten the multi-level partnership within the region.

The Council was established with the prior objective to facilitate and stimulate the co-operation between all the administrative jurisdiction of the metropolitan area, especially in the areas that usually cause nuisance in the city-regions. The main scope of interest of the Council are:

- public transport,
- marketing, promotion, co-ordination of common investments
- joint applying for EU funds.

⁹ Others are Bydgoszcz with two core cities (Bydgoszcz and Toruń) and Upper Silesia, which core area consists of several cities, of which the largest is Katowice.



Figure 3. Local governments members of Metropolitan Council of Gdańsk Bay

It seems that two first items have already met with recognition and approval of the Council members. We will come back to this topic later on.

The functioning of the Council is based on regular monthly meetings. These are held in different places of the MA (as a sign of the equality of all the participants; like in case of Wrocław), still the “emergency host” is always the Marshal Office. As we remember apparent and formally stated leadership doesn’t exist in case of Wrocław Committee whereas here we have clearly defined formal leadership of the Region.

Even though the Council is not a separate legal entity its meetings are treated very seriously- usually they are attended by the political leaders of the involved local governments. Moreover the meetings are open to the public and often happens that there are some guests invited (like in Wrocław Committee): e.g. representatives of the organisations, companies, individuals involved in a specific issue or initiating the project (e.g. university experts). Quite often the debates are held within smaller groups – this is the case by the elaborating of the project of the creation of the business metropolitan forum that would provide a common pint for meetings and presenting the investment offers for the whole region.

Interviewed representative of the regional government indicate among the most important issues dealt with by the Council following issues: public safety in the whole metropolitan area, ownership restructuring of the Fast Urban Rail, elaboration of the delimitation of the Gdańsk Metropolitan Area and the Concept of the Spatial Development Plan of the Metropolitan Area.

This list shows clearly main scopes of underperformance. First of all, Gdańsk Metropolis has not agreed a joint development strategy yet. If we treat existing of such a document as a sign of the more advanced metropolitan partnership we may conclude on the higher level of metropolitan-self-organizing in Wrocław. Even keeping in mind that in Wrocław the metropolitan body exists 4 years longer one faces the question of the reasons for which such a difference in time of creation has occurred.

Another common document often mentioned as regards MAs is a Spatial Development Plan of the Metropolitan Area. In Gdańsk the work on this is still in progress, apparently not at the very advanced stage. The Plan is supposed to become a part of the Spatial Development Plan of the Pomorski Region till the end of 2006. The diagnosis which will pose the basis for the Metropolitan Area Plan has been already completed. It is worth mentioning that the delays are related to the competence and tasks sharing. It must not be forgotten that the Marshal office that is the main initiator and an engine of the Plan and other Council actions is not formally responsible for provision of functions being in the focus of the council interest. Therefore the ever-day attention of the regional administration is rather focus on obligatory functions subscribed to the Marshal Office by Polish law. As a result issues related to the Council itself usually have to wait. The similar problem we noticed in Wrocław, where co-ordination functions have to give-up priority to obligatory functions to be performed by the central city.

Investigating into the projects, or wider effects of the Council's activity we have found out that most of the projects are yet at the discussion stage (apparently less advanced than in Wrocław MA). Perhaps this is related to the Council's relatively short history (4 years shorter than the Wrocław MA Committee).

As stated above, one of the topics of the Council's hottest debates is the integration of the public transport within the agglomeration. Attempts are being made to create Municipal Association of Transport and to introduce the integrated "**agglomeration-ticket**" valid in the whole agglomeration. Negotiations and debates (in which academics of the Gdańsk University are involved) on the establishment of the Communication Association of the Municipalities of the Triple City Region are in progress with the statute of the Association having been elaborated at the beginning of March 2006 and posing a starting point for the process of final approval by the relevant councils. The plan assumes that the Association would be the final form of the communication system integration and is to cause the integrated ticket introduction at the beginning of 2008. Definitely one of the most problematic issue in the implementation of the project will be the Fast Urban Rail (FUR) inclusion. The FUR is owned by the Polish Rail – Regional Transport state-owned Company and it does not seem probable that its ownership would be transferred to the sub-national government unit of any tier¹⁰.

The second mentioned field requiring the common management is a **joint promotion** of the metro region, the field that seems to be the only scope that meets perfect unanimity of local governments. However, in practice not much has happened in this area so far.

The application for **EU funds**, although mentioned among the main goals of the Council still remains at a stage of planned rather than implemented projects.

¹⁰ Although it is worth to notice that such an ownership transfer to regional governments has materialized in two other Polish regions. It imposes additional financial obligations on the regional government but on the other hand it allows for larger influence of regional rail operation and management.

As it has been already stated delimitation of the metro areas in Poland cause problems. In case of Gdańsk MA the situation does not pose an exception. The local authorities have their own vision of this issue not necessary identical with the ones presented by Union of Polish Metropolises or National Development Plan. Regional administration persists on the delimitation that would respect municipal boundaries only (not the county ones, which would lead to identification of a wider area) and in this way takes into consideration functional relations among the entities involved.

Among general environment in which attempts at co-ordination take place, it is worth noticing that the political leadership of Sopot and Gdynia present considerable level of stability – the situation is similar to the Wrocław case. Situation is more complicated in the largest city Gdańsk, in which political leadership over last 15 years has been less stable. Overall, the above description suggests that Gdańsk MA governing does not look successful. Perhaps one of the reasons why the co-operation does not proceed as smoothly as wished is a competition between Gdańsk and Gdynia as well as hesitation and fear of the municipalities against losing their independence and giving up a part of their competences to co-ordinating body.

3.3. Voluntary co-operation of local governments – conclusions from the case studies

To conclude some remarks on the similarities and differences between the two described cases are presented in the table below.

Comparing the two MAs we should keep in mind the structural difference which seems to determine the shape of the metropolitan wide management initiative. In case of Wrocław we have a monocentric area dominated by Wrocław which implies the leadership of this city in the whole initiative. On the other end we have the Triple City MA, where the conflicts between Gdańsk and Gdynia impede establishing one strong leader form among the sub-regional tier units. As a result a higher tier has taken over the leadership in quite a natural and undisputable way.

Table 4. Comparison of voluntary co-operation of local governments in Wrocław and Gdańsk Metropolitan Areas

	Wrocław	Gdańsk
Context		
Type of metropolitan area	Monocentric	Polycentric
Role of EU structures	Joint applying for EU funds as an incentive for co-operation	Joint applying for EU funds as an incentive for co-operation, still no projects developed so far
Political leadership environment	Relatively stable leadership in Wrocław (3 mayors of the same political option throughout 16 years)	Stable leadership in Gdynia and Sopot (2 mayors of the same political colour throughout 16 years in both cities), unstable in Gdańsk. Poor co-operation between leaders in spite of the same political colour.
Formal structure	Weak formalization, Committee involving interested municipalities and counties,	Weak formalization, Council involving interested

	stable division on 8 working groups dealing with different sectoral issues	municipalities, counties and regional government, no stable division into thematic working groups, only ad hoc, informal gatherings emerge in relation with the specific problems
Basic characteristics of the metropolitan co-operation		
Main initiator	Wrocław (central city)	Regional government
Beginning year	1999	2003
Main “engine” of co-operation	Wrocław city (City Development Office)	Regional self-government administration
Frequency of meetings	Every six months	Once a month
Mode of democratic legitimacy	Indirect (no direct election)	Indirect (no direct election)
Financial base	Ad hoc mobilization for individual projects	Ad hoc mobilization for individual projects (potentially, in practice no such projects so far)
Involvement of non-government actors	Incidental	Incidental
Advancement of projects of joint interest		
- Development strategy of the MA	Approved in 2001	Early stage of discussions/development
- Spatial Development Plan of the Metropolitan Area	Advanced works on integration of Spatial Plans prepared for the individual municipalities	Early stage, efforts to include MA Plan in Regional one till the end of 2006.
- Economic development	Joint system of jobs’ offer; Joint diagnosis of the labour market co-financed by the EU Social Fund	Idea of Business Metropolitan Forum, on a stage of discussions
- Public transport	Some small projects implemented (integrated ticket covering some suburb municipalities)	Stage of debates and policy development, plan to introduce integrated ticket by 2008
- Education	Some small projects implemented (internet recruitment system to secondary schools)	-
- Joint promotion	Plans to establish the joint web-site	General acceptance of the idea, no practical progress so far

Referring to all the mentioned examples of the metropolitan wide co-ordination in Poland it seems that apart from stable and strong leadership an important factor stimulating efficient co-operation is the one of the leading role of the central city. This condition is being fulfilled more in case of Wrocław than Warsaw, which seems to be not interested in performing the leadership role in the partnership with suburb local governments. It should be stressed that, neither Polish national government nor EU policies provide real incentives for the cities that are initiating the supra-municipal co-operation. On the other hand, the willingness to co-operate stacks out as an important factor. It seems that the Metropolitan Council of Gdańsk Bay suffers from competition of two major municipalities being part of the central area.

Interestingly enough poor co-operation of Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia persists despite the same political orientation of their leaders¹¹.

As it was mentioned before, a potential incentive for the co-operation can come from the EU cohesion policy favouring those projects that comes from the jointly elaborated programmes covering the whole metropolitan area. Examples of such joint applications have been noticed in the Wrocław MA, but in Gdańsk are still on a stage of the preliminary discussions. In general though, even if the “EU factor” works as a strong stimulus for the initiation of the metropolitan-wide co-operation it does not seem to be used that much once the co-operation is already established.

4. Drafts of institutional reform

We have already said that there are no forms of metropolitan government institutions in Poland. There are signs, however, that the situation is evolving and there is a growing attention placed at co-ordination of planning and management of functions which are important for metropolitan areas.

Most of attempts at creating legal frame for metropolitan government institutions or co-ordination of metropolitan functions has been coming from debates in the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP). Already in 1997 UMP argued that special regulations on spatial planning for metropolitan regions were necessary (Mościcki 1997). After a few years it led to the first regulations ever which directly took into account existence of metropolitan areas. It came into force in 2003 relating MAs to spatial planning. The Law on Spatial Planning introduces obligation to prepare separate sections on metropolitan areas. These plans are being approved by the regional councils although the mere defining and delimitation of the metropolitan areas is a part of the prior document “Spatial Management Policy” elaborated by the central government.

But first attempts at creating metropolitan government institutions date back to the mid of the previous decade and are related to Warsaw. The thesis that Warsaw needs metropolitan government going beyond the core city limits became popular among some of local politicians (Isakiewicz 1996). In 1998, eight mayors of suburb municipalities suggested creation of the Warsaw Metropolitan Council which would not be directly elected, but which would include representatives of all involved municipal governments (Mościcki 1998). In 2000 the Association “Warsaw Metropolis” submitted to the Parliament a Draft Law on Warsaw Agglomeration (*Ustawa o Warszawskim Zespole Miejskim*, see Niziołek 2005). The draft assumed creation of upper-tier government covering Warsaw city and 58 suburb municipalities with the directly elected Metropolitan Council, in which one councilor would be elected in every municipality. The only exception would be made for Warsaw central city, which would elect 7 councilors. (“Okręg za stołecznymi...”, 2000). As a result, despite the central city population constituting more than half of the total metropolitan area population, the council would be strongly dominated by suburb municipalities (they would elect 51 out of 58 council members). This draft was rejected by the Parliament, who was arguing that such an institution would result in a harmful domination of suburb municipalities over the central city in the decision making process.

¹¹ The mayor of Gdynia is formally independent, but his political orientation is well known and located him close to the party in which mayors of Sopot and Gdańsk are formal members.

A year later, in June 2001 the Parliament voted another Law on Warsaw Agglomeration according, which was giving power to the Assembly of Municipalities of the Warsaw Agglomeration and assumed creation of executive organs of the agglomeration. The Law has been protested by the regional government, who was afraid of losing some of its competence in favour of the new metropolitan authorities (“Kto odpowiada za...?”, 2001). However the law has never entered into power, since it was vetoed by the Polish president (“Weto do ustawy...”, 2001). Accounting for his decision president used several arguments, but effectively he did not agree either with the idea of establishing the metropolitan authority which would have a status different from any existing “normal” local government tiers.

Most interesting are probably proposals of institutional settings which for several years have been drafted in the office of the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP). For the last two years UMP has been actively lobbying for introducing a metropolitan government institution and it seems that its ideas are gaining a growing support among main decision makers. Up till now the UMP has not produced any draft of the legislation, presenting rather a set of policy papers drafting main directions of the proposed regulations.

The UMP proposal itself has been evolving during recent years. Initially it has been an idea of the metro government clearly led by the central city. The proposal assumed that although the metro area would have upper tier government clearly separate from municipal governments, but the mayor of the central city would automatically play a role of a leader and a head of executive for the whole metropolitan area. One may expect that such a solution would lead to the accountability problems similar to those known from French urban communities (Borraz, Le Gales 2005) or Regional Public Authorities in the Netherlands (Denters, Klok 2005).

But more recently, the UMP proposal has evolved in the direction of more strict separation between municipal and metropolitan tier authorities. UMP policy papers often refer to institutional settings in metropolitan areas in other countries, with the special attention placed at German experience. In particular, Hanover example is often referred to as “the best case to be followed” (“Jakie władze...”, 2005).

Main elements of the most recent version of the UMP proposal may be summarized in following points:

- Both metropolitan council and a head of metropolitan executive should be directly elected by residents;
- The suggested term for the head of metro executive is “marshal” – the same as the term used for the head of regional government. The UMP policy papers are ambiguous on this issue, but sometimes they propose the regional government status for the metropolitan government, at least for some of the largest metropolitan areas (and especially for Warsaw);
- Still the main suggestion of UMP is the one of creation of metropolitan counties (inter-mediate tier between municipality and the region). However, functions of metropolitan county should not be identical with functions of the ordinary county. In particular, metropolitan government should have wider responsibilities in physical infrastructure and transport systems planning and development;
- On the other hand, according to the UMP proposals, metropolitan counties should have very little responsibility for social services. For example, secondary school education should be provided by metropolitan government only provided that the functions were voluntary delegated by central city government;

- Metro council should be elected through the majoritarian system (one seat per one ward, *first takes the post* system) and should be smaller than in other Polish local governments of comparable size. The size of metro council suggested by UMP is 13-19 members. The main argument for majoritarian system of election is willingness to strengthen non-partisan character of the government.

There are several open questions or criticisms which might be formulated towards the UMP proposal. UMP is not very clear about how the boundaries of the metropolitan government should be defined. UMP suggests that the new boundaries should respect present boundaries of the county level (so the new metropolitan county would be in territorial term a sum of two or more present county governments) but its argumentation for such a solution is not very convincing. As discussed in the IMO first phase paper on Poland, present counties provide a poor base for a rational delimitation of metropolitan areas.

In the UMP proposal there is also a potential conflict between central city and metro level government, and in particular between a central city mayor and metropolitan marshal. Central city is going to be a very strong actor and a conflict on who is the main political leader representing a metropolis is almost inevitable. One potential solution might be the fragmentation of the central city into the smaller borough governments. It should be reminded that present boundaries of the Polish central cities are usually very wide and extended in an artificial way as a result of gradual annexation of suburb areas. One may ask about the reason for existence of the city government in such a scale, if there is a separate metropolitan government. With some simplification we may say that central cities in their present boundaries are over-sized for some (local) functions and under-sized for other (metropolitan) functions, but there are almost no functions which catchment area would be close to present administrative boundaries. There might be a two-tier structure instead, in which the lower tier consists of municipalities, some of them created from boroughs (districts) of the present central city and some from present suburb municipalities, and the upper tier covering the whole metropolitan area. But this option, being quite a rigid one, would probably meet a strong opposition of the present city government structures.

It is also controversial to leave social functions out of the scope of functions of metropolitan government. Recalling once again the case of secondary schools, such a solution would not solve a problem of under-bounded jurisdictions and free-rider effect.

The Union of Polish Metropolises was negotiating with the central government initiating the reform immediately after next local elections scheduled for autumn 2006. The proposal was to start the pilot programme from the beginning of 2007 in three metro areas in which a formal co-operation agreement was recently signed (Bydgoszcz, Lublin and Białystok). In remaining metropolitan areas this government model could be introduced after following local elections in 2010. But at the moment it seems that the proposal has lost its impetus and the 2006/7 pilot programme is very unlikely. Local governments are partially to be blame for such a situation. Their interest in co-operating was to a large extent instrumental. The main motivation for Bydgoszcz, Białystok and Lublin on entering into agreements was to reach the metropolitan area formal status, which – as it seemed at that moment – would mean an opportunity to benefit from additional EU funds. When the idea of metropolitan operational programme became less probable, both regional and city authorities lost most of their interest in developing formal metropolitan structures.

5. Concluding remarks

Although Polish central cities are relatively large and cover also a part of the suburb zone, Polish metropolitan areas are geo-politically fragmented with three tiers of government operating there, none of which corresponds exactly with the territory of the metropolitan area.

Until the 1980s the main instrument of dealing with metropolitan management co-ordination was incorporation of suburb areas by the central city. It was never solving all problems but at least it was allowing to cope with the most pressing issues of land use planning being a *sine qua non condition* for housing and infrastructure development. This solution was relatively easy to apply in non-democratic system where the autonomy of local communities was an empty slogan. But presently, the annexation option, although still used, is much less popular, mostly due to the resistance of suburb municipalities and understanding of economic inefficiency of such a solution.

However the decentralization reform have not prescribed any alternative institutional solution, leaving metropolitan co-ordination mainly the possibility of spontaneous bottom-up initiatives to be undertaken on a municipal level. Indeed, there are several examples of such a co-operation, both in provision of individual services (for example public transport in Katowice) and more general issues of metropolitan planning (initiatives developed in Wrocław metropolitan area provides perhaps the most advanced example of such a initiative). The 1998 reform introducing regional government has brought in a new actor who may play a role in management of metropolitan areas. Moreover, the legal systems directly provides a role for regions in metropolitan planning. Gdańsk provides an example of a region which tries to play a role of a leader of metropolitan integration, however with very limited success only. It seems that emerging of a new, regional actor hasn't changed substantially the metropolitan arena, bringing just one more actor to basically bottom-up, voluntary attempts at coordination.

Despite several successes, this type of initiatives (no matter if they involve regional government or are based mostly on inter-municipal co-operation) has serious limitations not allowing for effective management of all pressing areas. Among the underlying reasons of the drawbacks of the bottom-up co-ordination one should mention low level of trust (and consequently "lack of co-operation climate"), weak leadership, and lack of incentives and/or support for such initiatives by central government policies. The same list appears in Heinelt's and Keubler's (2005) list of conditions for effective local governance through network of partnerships of public and private actors. No wonder that also in Polish metropolitan areas involvement of private actors in metropolitan governance is no more than incidental and co-operation between tiers of government is also far from being perfect.

Under such circumstances it seems more and more clear that an institutional reform introducing a form of metropolitan government tier is the only realistic solution. Over the last few years discussion on such a reform has been initiated and led by the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP), being an organization of 12 major Polish cities. The main argument raised by champions of the reform is the one of economic competitiveness. They argue that without strong metropolitan government it is impossible to achieve the major progress in development of transport systems and other infrastructure, which may undermine competitive advantage of Polish metropolitan areas. In particular, metropolitan scale of government should help in proper absorption of available European Union structural and cohesion funds which are potentially available for Polish local governments. Some of ideas developed in

UMP seem to be gaining a growing support of local and some central politicians. The more or less commonly accepted areas include:

- 1) creation of the two-tier government structure (municipalities plus metropolitan counties) with social services kept mostly by municipalities and development functions allocated to municipal councils;
- 2) direct election of metropolitan council and metropolitan political leader.

Still there are several issues to be decided on. In practice many local politicians are afraid of losing some of present competences. Moreover the metropolitan reform is not high on political agenda of central government. Therefore it is very difficult to predict if and when it might be practically implemented.

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