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COSMOPOLITANS OF SMALL FATHERLANDS

Abstract: The paper investigates into the specific features of the residents living in the metropolitan areas (MAs) in Poland. Basing on the statistical data and survey conducted in the two Polish MAs we draw conclusions on the spatial and political behaviour of metropolitan residents and on their territorial identity. The results show that a fair share of metropolitan residents live in a scale wider than their home municipality. Moreover some citizens (especially those who migrated to suburbs recently and those with higher education) reveal stronger spatial identity with the whole metropolitan area than with their home municipality. Delocalisation is also reflected in the lack of interest in municipal politics and low trust in suburb municipal politicians, while their interest in general politics remains on a high level.

Key words: metropolitan area; territorial identity; local government; local elections; local politics.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social dynamics of contemporary Metropolitan Areas (MAs)¹ have several important consequences for the politics of place. In Poland,

¹ In our paper we do not go into details of the numerous and very diversified definitions of Metropolitan Areas. We use the term to describe the central city and surrounding suburb zone, which are strongly bound by functional ties.

as in most of other European countries, metropolitan areas are geographically fragmented, with several municipal jurisdictions operating on an area which to large extent is a functional unity. There is also no government (administration) which would cover the territory of the whole MA and which would provide functions, which are vital for the agglomeration as a whole. Services are delivered either by municipalities (typically by central cities) or by regional (or national) governments which leads to problems related to both under-bound and over-bound catchment areas (Bennet 1997).

At the same time, significant proportion of residents of the area lives in the spatial scale of the whole metropolitan area. They have their homes, jobs, relatives and friends to visit, schools of their children, shopping centres in different parts of agglomeration (different municipal jurisdictions). This phenomenon is quite wide-spread, but it especially concerns “new metropolitan class” – young, educated and relatively affluent citizens, who “escape” from the city centre to the suburbs in order to avoid high price of land, congestion, noise and pollution. One may expect that their spatial identity is first of all with agglomeration (metropolitan area) as a whole, perhaps also with a small neighbourhood they live in, but not with the municipality where they build or bought a house. This group of people reminds to some extent the “creative class” (Florida 2002) – they are creative, educated, open, tolerant, looking for social diversity, but at the same time they are “de-localized” – since they commute, change jobs and place of residence very often, their identity with “small fatherland” is rather weak.

The fact that metropolitan territory is not only an economic but also a social construct, has serious consequences for local political life (Lefèvre 1998). Asking about trust we may indirectly check what is the level of legitimacy of the metropolitan political system. Like in several other countries (Rose 2002), in Poland (Swianiewicz 2002), size matters for trust and interest in local politics – in small municipalities there is more incentive for participation because a single individual vote will “weigh more”. Also contacts between councilors and citizens are closer and politicians are more accountable to their local communities (see for ex. Denters 2002). But this holds true in areas which are demographically stable (relatively low migration, many living in the same community for generations), but not necessarily in agglomerations’ suburb municipalities. Suburb population

commutes to central city, consumes public services in various places of the municipal area, so why should they be especially interested in local government in the municipality with which not much binds them, neither emotionally nor “functionally”? They may be more interested in metro-wide services, which cannot be provided by their municipality, so they *distant themselves from opaque and functionally split local governments* (Hoffmann-Martinot & Sellers 2005). Preteceille (2000, p. 92–93) provides examples of such a phenomenon in France. This lower interest in local politics is not a consequence of lower interest in politics in general. Metropolitan areas are inhabited by voters which are (more often than in other parts of the country) affluent, educated and they potentially have good access to information. These are all factors, which according to classic sociological models of voting (eg. Lipset, 1981) may positively influence turn-out in elections. But this logic works for national elections only, while for local elections disincentive logic described above prevails.

The aim of this paper is an empirical verification of the theoretical expectations formulated above. Verification is based mostly on the survey conducted in the two Polish metropolitan areas:

- Wrocław – monocentric agglomeration, consisting of Wrocław city and surrounding municipalities. The survey was conducted in September 2006 on a sample of 417 central city and 872 suburb residents (in 16 suburb municipalities);
- Gdańsk – polycentric agglomeration with the central area divided into three cities (Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia – so-called Tricity agglomeration). The survey was conducted in July 2007 on a sample of 855 central cities and 768 suburb residents (10 suburb municipalities).

Empirical part of this paper consists of three major parts. In the first one we analyse metropolitan self-identification of suburb residents. To what extent suburb residents identify themselves with the whole agglomeration rather than with their “home municipality” and to what extent do they use services in other parts of the agglomeration? The second part verifies interest in local (municipal) public affairs using electoral turn-out data. The third part concentrates again on survey data, analyzing variation of trust, interest and knowledge of local governments.

EVERYDAY LIFE A CROSS THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES

Investigating into the supramunicipal dimension of the spatial behaviour in both MAs we paid attention to the three aspects: (i) place of working or studying, (ii) location of a school attended by a respondent's child and (iii) using various services out of respondent's municipality.

It turns out that in both MAs their boundaries encompass basic activities of their citizens. Respondents working/studying out of their MA constitute only 4.6% in case of Wrocław and 10.7% in case of Gdańsk. Not surprisingly, the polycentric metropolitan core of Gdańsk concentrates more employees and students of the suburban area than does Wrocław. The fact that in a sub-wrocławian municipality declaration of working in other suburban municipality was relatively frequent can be explained by the high concentration of the new investments in the suburban zone of Wrocław (eg. LG Philips LCD, LG Electronics, Toyota, Prolongis).

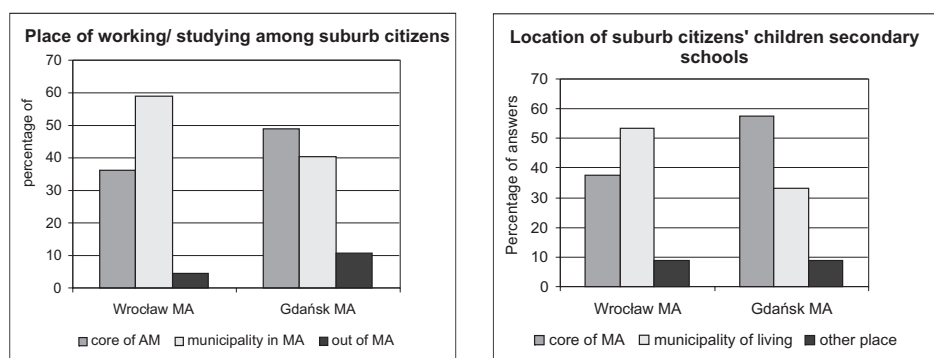


Fig. 1 and 2. Place of working, studying or attending children to secondary schools
Source: own survey of Wrocław and Gdańsk suburb residents.

Talking about school location, we focused on secondary schools, but even in case of primary education facilities (which are more often attended by children living nearby) the proportion of pupils commuting to the central city is quite high (among respondents having children in relevant age, such declarations were made by 18% in Wrocław and 11.5% in Gdańsk suburbs). Considering the secondary schools we notice a similar pattern like in case of a working/studying place. Declarations of sending children to Gdańsk central cities are about 20

percent points more frequent than in case of Wrocław MA, where much more teenagers attend secondary schools in their home municipalities. Perhaps the difference derives from the spatial shape of the two MAs. Due to the oval shape of the Gdańsk polycentric core, schools in that core are relatively closer to more children from the suburban zone than it is in case of a circular core of the Wrocław MA. Opinions of those parents whose children learn in the home municipality speak volumes. Asked if they would like their children to attend a school in the core city the respondents from Wrocław suburban zone answered “yes” more frequently (30% of them) than those from the Gdańsk suburbs (18%). So it seems that the “demand for central city schools” is similar, but it may be more easily met in case of Gdańsk.

We asked the citizens of suburban zone whether and how often do they use services² in the core of MA. It is most popular in case of shopping – in both MAs above 60% of the respondents from suburban municipalities declared frequent and very frequent use of shops in Wrocław (65%) and in Gdańsk central area (63%). Prevailing answer is “a few times a month”. Frequency of the use of the shops and cultural services in the center of the MA is negatively correlated with age and positively with education.³

We wanted to check if the mentioned “delocalization” of life and shifting it to the scale of the whole MA, which is clear in relation to the everyday functioning, is also reflected in the consciousness of metropolitan citizens. To identify the strength of the “metropolitan identification” (identification with the MA as a whole rather than with units of other territorial scale) we create an index, composed of the following variables:

- subjective feeling of the strength of the emotional relation to the MA,
- choice of the utterance „my municipality is a part of Wrocław/Gdańsk” or „my municipality is a part of Wrocław/Gdańsk MA” or “my municipality is a part of Wrocław/Gdańsk agglomeration” among a few descriptions of the place of living,
- declared having friends in Wrocław /Gdańsk or in other municipalities of MA,

² Shopping, cultural and administrative services.

³ Both correlations significant on 0.001 level; absolute values of correlation coefficients vary from 0.230 to 0.450.

- knowledge of the name of the mayor of Wrocław, and in case of Gdańsk MA – knowledge of the names of at least two of the three mayors of the cities of the central area.

Values of the index vary from 0 to 4 and variables composing the index have the same importance. Comparing the mean value for the two MAs we notice a higher level of the metropolitan identity in a polycentric region. The mean value of an index in Wrocław suburbs is 1.66, while in Gdańsk suburbs it is 2.05. 17% of citizens of Gdańsk suburbs and 10% of Wrocław suburbs treat their suburb municipality as „a part of central city” and another 16% around Gdańsk and 11% around Wrocław choose “my municipality is a part of the Wrocław/Gdańsk metropolitan area” as the best description of their place of living. Analysing strength of emotional relations, we discover that subjective self-identification of suburb residents with the whole agglomeration is similar to self-identification of suburb municipality (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Strength of subjective self-identification with whole metropolitan area
and home suburb municipality

	Wrocław suburbs	Gdańsk suburbs
Identification much stronger with suburb municipality	14%	14%
Identification somewhat stronger with suburb municipality	17%	19%
The same level of identification	37%	37%
Identification somewhat stronger with the whole MA	14%	16%
Identification much stronger with the whole MA	18%	14%

Source: own survey of Wrocław and Gdańsk suburb residents

From the regression model (Table 2) we see that the determinants of the index's value are in both MAs the same.

Table 2.
Factors explaining variation of “metropolitan identity” – regression model

	Standardised Beta coefficients	
	Gdańsk MA	Wrocław MA
R	0.30	0.34
Age	0.017	-0.051
Education	0.264***	0.215***
Length of living in one's municipality	0.124***	0.225***

Note: *** – variable significant on 0.001 level

Source: own survey of Wrocław and Gdańsk suburb residents

It turns out that the metropolitan identification depends on the education (positive correlation) and on the length of living in a respondent's municipality (negative correlation, ie. new migrants into the metro suburb have higher metropolitan identity). Opposite to our expectations, formulated in the introductory section, the impact of age has not been confirmed. It means that the typical member of our “de-localised metropolitan class” is educated, has moved to the suburb recently, but is not necessarily young.

INTEREST IN LOCAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS MEASURED BY ELECTORAL TURN-OUT

Figure 3 shows that – as we have expected – when we analyse national data, electoral turn-out in local government elections is in metropolitan suburbs lower than in other municipalities of comparable size. Differences are not very big, but they are statistically significant.

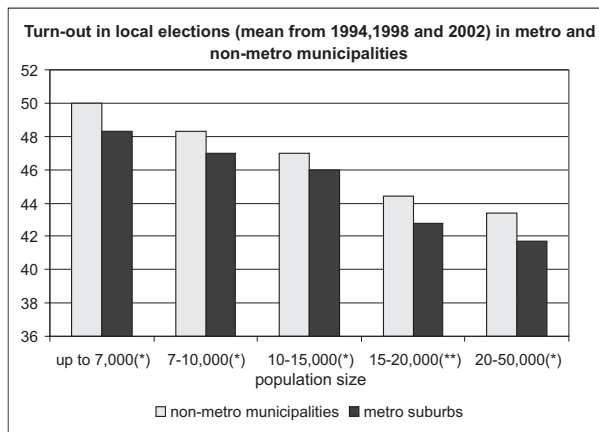


Fig. 3. Comparison of the turn-outs in local elections in metro and non-metro municipalities

Note: (*) – difference significant on 0.05 level, (**) – difference significant on 0.01 level.
Source: own calculations based on National Electoral Committee data

When we compare turn-out in national (parliamentary) elections, the pattern is opposite – turn-out is higher in metro than in non-metro municipalities of comparable size. As shown on the figure 4, if we

take into account results of 2005 parliamentary elections, the difference between metro and non-metro areas is statistically significant. Moreover, the significance systematically grows – it is higher when we analyse more recent data, than in the previous decade. It probably means, that Polish metropolitan areas have become recently “more metropolitan” – ie. in recent few years one may find more features of political behaviour which are expected by “metropolitan theory” than it was a case in the previous decade. Results presented in this section tell us that lower participation of metropolitan suburbs in local elections is not a result of lower interest in politics in general, but derives from the specific features of local politics in metropolitan areas.

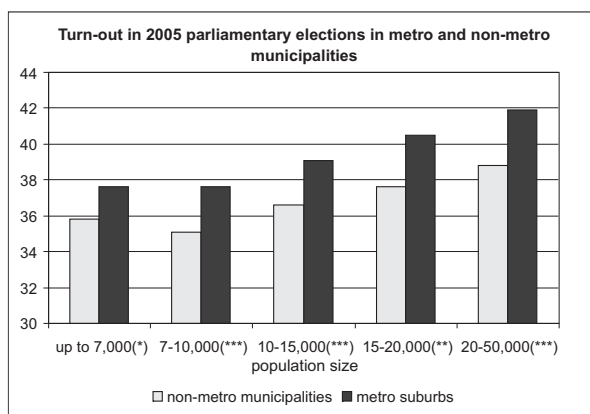


Fig.4. Comparison of the turn-outs in parliamentary elections in metro and non-metro municipalities

Note: (*) – difference significant on 0.05 level, (**) – difference significant on 0.01 level., (***) – difference significant on 0.001 level.

Source: own calculations based on National Electoral Committee data

TRUST AND INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS – SURVEY RESULTS

As presented in the table 3, in both of Metropolitan Areas trust in mayor of own municipality is higher in central cities than in suburb communities. This picture is opposite to a general rule saying that trust in Polish local governments is usually higher in small than in bigger local governments – such a rule finds confirmation in numer-

ous empirical results (Swianiewicz, 2001; Szymiel, 2006; “Opinie o...” 2007). Trust in suburban mayors is lower than average for communities of comparable size – in Spring 2007 average trust in local governments with less than 20,000 residents was around 70% (“Opinie o...” 2007), but only about 50% in suburb municipalities of comparable size. This reflects lower “local identity” of suburb residents as well as their dissatisfaction with services provided by functionally split and territorially fragmented governments. On the other hand, trust in mayors of central cities (Wrocław, Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot) is higher than average for cities of similar size. It reflects the fact that we have chosen for empirical research agglomerations with strong, extremely popular mayors. It is worth mention, that in recent local elections (November 2006), mayors of Gdynia and Wrocław got the highest voters’ support among all candidates from major Polish cities (over 80% of votes in the first round of mayoral elections – see Swianiewicz, 2006). It is meaningful that also residents of suburb municipalities express high trust in mayors of central cities – if we disregard relatively numerous “don’t know” answers, it is even higher than trust towards their own suburb mayors.

Table 3.

Trust and interest in local governments in Wrocław and Gdańsk metropolitan areas

	% declaring trust in:		% of declaring no interest in local government activity	% knowing name of the mayor of the central city
	Mayor of own suburb	Mayor of the central city(*)		
Wrocław suburbs	45	37 (61)	35	40
Gdańsk suburbs	55	35 (61)	29	58
Wrocław central city	NA	67	47	65
Gdańsk central city	NA	76	34	82

Note: trust in Gdańsk central cities – (weighted by population) mean of values for Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia

(*) in brackets – result if “don’t know” answers treated as missing values

Source: own survey of residents of Wrocław and Gdańsk metropolitan areas

Both theory and earlier empirical results (Swianiewicz, 2001; Szymiel, 2005) suggest that interest in local government activity should be strongly (and negatively) correlated with population size. Taking this into account, data in the table 3 show surprisingly small difference between suburbs and central cities. It is because the de-

clared interest of suburb citizens is significantly lower than in “non-metropolitan” municipalities of comparable size.

Table 4 illustrates impact of two independent variables – education and length of time of living in the suburb – on trust and interest in local governments of metropolitan areas. Opposite to our initial expectations, we found no relationship with the age of respondents (and age variable has been omitted in the table 4), but correlations with other two variables are significant. Interestingly, considered variables are not correlated with the trust towards own suburban mayors, but they have an impact on trust towards mayors of central cities. “New migrants” in the suburbs know more about central cities government, for example they know names of city mayors more often. They also trust city mayors more frequently. Similarly, name of central mayors is more often known by suburb residents with higher education. This follows the classic pattern of citizens interest in politics (Lipset, 1981), but interestingly enough, in case of Wrocław suburb the same pattern is not repeated as regard their own community. It reflects the fact that many educated, new-migrants in the Wrocław suburbs, are more interested in politics of the city of Wrocław than in the politics of the municipality of their formal residence. The same pattern applies to “new migrants” in the suburbs of Gdańsk metropolitan area.

Table 4.
Factors explaining trust and interest in local governments – Pearson correlations

	Trust in:		Declared interest in local govern- ment activity	Know name of the mayor of the central city
	Mayor of own suburb	Mayor of the central city		
Level of education				
– Wrocław suburb citizens		++		+++
– Gdańsk suburb citizens			+++	+++
– Wrocław central city	NA			+++
– Gdańsk central cities	NA	+	+++	+++
Short time of living in the same municipality (“new migrants”)				
– Wrocław suburb citizens		+++		+++
– Gdańsk suburb citizens		+++		

Notes: + – positive correlation significant on 0.05 level, ++ – significant on 0.01 level, +++ – significant on 0.001 level. Blank spaces mean insignificant correlations

Source: own survey of residents of Wrocław and Gdańsk metropolitan areas

CONCLUSIONS

Our empirical results confirm most of theoretical expectations formulated in the introductory sections. A large proportion of suburb residents uses various services in the central city, and their spatial identity is often connected with the metropolitan area as a whole rather than with their home municipality. This concerns more often citizens with higher education and who moved to the suburbs recently, but opposite to our initial expectations it is only loosely related to age of our respondents.

Suburb citizens are less (than residents of similar size local governments located in non-metropolitan areas) interested in local politics and express lower trust in suburb municipal politicians. It is because they are neither functionally nor emotionally bound with their local jurisdictions – they use services provided in various places of the whole metropolitan area (functional dimension), and they moved to their suburb recently, while their friends, relatives and “life interests” are often located elsewhere (emotional dimension). In that sense they are “local cosmopolitans”, not really connected with their “formal small fatherland”. This description applies more often to educated and new-migrants to the suburb area. We may call them also “de-localized homo politicus” – the suburb-metropolitan, educated class is interested in politics in general, and for example their participation in national elections is significantly higher than in non-metropolitan areas, the low interest applies only to local politics.

The pattern described above more clearly applies to Wrocław than to Gdańsk metropolitan area. The reason should be probably sought in physical features of both areas. Wrocław metropolitan area has “more classic” shape – it is mono-centric, with circular shape of suburbs around the central city, while Gdańsk is a poly-centric metropolitan area, with an oval shape of surrounding suburbs.

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