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SUBREGIONAL GROWTH POLES IN THE COMPETITION FOR DEVELOPMENT FACTORS

Abstract: This article presents the findings of a two-year research project¹. The main aim of the project was to analyse the role and growth possibilities of subregional centres in Poland, taking into account polarisation processes and a knowledge-based economy. The cities chosen for their degree of competitiveness and growth possibilities were those of over 40000 inhabitants, not situated in close proximity to capitals of Polish regions. Apart from that questionnaires were sent by post to all previously identified subregional growth poles and municipalities of their surroundings. Moreover, ten subregional growth poles were chosen to be analysed as case studies. Six fragmentary hypotheses were verified in the research: historical hypothesis, metropolitan hypothesis, hypothesis of internal resources, networking hypothesis, hypothesis of strong surroundings, administrative-political hypothesis.

Key words: subregional growth poles, local development, polarisation process

INTRODUCTION

In the era of the development of a knowledge-based economy and transformation of the development model in the direction of innovations, the dominant view in literature is that metropolitan systems are the driving

¹ The project financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education was realised under Wojciech Dziemianowicz's supervision. Complete results of the project are presented in the publication edited by Wojciech Dziemianowicz, Jacek Szlachta and Katarzyna Szmigiel-Rawska summarizing project: "Subregional growth poles according to economic transformation, administration reform and knowledge-based economy". Authors of this article are co-authors of the publication.

force of development. As Manuel Castells claims, “metropolises run the world”. The position and competitiveness of the Polish economy will be based on the position of Polish metropolises in the net of the world’s biggest cities. At the same time, principles of solidarity and equalization of opportunities that demand to treat development not only in terms of economic growth form the axiological basis of the European Union that are constitutionally rooted in the EU treaties. As a result, in socio-economic development policies of regions two competitive approaches clashed, the one aimed at supporting the strongest driving forces of development and the other concentrated on equalization of development opportunities by supporting the poor regions.

The policy-makers in Poland and in EU on different levels (regional and national) must confront a dilemma: competitiveness or convergence, effectiveness or equality.

It seems that subregional centres (located “somewhere in inter-metropolises areas”) stay outside of the EU discussion on the state aid allocation, Polish regional policy dilemmas and theoretical discussion of the researchers of regional studies. In the past in different geopolitical conditions subregional centres (often having a status of the capital of the region² and experiencing their golden ages) in Poland constituted growth poles for their surroundings. On account of the need for dynamisation of socio-economic development in Poland and the obligations to provide the citizens with a good access to high quality public services, it seems to be appropriate to use the potential and resources of subregional centres. It is interesting whether subregional centres are indeed growth poles for their surroundings and what their development potentials are in the age of growing regional polarisation and a knowledge-based economy.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The concept of the conducted research refers to the two main theoretical assumptions. Firstly, economic growth has a tendency to concentrate in certain development centres (theories of regional polarisation F. Perroux, A. O. Hirschman, G. Myrdal, J. Friedman). Secondly, there is a natural hierarchy of human settlements ordered by the size and by the range of their influence on the surrounding areas (central place theory created by W. Christaller).

Growth poles theory of the French economist F. Perroux is fundamental to the phenomenon of polarisation. The concept of growth poles in Perroux’s work denotes an individual company with a high degree of dominance, although the one which occupies an abstract economic space rather than a specific geographical space. A group of the best companies, industry or economy sectors called “motor units” or “leading industries” fulfil the role of

² Terms region and voivodship are in the article used interchangeably.

growth poles for the whole economy by gaining control over other weaker companies. According to Perroux's theory, they are characterised by the highest level of innovations, the highest degree of dominance, high growth rate of business activity and interactions with other firms (Grzeszczak, 1999).

Research on the development of growth poles theory in the regional context was carried on by A.O. Hirschman and G. Myrdal. Positive and negative effects of relations between the growth pole and its surroundings were among the main scientific interests of Hirschman and Myrdal. Investments and purchases in the surroundings of the growth pole by the companies from the growth pole and the flow of the unemployed from poor regions to these with high level of development can be counted among positive effects. To exemplify negative effects we can say that new attractive investments are usually located in the growth pole, draining the best qualified labour force from the surroundings of the growth pole. Among the observations of great importance made not only by Hirschman and Myrdal but also by other experts is the one which states that negative effects gain advantage over the positive ones (Grzeszczak, 1999, Malizia, Feser, 1999) and that it takes quite a long time for positive effects to emerge. The process of economic dependence of peripheral areas on strong growth poles is accompanied by deepening of regional diversification (mechanism of vicious circle).

Friedmann in his core and peripheries model touches on the problem of unequal development of regions. According to the author service and production activity of the most competitive firms is located in core regions in metropolises which built their advantage over surroundings in particular. The dominance of the "core" over its peripheries is noticeable not only in economic sphere but also in political and cultural areas (Malizia, Feser 1999). Similar view is expressed by M. Castells. In his opinion the centres of economic growth are the biggest metropolises and technopolises in which the highest economic, financial and innovative potential is concentrated (Grosse, 2002).

At the same time, in central place theory Christaller (Christaller, 1963) assumes that the importance of the city and its position in national settlement system is connected with the number of inhabitants and the size of the area of services provision. In accordance with this assumption centres placed higher in the hierarchy have influence on the areas bigger in size and accomplish more central functions, while smaller centres offer low range and low threshold goods and services and constitute a distinctive growth pole for a smaller area.

Although Christaller used many simplifications in order to describe the rules explaining the rise of settlement systems and his theory is often refuted in view of its "incompatibility" with the present socio-economic conditions (for instance because of the fact that the hierarchical nature of migrations within the network – from smaller cities to the nearest big one – is superseded by non-hierarchical migrations between the cities of different sizes regardless of the distance between them), from the point of view of the

research that was conducted the important thing seems to be confirmation of the existence of a certain hierarchy of cities which is the derivative of their size and performed functions as well as the possibility of providing services in certain surroundings.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The complexity of regional development processes induces a multi-faceted analysis of subregional growth poles. Because of that to realise the main objective of the research which is assessment of *the role and growth possibilities of subregional centres in Poland, taking into account polarisation processes and a knowledge-based economy* the final analysis takes six factors (fragmentary hypotheses) into consideration:

- **Historical hypothesis** – The statement that historical background influences the current situation of cities and regions is well-grounded and it is often proved in analyses of important socio-economic processes. However, it is difficult to assess explicitly the strength of these impacts and divide historical events into specific development stages. It is claimed in historical hypothesis that development potential at least in case of some subregional regions is a result of historical processes taking place in the following periods of time: the period of the partitions of Poland, the interwar period, the stage of Polish People's Republic, the turning point in 1989 when the economic transformation begun;
- **Metropolitan hypothesis** – Development of subregional growth poles depends on the impact the metropolis has on the growth pole. It should be stressed that it is essential to analyse this issue not only in regional boundaries but especially on the ground of socio-economic relations. These relations are usually conditioned by economic potential, distance to the metropolis and transport accessibility;
- **Hypothesis of internal resources** – From the time when discussion about development factors was initiated internal resources are perceived as one of the pillars of regional and local development. However, currently the quality of internal resources is becoming the subject of deeper and more detailed analysis. In the time of knowledge-based economy issues concerning human resources come to the fore. There are many examples showing that centres with high quality human resources not only are able to manage changes (like local government reform) better than others, but they also adjusted faster and more efficiently to new development conditions that are based on finance from the EU and innovations;
- **Networking hypothesis** – It is claimed in the hypothesis that the most dynamic subregional growth poles achieve superior growth po-

tential due to networking. The value of net relations should be measured by the activity of cooperation and by the achieved results. Dynamic local government units use their cooperation with partners from Poland and foreign partners to improve the quality of contacts with businessmen, economic and tourist promotion and to acquire the knowledge that is essential in competing for development funds. Established contacts often have a non-economic character and are built with partners from the “administrative surroundings”;

- **Hypothesis of strong surroundings** – In the age of “tearing the metropolis off from the region” subregional growth poles with well developed surroundings manage the negative effects of polarisation much better. These growth poles which influence the region in a positive way are probably in a better situation than the ones which drain the best working force and weaken development factors.
- **Administrative-political hypothesis** – Some Polish cities have lost their status of the capital of the region as a result of a local government reform of 1989. The partial loss of social and economic relations proved beneficial to new capitals of regions (mainly metropolises). It could also be observed in omitting these “loser” cities in distribution of development factors (public, such as European funds, and private, like direct foreign investments) which until then were concentrated in metropolises. It can be seen in practical realization of the development policy on the regional level that the capitals of regions are preferred when funds for development are allocated to local government units.

RESEARCH METHODS

The realisation of the objectives of the project was feasible by using the following research methods (methods were listed in the chronological sequence as they were used in the analysis):

- **Distance to the model Method** (one of the linear ordering methods). All Polish municipalities were analyzed separately for regional, subregional and local growth poles in the following periods: 1994-1998; 1999-2002; 2003-2006. Division into these periods was related to observable stages of the economic development in Poland, local governments reform and election cycles;
- **Correlation analysis** – was used to analyse subregional growth poles in three periods of time taking into consideration municipalities of their surroundings in scope of factors determining development processes;
- **Mailing Questionnaire** – questionnaires were sent to City Halls of subregional growth poles and municipalities from their surroundings

- by post. The aim of that method was to broaden knowledge of the processes and mechanism of subregional growth poles development;
- **Analysis of documents** – analysis of development policy instruments in regions, which has shown directions and allocated support within the regions;
 - **Ward's Method** (one of the cluster analysis methods) – the method was used to work out the typology of subregional growth poles taking into account these units which could become growth poles only recently;
 - **Experts Workshops** – selection of the group of ten subregional growth poles to be analysed as case studies. The criteria for choosing them included among other things: belonging to different types of growth poles, geographical location, location in relation to formerly annexed territories, strength of the surroundings, socio-economic changes within the last years;
 - **Interviews** – People who are members of the following social groups were marked out to be interviewed: local authorities, local leaders, representatives of institutions connected with business, representatives of strong political parties from the municipality.

IDENTIFICATION OF SUBREGIONAL GROWTH POLES

Identification of subregional growth poles was conducted on the basis of the following four criteria:

1. Status of the capital of the region in 1975-1998 period that was lost on 1st of January 1999. On the whole it includes 31 Polish cities.
2. Status of subregional centre – NUTS 3. Taking all cities not being a part of a big conurbation into account there are 43 subregional centres.
3. Demographical centre. In the current socio-economic situation in Poland only a city with at least 50 thousands inhabitants can be an urban centre which can provide an essential set of public services. If apart from the capitals of regions also municipalities of metropolitan areas are excluded, then a list of maximum 45 cities is obtained.
4. Area of subregional centre influence. During the work within ESPON³ project it was determined that cities with over 100 000 inhabitants

³ ESPON – European Spatial Planning Observation Network; European Union research project realized between 2000-2006, whose main objective was to analyse EU territorial cohesion. All EU countries along with Norway and Switzerland participate in the project. There is a continuation of the project in the subsequent period of programming the budget and the policies of the EU in the years 2007-2013.

should provide the full set of higher order services.⁴ It was accepted that the travelling time to subregional centre not exceeding 45 minutes is a satisfying accessibility. All regional capitals (18 cities) and some of the cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants (12 cities) were automatically classified to the list. However, there are extensive areas in Poland situated not close enough to the cities from the aforementioned list. Because of that it is essential to supplement the list with smaller cities which fill the gaps on the map of territorial accessibility. On the basis of ESPON works the list was supplemented with the centres that have a status of FUA (*Functional Urban Areas*).⁵ It means granting these cities with the status of subregional centres, even though they do not have 100 000 inhabitants (16 cities). In that way there are 28 subregional centres altogether in that list which appear on the maps of the settlement system of the European Union.

The result of the analysis is the conclusion that the maximum list of potential subregional centres includes 58 cities. 21 among them meet all four aforementioned criteria and could be called the group of subregional growth poles. This group can constitute a group of reference for the model characteristic of a subregional growth pole in Poland.

RESULT OF THE RESEARCH

Presented results of the research are related to the material collected in the course of:

1. Mailing questionnaires, conducted during the first half of 2010 among the municipalities identified as subregional growth poles (see the part concerning Identification of subregional growth poles) and their surroundings⁶. Figure 1 presents spatial distribution of municipalities covered in the research.
2. Interviews conducted within the case studies analysis in 2009 in 10 subregional growth poles and its surroundings (growth poles were selected from the group of 58 subregional centres: Elbląg, Elk, Inowrocław, Jelenia Góra, Mielec, Piła, Radom, Skierniewice, Słupsk and Suwałki; see the part concerning Identification of subregional growth poles). Figure 2 presents subregional growth poles analysed as case studies.

⁴ See: ESPON Synthesis Report III 2006. Map 8: Areas within 45 minutes reach from urban centres. p. 45.

⁵ See op. cit.: Map 1: Main economic structures of the European territory. p. 27.

⁶ 97 out of the 737 questionnaires which had been sent were returned completed. 14 among these came from subregional centres (main cities) and 83 from the surrounding municipalities. In 9 cases of the analysed poles the questionnaires were sent back by both the subregional centre and by at least one of the municipalities of its surroundings.

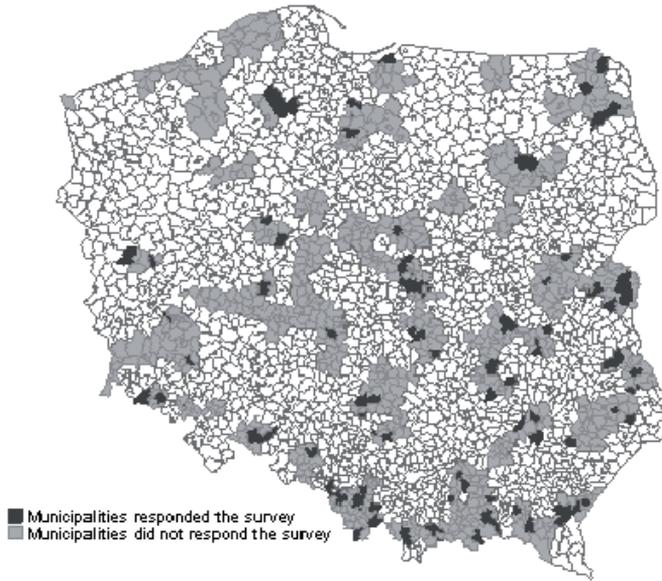


Figure 1. Spatial location of the municipalities taking part in the survey
Source: Own compilation based on survey.

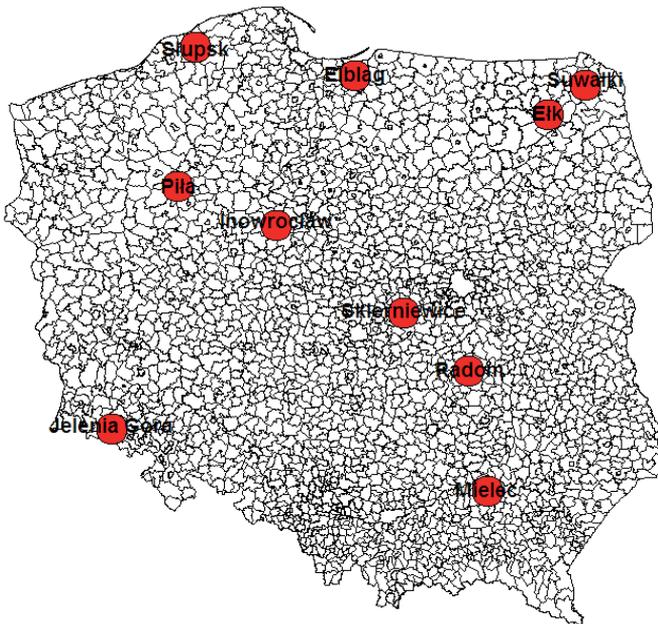


Figure 2. Subregional growth poles analysed as case studies
Source: Own compilation based on survey.

Presentations of the research results is divided into parts in relation to the research hypotheses.

1. Historical hypothesis

The current level of development of subregional growth poles depends on many factors. Their presence is connected with many different landmarks that can be associated with particular historical periods on the time axle.

According to the responses of the examined municipalities, the period which started with the system transformation in 1989, especially the time after the accession of Poland to the European Union (2005-2007), connected with a strong stream of European funds, had the most positive impact on the development of Polish municipalities (Figure 3). The years 2007-2009 are judged as positive less frequently, which is the effect of the world economic crisis and uncertainty about the future connected with it. It seems that the world economic crisis had bigger impact on subregional growth poles, which consider this period negative three times more often than the rest of the municipalities. The opinions of the people from the local government are definitely affected by the financial situation of the municipalities in the time of crisis. The analysis of the impact of the world economic crisis on the budget situation of local government units in Poland shows that it was most detrimental for the cities with county status (Swianiewicz, Łukomska 2009).

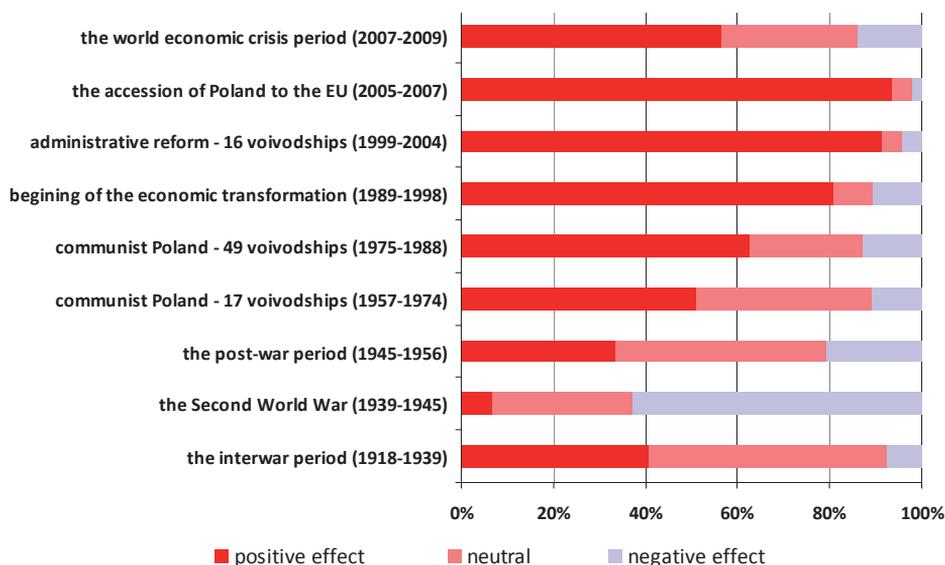


Figure 3. Assessment of historical conditions effects on local development

Source: Own compilation based on survey.

From the historical perspective, the most negative impact was obviously related to the period of the Second World War, judged so by the 2/3 of the examined municipalities. The influence of the years 1957-1974, when Poland was divided into 17 voivodships, is gauged positive by half of them. The period from the implementation of 49 voivodships until the system transformation was estimated as definitely positive by almost every second subregional pole, whereas positive assessments given by the surrounding municipalities certainly occur less frequently. Such a situation is connected with the fact that at that time many subregional growth poles became the capital cities of voivodships. Gaining a new function and numerous investments made it a period of intensive development for them.

The history of the city of Skierniewice may serve as the confirmation of this occurrence. For this city gaining the title of the capital city of the voivodship in 1975 was a turning point in its history and the biggest development impulse from the time of the construction of the Warsaw-Vienna railway that in the middle of the 19th century connected Warsaw with Łódź and Silesia via Skierniewice. The huge impact of the administration reform from the year 1975 is shown in the analysis of the population size of Skierniewice and Żyrardów (the next county city on the way to Warsaw) in the period 1970-1998. According to the census made in 1970, Żyrardów had 33 200 citizens and Skierniewice only 25 600. Almost 30 years later the numbers were 43 600 and 48 700 respectively. The factor that intensified the development of Skierniewice after 1975 stopped it in 1998. Because of the administrative reform in 1998 Skierniewice was "degraded" to the role of the county city and incorporated into the Łódź Voivodship. Half of the examined people said that the change of the administrative status of the city abruptly stopped its development. From this time the city became a sluggish bedroom drained by the two closely located metropolises of Warsaw and Łódź.

The administrative reform of 1975 opened a very big chance also for the development of Radom, the biggest city of southern Mazovia that also gained a status of the voivodship city. But in 1976 Radom was one of the two main centres of strikes caused by the announcement of the high rise of official prices of consumer goods. Communistic authorities undertook a brutal pacification of strikes and as a revenge for the disobedience stopped all development investments in Radom by an administrative decision, allocating financial resources to the southern neighbouring cities of Kielce and Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. As a result, the development of Radom was stopped for many years and the stamp of that incident can be observed in the city until now.

2. Metropolitan hypothesis

The development of subregional growth poles very often depends on the impact (positive as well as negative) of voivodship centres on a pole.

A voivodship centre is considered as the place where important decisions are taken by a majority of the examined municipalities (Figure 4). What is meant here, are both the development policy (for example the strategy of social and economic development of voivodship) and the distribution of European funds. For most municipalities the voivodship's capital city seems to be the centre for medical treatment with a wide range of services, which is caused by the localization of modern equipment and the presence of specialists. The examined municipalities often highlight the role of the capital city of the voivodship as the academic and knowledge centre as well as a place for improving skills, what is a natural consequence of the fact that many universities and science centres are located in these cities. A relatively small role is played by a metropolis as a place for leisure, recreation and entertainment. The only point considered here are services connected with culture that is specialised, which have to be concentrated in the biggest cities. As far as voivodship capital cities are considered as places of gaining goods and services, they are not widely regarded as a place of marketing subregional goods and services. When analysing relationships between regional and subregional growth poles it must be acknowledged that they are rather a one-way relationship and the advantages from it are rather on the part of the metropolis.

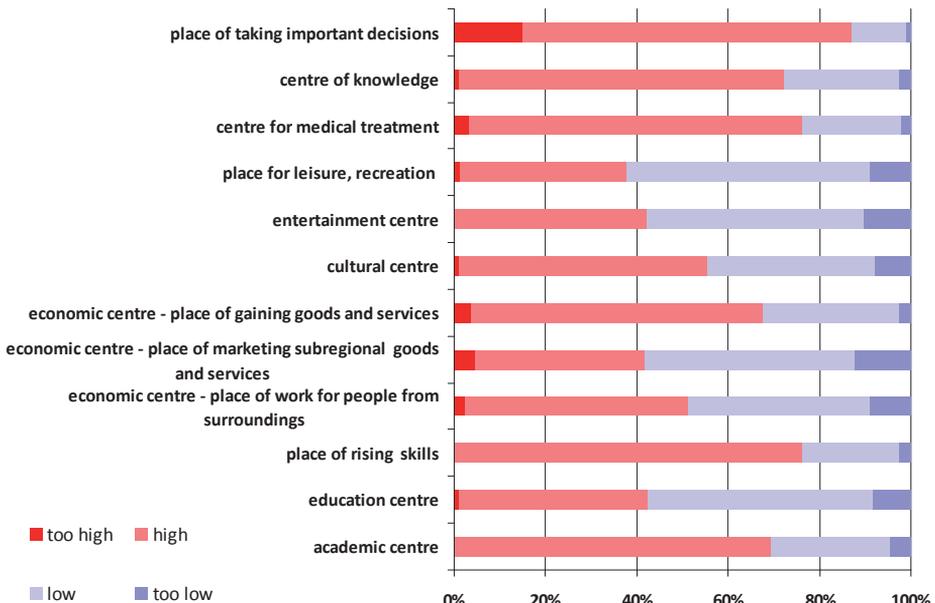


Figure 4. Importance of the voivodship capital city for the municipality

Source: Own compilation based on survey.

Undoubtedly, an example of a strong influence of the metropolis on the development of the subregional growth pole is the city of Elbląg, whose

history is tightly bound with the history of another city placed 60 km to the east, namely Gdańsk. In the time of prosperity of Gdańsk, the development of Elbląg was inhibited, when Gdańsk was in feuding with the Republic of Poland, Elbląg became the main Polish sea port. The formal relationship of Elbląg with Gdańsk was broken in 1975, when Elbląg became the capital city of its own voivodship. But even then a strong drawing of Elbląg towards Gdańsk was felt. In view of the territorial reform of 1998 Elbląg was incorporated into the voivodship of Warmia and Masuria with the capital city in Olsztyn. Moreover, most of the terrain of the former voivodship of Elbląg along the Vistula river was left in the Pomerania voivodship with the capital city in Gdańsk. Elbląg has never come to terms with this political and administrative decision and felt uncomfortable in its new, mentally alien voivodship. The town council even passed a motion of changing its voivodship membership to the government. At the same time Pomerania voivodship considers Elbląg in its strategies. In the Spacial Plan of Pomerania Voivodship it was clearly emphasized that because of the strong, historically created relationships between Elbląg and Gdańsk and its good location Elbląg comprises an integral part of the second metropolitan zone of Gdańsk regardless of its formal administrative membership. The decentralised model of the metropolitan region was recognized as the best possibility of the development of its functional and spatial structure, as the one creating a possibility of concentration of social and economic activity in already existing middle-sized cities of the metropolitan region (including Elbląg).⁷

3. Hypothesis of internal resources

The internal potential of municipalities constitutes the main foundations of their development. When describing their own strengths, the examined local self-governments most often indicate factors related to the human resources (experience and efficiency of the local authorities, willingness to work and competences of the inhabitants) (Figure 5). Moreover, tourist attractiveness and the quality of life are very often considered as the advantages of municipalities. These are nowadays regarded as the increasingly important factors of company investments.

The examined local authorities very rarely indicate the elements related directly to business when considering their financial resources (it is highlighted by less than a half of the municipalities). What is important, subregional growth poles more often than the surrounding municipalities specify small and medium-sized enterprises as well as big employers and active business associations as their strengths.

⁷ *Plan Zagospodarowania Przestrzennego Województwa Pomorskiego (2002)*, Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Pomorskiego, Gdańsk, http://www.woj-pomorskie.pl/Pages/Lang/pl/Article/wazne.plan_kierunki.html, checked 07.09.2010.

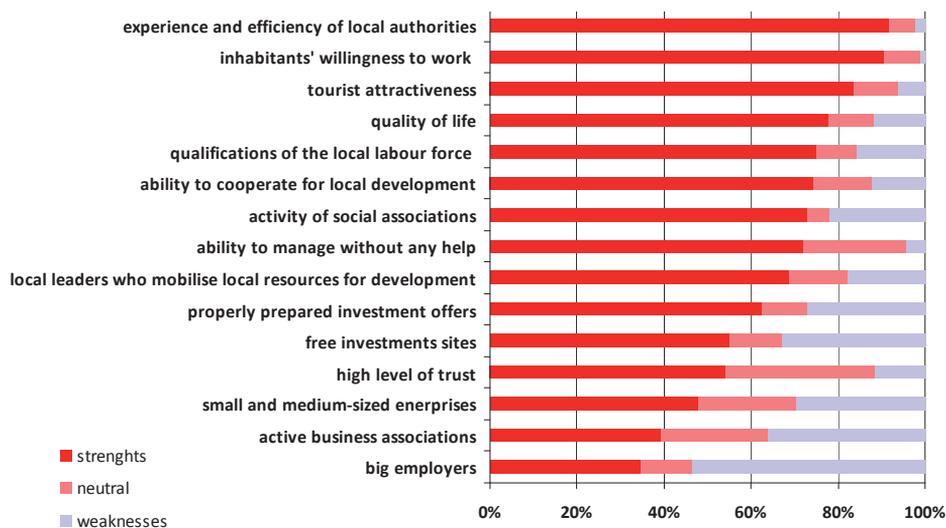


Figure 5. Stengths of municipalities

Source: Own compilation based on survey.

Among the examined cities the best examples of the development based on internal potential seem to be Piła and Elk. Piła is the biggest city of northern Wielkopolska, located in a similar distance of 100 km from metropolises of Poznań and Bydgoszcz. In the consistent opinion of the authorities of the city and the surrounding municipalities it is the internal power of Piła that constitutes its strength. The economy of the surrounding municipalities is based on agriculture and tourism only seems to be a chance which should be realised in the future. The region is also of no support to the city. Its development is based only on own resources, but its set does not differ from other cities: good transportation connections, industry plants, educational system developed on the secondary and higher level, cultural institutions and natural sites.

Another Polish city which is somehow forced to subordinate its development to its own resources is Elk, a city with 50 000 inhabitants located in the eastern part of Warmia and Masuria voivodship that after the territorial reform of 1998 was cut off from its natural metropolitan centres of Suwałki and Białystok. The surrounding municipalities belong to the poorest municipalities in Poland, moreover, the rural municipality next to the city is in conflict with Elk. The subject of the so-called “municipal war of Masuria” is the broadening of the city borders at the expense of the rural municipality. The conflict has lasted since 2008 and, despite the intervention of the government, the improvement in the relationships is rather a wishful thinking. That is why Elk has to concentrate on internal development based on efficient local administration, special economic zone with law and tax facilities for new investors and natural sites.

4. Networking hypothesis

The conducted survey shows that local self-governments cooperate with different local, regional, nationwide as well as international organisations. Networks in which municipalities take part do not possess a big value, especially in the case of the surrounding municipalities. The examined authorities most often cooperate with other authorities of different level and representatives of local government administration, who are perceived as very active (Figure 6). Therefore, the dominating relationships are very formalised and depend on the position of the local self-government in the structure of the state. Only one municipality of the five examined cooperates with business organisations located in its area or with other institutions related to business such as Regional Centre for Investor’s Attendance or Polish Agency of Information and Foreign Investments. These institutions, if they are active, cooperate mainly with subregional centres. Networking inside the subregion is rather poor; cooperation concerning the whole territory of the subregion is very seldom.

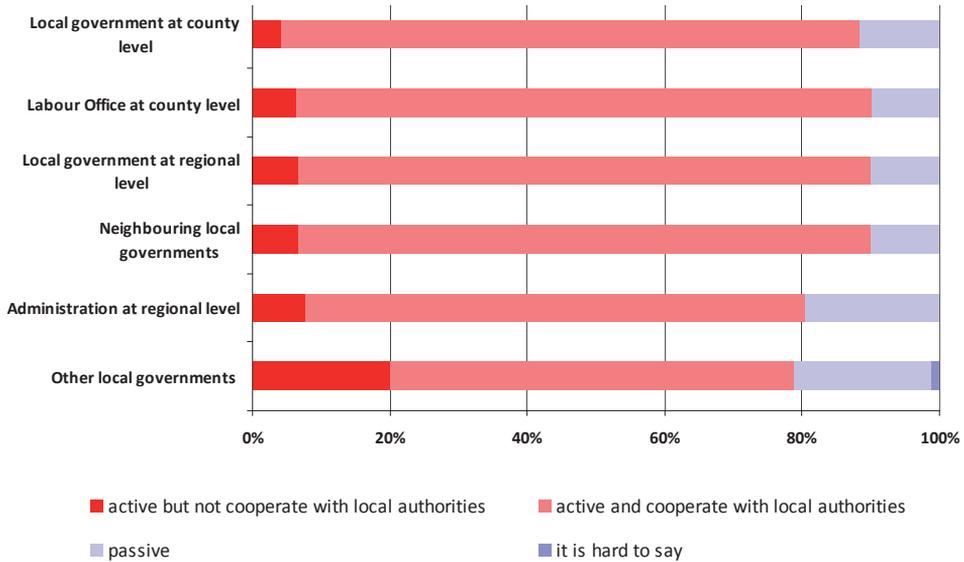


Figure 6. Institutions cooperating with municipalities

Source: Own compilation based on survey.

A very poor level of horizontal cooperation in the system of a subregional growth pole and its surroundings was confirmed in most of the examined cases. A positive example was found in Mielec – a city in south-west Poland, whose development is related to the development of an aviation company. The transformation period and modernisation led the company to bankruptcy, but on its basis, with the participation of the world’s avionic

giant Sikorsky Aircraft, and also with a political decision of creating the first special economic zone which increased investments attractiveness of the region, it was possible to build a regional economic might. It is worth highlighting that the development applies not only to the city, but also to the surrounding municipalities. It is an effect of a tradition of cooperation of the local self-government units. For many years there has existed the Convent of Mayors. Every month there are meetings of all mayors of the county and attendance is usually very high. Although it was not possible to learn about any real effect of the Convent's activity, there was also no sign of the Convent being useless or redundant. Moreover, cooperation with the county authorities is also considered very good. Nevertheless, there was an idea of creating an "integrated county", where the municipal authorities of the main city would also be the authorities of the county. The effective and consistent cooperation of municipalities in the region of Mielec was crucial in overcoming the crisis caused by the system transformation and guarantees further beneficial development.

Another example of good networking can be the city of Elk, which is not supported by the nearest surroundings even though it initiates collaboration with the municipalities. In recent years an association was created of Elk-Goldap-Olecko, three eastern counties in Warmia and Masuria voivodship. Although the association was not joined by a rural municipality conflicted with the city and two other units, the cooperation for rising the investment attractiveness and solving local social and economic subjects will be developed. The first project that was launched was the project of waste management with three sorting points, a central rubbish dump and a utilisation plant, the other one is a joint tourist project.

5. Hypothesis of strong surroundings

As the result of the conducted survey it is not possible to affirm that the surroundings of a subregional growth pole is an important development factor for the pole. As the reason given in the literature for that phenomenon is the change in the set of development factors for growth poles. Nowadays crucial development factors come from big metropolises. Factors which until the nearest past consisted the basis for development can be gained nowadays from many different places, not only from the very next surroundings.

The scope of models of cooperation between a subregional growth pole and its surroundings extends from peaceful coexistence to open hostility. Even if there were found elements of cooperation or interdependence, there was always a fear of being used by a stronger unit. The most important conclusions about the relationships linking subregional growth poles with their surroundings coming out from the survey can be brought to three points:

- In the development of a subregional growth pole its surroundings plays marginal role.

- There are big differences in assessments of importance of the surroundings for the core, where the surroundings recognises itself for more important than the core-city it assesses.
- The surroundings are not a partner for the pole. The examples of more advanced cooperation are very seldom, in most cases it is only a simple exchange of workforce and possibilities of purchasing and marketing basic goods and services.

The scope of cooperation described during the survey comprised of a few basic topics. It was always mentioned that the surroundings is a source of workforce for the core-city, especially of poor-qualified workers. A very important element is that the surroundings is a source of consumers and pupils on the secondary level. In most cases there was appreciated the role of surroundings as a place for living and recreation. Rarely the surroundings was appreciated as a base of food and resources and tourism. But in the case of tourism not always the cooperation gives equal results for both partner. One of local leaders expressed an opinion that: "tourists leave money in the core-city and garbage at our place". Only in some cases the surroundings was for the core-city an important place of work for its citizens. It was always connected with some big factories located in special economic zones (SEZ). SEZ usually are the instruments used for the development stimulation of the whole region. The most rare form of cooperation was the cooperation in the area of public services, first of all watering system for the core-city and waste disposal system. The best example of this kind of cooperation is the area of Elk, where a common for three counties waste disposal system is organised with the main dump localized in the rural municipality surrounding the city of Elk.

Definitely the best example of the synergy between a city and its region is Jelenia Góra, a former capital city of a voivodship, located in the Voivodship of Lower Silesia, next to the second most important Polish mountains of Karkonosze. The surrounding municipalities, especially these located along the Polish-Czech borderline are very strong and develop well because of their own potential concentrated on tourism. There were even opinions that the power of Jelenia Góra is created only by the region, not by the city itself. This opinion seems to be exaggerated but definitely the relationships must be qualified as equivalent. The surrounding municipalities are not only a place to live for the people moving out from the city, but they are often a workplace for the citizens of the core-city. Even though almost all the examined people find that there is still much unused potential, especially because of the high mobility, creativity and entrepreneurship of the local people.

6. Administrative-political hypothesis

The administrative reform of 1998 made some cities in Poland lose their position in the hierarchy of administration, what could be seen in omitting

these cities by the distribution canals of the development factors (public, such as European funds, and private, like direct foreign investments) which until then were concentrated in metropolises. Relationships created for social and economic development between local self-governments and regional Voivodship Marshall Office play an important role with regard to competition for external funds.

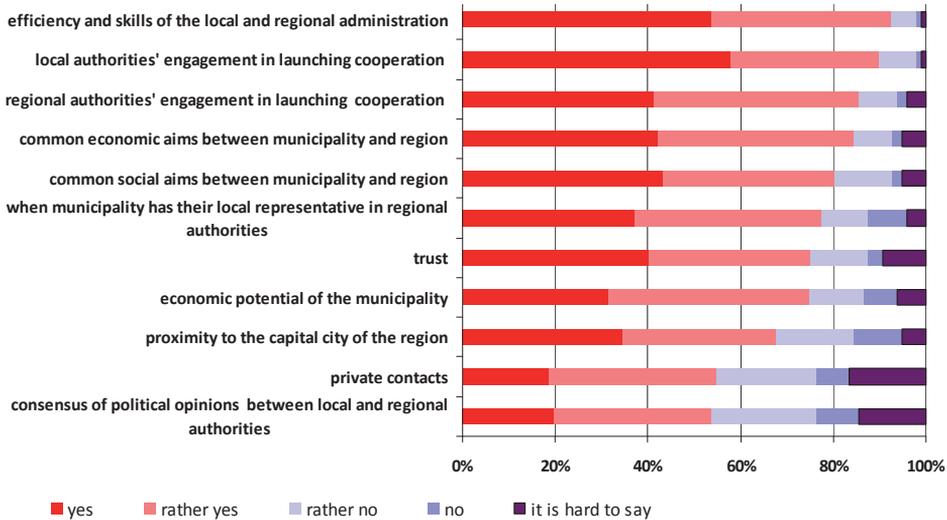


Figure 7. Factors affecting relationships for social and economic development between the local self-government and Voivodship Marshall Office.

Source: Own compilation based on survey.

According to the examined authorities, to the most important factors affecting these relations belong efficiency and skills of the local and regional administration, as well as engagement of both sides in launching the cooperation and common aims (Figure 5). Those factors are connected with the next one also playing an important role – namely confidence. Economic power of a municipality is also important for good relationships. Voivodship Marshall Office seems to be willing to cooperate rather with municipalities well developed economically. At the same time, it can be observed that subregional growth poles look more often than its surroundings at political consistency of partners and at having their own representatives in the authorities of a higher level.

Mielec as a subregional centre was created not as an effect of an emergent local action, but just because of the decisions taken for the citizens and the local authorities by others. In the time between the World Wars the area between Radom, Kielce and Tarnobrzeg was considered as strategically the best for locating a new industry district. A part of this idea was a project of locating an airplane construction site in Mielec, which was realized in 1936-

1939. After the Second World War the plant was rebuilt and became the axle of the development of the city. The economic crisis connected with the system transformation led the plant to bankruptcy, what in the long run would have led the city to a downfall. But once again a favourable political decision taken on the governmental level (which was, however, an effect of a consistent activity of the local society) that there will be the first experimental special economic zone created in Mielec gave a chance for the restoration of the avionic industry, which once again became the city's main driving force of the development. However, administrative decisions not always were favourable for Mielec. Since 2007 the office responsible for dividing the European Funds in Poland has not been the central government any more, but the Voivodship Marshall Office. As a result of local elections in 2006 Mielec lost its representatives in the authorities of the voivodship and the power went to people coming from the poorer south-eastern part of the region. According to the responses given by the local authorities of Mielec, they, as the richest part of the voivodship, are handicapped in obtaining the European Funds for social and economic development.

SUMMARY

In the last decade social and economic potential of subregional growth poles in Poland was used in a very limited way. Many of them still regret the administrative reform of 1998, when they lost their own voivodships. However, others have found their feet in a new situation and showed that they can use a new set of competences and rights. Own resources (most often related to human resources) were crucial in achieving it. The ability to create the right relations with the regional centre was also important. Options for the development of subregional growth poles are increasing as a result of the priority of the European Union to create a network of a variety of regional and local actors.

The analysis shows that a related external zone comprised of surrounding municipalities establishes around subregional centres due to suburbanisation. These are extremely often municipalities with a very high development ratio. The ability to undertake and develop good partnership and cooperation between a pole and the surrounding municipalities, especially in the area of spatial planning, is necessary for the maximal exploitation of the development potential of the whole region.

It seems that full exploitation of social and economic potential of Polish space will not be possible without dealing with the problem of subregional growth poles in a more efficient and system-oriented way. Unfortunately, in some places in Poland such cities are still treated as a threat to the capital cities of voivodships.

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