Planning for urban regions in Poland: top-down failures, bottom-up struggles

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Key issues

- Spatial planning and local government in Poland – general framework
- Challenges for spatial policy in urban regions: empirical evidence from the Poznań Agglomeration
- Metropolitan reform in Poland: the story of failure?
- Creating ‘bottom-up’ metropolitan governance and planning
Spatial planning system in Poland

- National level: legislation + National Spatial Development Conception
- Region (województwo): Regional and metropolitan spatial development plans
- County (powiat): lack of planning competence (but management of the infrastructure and public services that should be subject to planning)
- Municipality/commune (gmina): the strongest level of planning – general study of spatial development, local development plans, individual administrative decisions on land development
Local and regional government in Poland

• Pre 1990 – **centralized system** of public governance,

• 1990 – **reintroduction of local self-government**, but only at the municipal level, the number (ca. 2,500) and boundaries of municipalities still based on the 1975 reform – they have not been significantly changed after 1990

• After 1990 – tendencies towards stronger municipal autonomy, breaking links between core city and suburban zone, ‘**public choice**’ approach (despite relatively strong control by central government)

• 1998 – new tiers of local and regional self-government: poviats and voivodeships, **further administrative disintegration** of metropolitan areas

• After 2000 - changing **socio-economical relations** between core cities and suburban zones (demography, labour market, financial resources, land-use)
Major urban areas of Poland

Metropolitan areas with more than 1 million residents:
- core cities
- suburban inner rings
- Other capitals of regions
- metropolitan areas
Population change in metropolitan areas of Poland (1995-2010)
Population change in metropolitan areas of Poland (1995-2010)
Demographic relations between City of Poznan and suburban zone (1999-2020, projection)
Suburbanization in the Poznań Agglomeration

Growth in number of residents (2000-2010)

Growth in number of homes (2000-2010)
New housing developments in the Poznań Agglomeration 2000-2010
Mapa regionu, pokazująca obszary Szczytniki, Sypniewo, Kamionki, Borowiec i Robakowo. Skala 1:50 000.
General studies of spatial development for the municipalities of the Poznań Agglomeration
General studies of spatial development for the municipalities of the Poznań Agglomeration
General studies of spatial development for the municipalities of the Poznań Agglomeration - standarized version
General studies of spatial development for the municipalities of the Poznań Agglomeration

- standardized version

- existing and planned residential development areas
Challenges for spatial planning in urban regions of Poland

- The extensive character of the spatial development in suburban municipalities
- Over-estimation of needs for new ‘greenfield’ investment areas without taking into account demographic forecasts for the whole urban region
- Problems with the localization of metropolitan-wide infrastructure (e.g. wastewater treatment installations, ring-roads)
- Lack of continuity in land use zones and network infrastructure in planning documents of the neighbouring municipalities
- Lack of integrated information system about planning documents for citizens and investors
Metropolitan reform in Poland: the story of failure?

• After 1998: calls for metropolitan reform but no effect

• 2003 – recognition of metropolitan areas in the Spatial Planning and Development Act but no further steps (unclear statutory regulation for delimitation of metropolitan areas, regional planners waiting for appropriate decisions at the national level)

• Since 2005, the Polish government attempts to introduce a legal basis for the governance of metropolitan areas with populations exceeding 500,000 residents

• The legislative proposal of 2009 concluded that integrated inter-municipal government should be obligatory for three areas: Warsaw, Upper Silesia and Tri-City (Gdansk). In other cases, the formation of metropolitan government systems would be of voluntary character

• A relatively wide range of required local government cooperation in the field of metropolitan spatial policy and planning coordination was one of the main objectives of this regulation.
Metropolitan planning in Poland – legal framework

Physical Planning and Spatial Development Act

Delimitation of metropolitan areas

National Spatial Development Conception

Regional spatial development plans

Delimitation of metropolitan areas
Metropolitan reform in Poland: the story of failure?

• The legislative process **not completed** - opposition of two strong actors: regional governments and minor coalition party – Polish Peasants’ Party (PSL), electorally based in rural areas

• **At present** - no integrated national urban policy nor formal legislation for metropolitan areas

• The postulates of largest cities claiming for the development and implementation of a ‘**metropolitan policy**’ and legal framework for metropolitan areas remain unanswered

• Recent government draft projects of national planning documents (National Spatial Development Conception 2030, National Urban Policy 2020, Green Paper on Metropolitan Areas) postulate providing **statutory base to new metropolitan planning instruments**

• New opening in 2012..., but admitting that nothing has been done for last 10 years
National Spatial Development Conception 2030 – primary urban areas
‘Bottom-up’ metropolitan planning in Poland

- At present, the only form of integrated planning in metropolitan areas could be provided by some ‘bottom-up’ initiatives based on the cooperation of local governments.
- Formalized municipal cooperation in Poland is less developed than in most Western European countries.
- No typical multi-task (including spatial planning) metropolitan joint boards or associations.
- The majority of the metropolitan declarations are not legally binding documents.
- Most of the initiatives concerning informal cooperation have just been initialised.
- These coordination mechanisms, despite not being legally binding, may begin movement towards more formalised political models.
‘Bottom-up’ metropolitan governance in Poland
‘Bottom-up’ metropolitan planning in Poland: the case of the Poznań Agglomeration

• In May 2007, City of Poznan, 17 suburban municipalities and Poviat (County) of Poznan created the Poznan Agglomeration Council as the non-statutory institutional arrangement expected to act as a forum for exchanging information between the local governments and creating common policies

• Intention to cooperate was expressed in the following areas: supporting business initiatives, marketing activities, public transport, education, healthcare and spatial policy.

• The major success of the Council was creating the Development Strategy for Poznan Agglomeration ‘Poznan Metropolis 2020’ adopted by local governments in June 2011.

• This coincided with the transformation of informal Poznan Agglomeration Council into statutory based Poznan Metropolis Association, which is, however, still in its development stage.
‘Bottom-up’ metropolitan planning in Poland: the case of the Poznań Agglomeration

- Two programmes of the Development Strategy for Poznan Agglomeration ‘Poznan Metropolis 2020’ are related directly to spatial planning:
  - 1.1. Concept of Spatial Development for Metropolis
  - 1.2. Common planning standards
- **Metropolitan Forum of Spatial Planning** has been created, including planning officers from all municipalities of the Agglomeration
- The first achievement of the Forum was preparing the **common opinion of the local governments** from the Poznan Metropolitan Association on the draft planning documents proposed by regional government
- The Poznan Metropolitan Association **calls regional government to play more active role in metropolitan spatial policy**, even if it would reduce the planning power of local authorities.
- The next goal of the Forum is to prepare the **common standards and techniques for the planning documents** in the municipalities of the Poznań Agglomeration
Possible transformations of planning system in Polish urban regions

- Strengthening the powers of regional government in the metropolitan spatial planning?
- Restructuring the local government (‘Metropolitan District’)?
- Obligatory cooperation of local governments?

- Should the changes in the planning system be followed by changes in the distribution of public tasks between tiers of local and regional government?
Conclusions

• The position of local governments in Poland is strong enough to make any radical metropolitan reform socially and politically unlikely.

• As compared to the situation observed 20 years ago, the general trend has reversed. After a period in which local governments have gained and secured their independence, now we are facing a stage of integration.

• Implementation of a jointly developed policies will require strengthening of the organizational structure, especially in matters relating to planning, infrastructure and public services.

• The significance of national legal regulations should not be overestimated – it could solve only some but not all problems of cooperation.

• Strategy of waiting for the so-called Metropolitan Act, although supported by some politicians, is the worst solution. The much better idea is to develop the ‘tradition’ and political culture of cooperating in voluntary forms. In future they can be easier transformed into stronger, more formalized institutions.
Thank you for attention!

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