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Forms of Relationships among Local Government Units in Polish Metropolitan Areas

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the paper is to identify the main tendencies in forming relations between local government units within metropolitan areas of Poland. The authors focused on the study of the dominant logic of the procedure of researched units – competition or cooperation (cooperation as a simultaneous occurrence of these two). For the purpose of the study, a qualitative method was used, i.e. a questionnaire that was addressed to representatives of local government units from metropolitan areas of Poland. The authors developed a typology of forms of relations within metropolitan areas based on the conducted studies as well as identified the main features of these relations.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The role of metropolitan areas in the socio-economic system in Poland

The functioning of metropolitan areas can be considered as a paradox – from one perspective they are a flourishing centers of socio-economic growth and development as well as places of accumulation of valuable resources: physical capital resources, human capital resources, organizational capital resources [1] and relational resources [2]. On the other hand, metropolitan areas – a dichotomous system of central city (metropolis) and its functional surrounding – struggle with many important developmental problems, which nowadays reach the highest level in history. Because

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of multiplicity of functions that metropolitan areas fulfill and net of relations – both of internal (domestic) and external (international) dimension, they can be considered as one of the most complex social and territorial system. Metropolitan areas play the leading role from the perspective of shaping the developmental potential of whole country – which is confirmed in the level of basic macroeconomics indicators (share in GDP, GDP per capita, economic growth, number of new enterprises, unemployment level).

Also, there is a strong need to implement a new sort of solutions in local and regional governance and management policies such as integrated management, which conduce to strengthening of metropolitan areas competitiveness – also in international dimension. Primarily the perspective of three main stakeholders should be taken into account:

- Inhabitants
- Entrepreneurs
- Other groups.

Satisfied expectations, especially of inhabitants and entrepreneurs are crucial from the perspective of perception of life quality and conditions of doing business in local government units and whole metropolitan areas. These two are the primary goals of local developmental policy.

Polish local government units forming metropolitan areas are nowadays more active in a field of cooperation initiatives that contribute to the internal cohesion and integrity of metropolitan areas. The manifestation of this phenomenon is for sure the number of formalized cooperation actions that increase steadily in last years. Cooperation between local government units may take the form of: associations, agreements and unions. On the other hand it should be taken into consideration that local government units and cities within metropolitan areas are natural competitors. The subjects of their rivalry are mainly the valuable resources that contribute to high quality of life and creation of conditions that favor business. In this context, especially valuable from the perspective of local government units and cities forming metropolitan areas are these resources, which are characterized by the high level of mobility – that can be easily move in terms of cost and time.

The main goal of this article is to characterize relations between local government units forming metropolitan areas in Poland. It was decided to identify and evaluate the dominant logic in shaping the relations within metropolitan areas in terms of competition and cooperation, which simultaneously create a relational stream system – so-called in literature cooptation – a paradox in its nature.

1.2. Inter-organizational relations

Nowadays it is pointed, that inter-organizational strategies in a form of network relations play more and more important role in management [3]. Previous approach, which assumes the use of only one of the strategic options (so-called pure strategies in the game theory) – competition or cooperation, where already examined in a great extent, both in practical and theoretical aspects [4]. Future directions of research in the field of relational strategies and the whole strategic management can be appointed by the problem of cooptation, which is a broad subject of potential scientific exploration.

Types of relational strategies in the context of strategic management level are presented in the Fig. 1.

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