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# Wasting collaboration potential: A study in urban green space governance in a post-transition country

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### ABSTRACT

Most accounts of urban green space governance originate in cities where such initiatives have been successful. Meanwhile, there is too little information on cities where such initiatives develop with more difficulty. In order to overcome the problems that such cities face, their situations need to be studied more carefully to facilitate peer comparisons. This article provides an account of urban green space governance in three cities in Poland (Krakow, Lodz, Poznan), where environmental protection is still quite far down on the list of political priorities. With the use of a social network analysis we looked at the extent of relationships between different stakeholders and the roles of different actors within the network. The results indicate that the network's collaboration potential is barely used and that cross-sectoral collaboration is especially deficient. In particular, public institutions hold a relatively strong position and downplay the role of other actors. More collaboration is necessary and the potential bridging role of NGOs should be used to a larger extent. However, this requires more openness and trust within the network.

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## 1. Introduction

In countries with long democratic traditions and a well-developed civil society, urban green space governance usually involves a broad array of stakeholders (Connolly et al., 2013; Ernstson et al., 2010; Fisher et al., 2012). Meanwhile, there are many cities and countries in which green spaces are managed in a much more centralized manner, with low (or very low) levels of civic involvement despite those countries' democratic achievements (Azadi et al., 2011). Poland—a post-socialist and post-transition country—is one such example (Mabelis and Maksymiuk, 2009) where the post-socialist legacy of marginalizing non-state

actors in environmental decision making still persists (Grosse, 2005; Guttenbrunner, 2009). Similar to other post-socialist countries, both Polish state and non-state actors were too weak to effectively cooperate during the intensive transformation process, especially at the local level (Börzel and Buzogány, 2010b).

The transition from a socialist to a democratic system in Poland led to important institutional and societal changes. Accession to the EU was another milestone that enhanced democratization and provided the legislative and organizational basis for improving environmental governance, reinforcing the role of civil society in shaping and implementing new environmental policies (Börzel and Buzogány, 2010a; Cent et al., 2013; Kronenberg and Bergier, 2012). This shift was particularly visible during the Natura 2000 sites designation process, when environmental NGOs started to be seen as valuable partners providing important resources—mostly scientific expertise and information (Cent et al., 2013). In Polish cities, especially most recently, more people are willing to become involved in shaping urban reality and it is becoming easier to gain understanding and find a group of supporters for environmental actions, which in turn makes it easier for those groups to be noticed and even become seen as partners by local authorities (Kotus, 2013).

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Internationally, urban green space governance has increasingly been viewed from the perspective of ecosystem services, or benefits that people derive from ecosystems. This focus on benefits helps different stakeholders to express their preferences toward green spaces and to reveal the values they deem important. Different green spaces may be differently understood and valued by different stakeholders (Hubacek and Kronenberg, 2013), which highlights the need for a participatory approach toward urban green space governance. Indeed, participatory, bottom-up governance using networks of different green space users can enhance urban resilience because of the diversity of these users' experiences (social–ecological memory) (Colding and Barthel, 2013; Muñoz-Erickson, 2014).

In this article we analyze Polish case studies in order to better understand how participation and collaboration potential is used in urban green space governance in a post-transition country. We use a stakeholder analysis to suggest improvements in the participatory governance of natural resources in Polish cities (cf. Prell et al., 2009). Ultimately, we aim at obtaining an in-depth image of social–ecological dynamics in order to suggest new avenues for governing and managing urban systems for resilience.

For this purpose, we use social network analysis (SNA), within which we create a map with stakeholders represented as points (or nodes), and their interactions as lines (or ties) between the points. This analysis is based on a mathematical model which allows us to calculate various features of the network, such as the density (or intensity) of interactions between the different stakeholders (the degree to which the maximum potential of interactions within a given network is currently activated) and the different stakeholders' roles in the network (Scott and Carrington, 2011). SNA is currently used to study urban green space governance, but mostly in countries with well-developed civil societies (Belaire et al., 2011; Connolly et al., 2013; Ernstson et al., 2008). To the best of our knowledge this tool has not yet been used to study green space governance in post-socialist, post-transition countries, although other approaches have been followed to study the different stakeholders' role in environmental governance in those countries (Carmin, 2010; Carmin and Fagan, 2010).

Although the potential of dynamic social networks and the related social capital of organizations and people involved in urban green space governance is underused in many countries (Andersson et al., 2007; Ernstson et al., 2010; Svendsen and Campbell, 2008), in Poland the situation seems to be especially complicated. Not only is there a failure of social mobilization (people are unwilling to engage), but also problems with authorization (non-governmental stakeholders not having a remit/mandate to deal with the relevant environmental issues) (Kronenberg, 2015; Regulaska, 1999). While in countries with better developed civil societies non-governmental actors have assumed important social tasks in advocacy and social capital building (Leroux, 2007; Salamon, 2012; Silvera Seamans, 2013), in Poland the non-governmental movement is still relatively weak and far less active in building bonds with other sectors (Carmin, 2010; Dudkiewicz and Makowski, 2011; Reichel and Rudnicka, 2009). Thus, the potential of social networks to contribute to better green space governance is significantly underutilized (Crona and Hubacek, 2010).

The purpose of our study is applied research and its implications are to be used to improve urban green space governance in our three case study cities. In the following sections we first present our case study cities and methods, and then the results, divided into general properties of the network and the most important issues of cooperation between local authorities and NGOs. Also, we present one case study city—Lodz—in more detail to better illustrate the situation we have been able to depict in our research. Eventually, we attempt to put these results in a broader perspective and suggest how NGOs, governments, and

other entities can better harness their social networks for environmental good in similar cities globally.

## 2. Methods and case study cities

Our research consisted of two stages: (1) stakeholder identification and analysis; and (2) analysis of interactions between stakeholders with the use of SNA. We restricted our study to three large cities in Poland: Krakow, Lodz and Poznan. We selected these cities as they represent a broad spectrum of the problems with urban green space governance in a post-transition country, being relatively diverse in terms of how they manage these challenges. Our research was carried out in cooperation with the Sendzimir Foundation's "Count on Green" project, which promotes innovative approaches to urban green space governance in Polish cities.

### 2.1. Case study cities

The three cities in our study—Krakow, Lodz and Poznan—are, respectively, the second, third and fifth largest cities in Poland with roughly 759,000, 711,000 and 548,000 inhabitants at the end of 2013. Table 1 features the key characteristics of green infrastructure in these cities.

Based on statistical analysis of basic indicators related to urban green space planning, including changes in the area of green spaces and public participation, Baycan and Nijkamp (2012) suggested that both Krakow and Lodz scored poorly in this field when compared with other European cities. Newer research suggests that green space governance in Polish cities is improving, albeit in most cases it is still less advanced than in Western Europe (Hansen et al., 2014). Interestingly, Poznan is often presented as a role model for other cities in Poland to follow with regard to solutions implemented by city officials to manage green infrastructure. In Lodz the only Polish direct valuation study of urban greenery was performed, within which inhabitants indicated their willingness to pay for increasing the number of streetside trees in the city center had they been given such an opportunity to contribute (Giergiczny and Kronenberg, 2014). Thus, they exhibited a broader interest in participating in green infrastructure maintenance.

### 2.2. Stakeholder identification and analysis

As a first step, we attempted to create a complete list of all stakeholders involved in urban green space governance, formally or informally, directly or indirectly, and to different extents (indeed some of the identified stakeholders were only marginally involved). We did not restrict ourselves to formal or informal civic groups but also included public institutions, research institutes, private companies, and individuals. The formal organizations in our list included environmental and spatial planning departments,

**Table 1**

Green space surface and share of the total city area in Krakow, Lodz and Poznan in 2013 (based on Local Databank of the Central Statistical Office of Poland: <http://stat.gov.pl/bdl>).

	Krakow		Lodz		Poznan	
	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
Parks	395	1.2%	589	2.0%	347	1.3%
Green squares	310	0.9%	105	0.4%	91	0.3%
Green space surrounding buildings	866	2.7%	908	3.1%	609	2.3%
Streetside greenery	600	1.8%	456	1.6%	309	1.2%
Forests	857	2.6%	1466	5.0%	2119	8.1%
Total	3028	9.3%	3523	12.0%	3475	13.3%
Green space (m <sup>2</sup> ) per inhabitant	40		50		63	

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