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SUBREGIONAL GROWTH POLES OF THE OPOLE VOIVODESHIP. THE CASE STUDY OF THE KĘDZIERZYN-STRZELCE SUBREGION

SUBREGIONALNE BIEGUNY WZROSTU WOJEWÓDZTWA OPOLSKIEGO. STUDIUM PRZYPADKU SUBREGIONU KĘDZIERZYŃSKO-STRZELECKIEGO

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Summary: The main objective of this paper is to present the organization of subregional growth poles of the Opole Voivodeship, especially the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion in the context of increasing the efficiency of local government units constituting the subregions in implementing the National Spatial Development Concept 2030 and the Opole Voivodeship development policy by 2020.

Keywords: growth pole, cohesion policy, local self-government, association.

Streszczenie: Głównym celem opracowania jest przedstawienie sposobu organizacji subregionalnych biegunów wzrostu województwa opolskiego, zwłaszcza subregionu kędzierzyńsko-strzeleckiego, w kontekście zwiększenia efektywności jednostek samorządu terytorialnego tworzących subregiony w realizacji założeń Koncepcji Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju 2030 i polityki rozwoju województwa opolskiego do roku 2020.

Słowa kluczowe: biegun wzrostu, polityka spójności, samorząd terytorialny, stowarzyszenie.

1. Introduction

The development policy of the Opole Voivodeship is directed at building competitive advantages based on the potential growth poles including the provincial centre (Opole) which encompass the functional area (Opole agglomeration), subregional centres (Nysa, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Kluczbork, Brzeg) and their functional areas,

emphasizing at the same time the open nature of the territorial approach [*Strategia...* 2012, pp. 70-72].

The openness of the approach was expressed in the pre-defined subregions borders determined by the provisions of National Spatial Development Concept 2030 (NSDC 2030). The authorities of the voivodeship simultaneously encouraged the self-governments located outside the subregions to conclude appropriate agreements oriented on being included into the designated areas but taking into account the decisive importance of the will for such a solution. Furthermore, they recommended starting institutionalized self-governmental partnerships, which would represent the interests of the cooperating poviats and municipalities, particularly in the context of the implementation of projects co-financed by the European Union in the years of 2014-2020. Therefore it may be assumed that the premises of the development policy of the voivodeship until the year of 2020 include the territorial approach and strengthen the position of local self-governments, taking advantage of the socio-economic subregional growth poles potential.¹ This article is an attempt to analyze the importance of self-governmental partnerships which are not the units of the Integrated Territorial Investments, especially the Association of Kędzierzyn-Strzelce Subregional functional area, as the recipient of the integrated approach to the territorial development of the Opole Voivodeship.²

2. Subregional growth pole of the Opole Voivodeship

Awareness of local governments in Poland about their role in the shaping and implementation of development policy by building partnerships based on a network of mutual ties has increased with the start of the programming period of the European Union budget for the years of 2014-2020. An opinion underlying the essential importance of self-governmental associations can be found in the announcement of the European untitled “Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes” [*Komunikat komisji...* 2013, pp. 8-9]. The communication indicates that the association should be involved in the implementation of relevant programs financed by the European Union. It has been reflected in the catalog of types of beneficiaries of national and regional operational programs, including the Opole Regional Operational Programme for the years 2014-2020 (OROP). It is worth adding that in appendix No. 4 to the above-mentioned program some estimated financial allocation to support subregional

¹ The analysis of the previous Development Strategy for the Opole Voivodeship has proved that the region was the only one of the studied that did not have any records related to smaller cities. [Dziemianowicz 2011, p. 85].

² According to the provisions of the Regional Operational Program of the Opole Voivodeship 2014-2020 – version approved by the European Commission, the implementation of the ITI outside the Opole Agglomeration is not anticipated.

cities and functional areas broken down into investment priorities has been determined, but without indicating any of self-government units making up the particular subregion.³

The current shape of subregional poles of growth of the Opole Voivodeship is more the outcome of political conditions than the delimitation of functional areas carried out on the principles and criteria by which their original boundaries were set. Although the self-governments constituting the core of the area and at the same time assuming the responsibility for determining the composition of the future partnerships had some opportunity and majority of them benefited from the support in planning

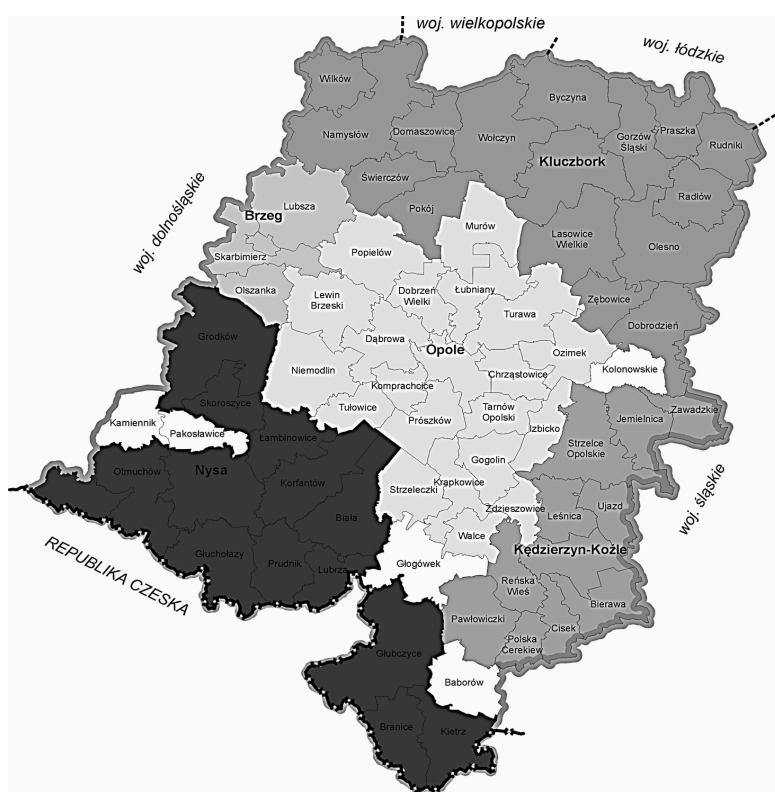


Figure 1. The Opole Voivodeship growth poles borders as of February 2016

Source: Marshal's Office of the Opole Voivodeship.

³ Allocation applies to Sub-measure 2.2.1 Preparation of investment areas (excluding the support area for Opole Agglomeration and Border Areas (districts: Głubczyce, Nysa and Prudnik, and limited to the sub-regions: Brzeg, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, North Opole Voivodeship), Sub-measure 3.1.1. Strategies for low emission in the subregional cities and Sub-Measure 3.2.1 Energy efficiency in public buildings. See Detailed Description of Priority Axes (ERDF), Annex to Resolution No. 385/2015 of 19th March 2015 amended version No. 12, May 2016.

urban functional areas,⁴ the discretion on including municipalities and poviats to particular subregions made the analyses confirm the already accepted schemes.

The constituted units at the end of many years of work on strategic documents and action plans have met with the necessity of revision of development assumptions in the context of the adopted by the Opole Voivodeship approach seeking to eliminate the so-called “white spots” on the map of the region, namely the municipalities not belonging to any of the subregions. The objective is not to reduce the opportunity of applying for outside budget funds by self-governmental units. The interpretation by the Marshal’s office met with some surprise or even protest from the local self-governments which after having completed studies, technical documentation, numerous public consultations, including the consultations with the Marshal’s Office, and establishing formal agreements were informed about this fact through the intake application regulations for the first call dedicated to the subregions and announced in June 2016 under the Regional Operational Program of the Opole Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020.⁵

Table 1. Opole Voivodeship subregional growth poles constitution

Subregion’s name*	Municipalities entering the subregions on the basis of local self-government agreements	Municipalities included to the subregions by the decision of the self-government of the Opole Voivodeship
Brzeg Subregion	Brzeg, Lubsza, Olszanka, Skarbimierz	Does not apply
Kędzierzyn-Strzelce Subregion	Bierawa, Cisek, Jemielnica, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Leśnica, Polska Cerekiew, Pawłowiczki, Reńska Wieś, Ujazd, Strzelce Opolskie, Zawadzkie	Kolonowskie
North Subregion	Byczyna, Dobrodzień, Domaszowice, Gorzów Śląski, Kluczbork, Lasowice Wielkie, Namysłów, Olesno, Pokój, Praszka, Radłów, Rudniki, Świerczów, Wilków, Wołczyn, Zębowice	Does not apply
South Subregion	Biała, Branice, Głubczyce, Głuchołazy, Grodków, Kietrz, Korfantów, Lubrza, Łambinowice, Nysa, Otmuchów, Paczków, Prudnik, Skoroszyce	Baborów, Głogówek, Kamiennik, Pakosławice

* The self-government of the Opole Voivodeship suggested the following names of the subregions: Western Subregion (Brzeg), Eastern Subregion (Kędzierzyn-Strzelce), North Subregion (Namysłów, Kluczbork-Olesno), South Subregion (Nysa). Two subregions, i.e. Brzeg and Kędzierzyn-Strzelce keep the names of their own.

⁴ Brzeg, Opole, Kędzierzyn-Koźle benefited from the funds of the Technical Assistance Operational Programme 2007-2013. Nysa benefited from the funds of EEA.

⁵ Appendix No. 11 Subregions Areas of the Opole Voivodeship to the Rules of the competition Sub-measure 3.1.1 Strategies for low emission cities in sub-regional cities [*Regionalny Program...* 2016].

3. Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion⁶ – a case study

As demonstrated in this article in the Opole Voivodeship an open approach in determining the boundaries of the subregions was initially adopted, leaving municipalities and poviats a possibility of delimitation based on the will of cooperation and resources of tangible and intangible territorial capital. Ultimately, however, the self-government of the Opole Voivodeship, as the holder the EU funds decided to revise the findings of local partnerships. An example of the functional area whose boundaries changed after the completion of the development programming is the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion.

The basis for the delimitation of the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion has been delivered by the records of the NSDC 2030 and OVDS 2030 according to which the functional area consisted of two municipalities of Strzelce (Ujazd and Leśnica) and four communes of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Bierawa, Cisek, Reńska Wieś). In 2012, the authorities of the aforementioned self-governments decided that the area should be extended to the communities of Pawłowiczki and Polska Cerekiew, situated in the administrative borders of the Kędzierzyn-Koźle powiat. As a result of the project entitled *Integrated territorial approach a chance to develop Kędzierzyn-Koźle Subregional Functional Area*, in 2014 it was proved that the subregion consisted of the following local self-government units: 1 municipality (Kędzierzyn-Koźle), 4 urban-rural municipalities (Leśnica, Strzelce Opolskie, Ujazd and Zawadzkie) and 6 rural communes (Bierawa, Cisek, Jemielnica, Pawłowiczki, Polska Cerekiew and Reńska Wieś) [Kantor 2015, p. 55]. The mentioned arrangements were addressed by the Department of Regional and Spatial Policy in the Marshal's Office of the Opole Voivodeship for consistency with the Development Strategy for the Opolskie Voivodeship until 2020 and the spatial planning of the Opole Voivodeship. The department confirmed the conclusion resulting from the study that it should be taken into consideration to widen the area by the municipality of Kolonowskie while considering the importance of the commune authorities' will for such a solution.⁷ The Kolonowskie municipality representatives did not court actively for the inclusion to the subregion limiting themselves to writing appeals to consider such a contingency. On May 29th, 2015 the issue of the inclusion of Kolonowskie was voted by the assembly of the members of the agreement for the co-operation of municipalities and poviats of the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion. The majority decided to leave the subregion in its existing borders. The standpoint regarding this matter was forwarded to the Marshal's Office. In August 2015 the subregion

⁶ Until 11th March 2016, i.e. to the enacting of the Statute of the Association of Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregional area, the functional sub-region operated under the name of Kędzierzyn-Koźle.

⁷ *Delimitacja granic kędzierzyńsko-kozielskiego subregionalnego obszaru funkcjonalnego, Kędzierzyn-Koźle 2013*, the report was made in 2013 on behalf of the Kędzierzyn-Koźle city hall, p. 145, http://www.subregionkk.pl/images/files/Dokumenty/Delimitacja_granic_Kedzierzynsko-Kozielskiego_Subregionalnego_Obszaru_Funkcjonalnego.pdf (June 2016).

completed work on the development programming of the area and the development of technical documentation for partner investment projects planned for implementation in 2014-2020. On March 11th, 2016, the representatives of municipalities and poviats constituting the subregion decided to create an association that May 30th, 2016 received an entry into the National Court Register.

Analysing the sequence of the actions taken by the cooperating units of local self-governments within the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce subregion, as well as the content of documents drawn up, including:

- 1) the delimitation of functional area,
- 2) social and economic diagnosis,
- 3) the Subregion Development Strategy to 2020,
- 4) the Kędzierzyn-Koźle Subregion Integrated Territorial Investment for the years of 2014-2020,⁸

- 5) the concept of spatial development directions of the subregional functional area, a clearly defined algorithm for the organization of a new form of cooperation should be noted, and to a certain point the flexibility of the representatives of Kędzierzyn-Koźle, as the main urban centre of the subregion, on which rested the greatest burden of handling the merits, personnel and administrative issues. The decision of the board of the Opole Voivodeship to change the borders of the subregion identified with the association of municipalities and poviats, the organization which took almost four years of work to launch, had very negative repercussions. The discontent of local governments was intensified not only by the way in which they had been informed about such an important for them matter, but also by the accepted by the Marshal's Office distribution allocation criteria between various subregions for tasks related to low-carbon economy, which is a priority subject for the Kędzierzyn-Strzelce association. An important issue for the local authorities are also funds which would finance the already designed strategies and plans updating, and potential investment plans as well.

4. Conclusions

High involvement of local self-governments creating subregional growth poles of the Opole Voivodeship in the implementation of the demands of territorially-oriented policy is expressed in the strategies of these areas and specific partner investment

⁸ Despite the implementation of the ITI in the Opole Voivodeship with regard to the Opole Agglomeration, the Kędzierzyn-Koźle subregion has developed an Integrated Territorial Investment Programme for the years of 2014-2020, which is an expression of the will of the cooperation of local self-governments, their aspirations to implement partnership projects ranging far beyond the scope of one self-government. The objective of this study is to plan joint investments of the local self-governments of the Kędzierzyn-Koźle subregion, enabling them to obtain funding for these investments. The ITI scheme of the Kędzierzyn-Koźle subregion is directly linked with the Subregion Development Strategy as its operational part [*Program Zintegrowanych...* 2015].

enterprises. All subregions of the Opole Voivodeship have their strategies and most of them have developed sectoral programs in such fields as transport, labor market, low-carbon economy, and spatial planning. Interviews and observations made by the author of this article show that in the case of the first intake for proposals of project co-funding dedicated to subregions, local governments seem to be more aware of their role than the institution responsible for managing the process, especially with regard to the issue of borders which makes the fundamental matter for functional areas.

Empowering local governments, using the potential of socio-economic subregional growth poles meets procedural, organizational, and institutional barriers. The obstacle in building lasting relationships between local governments (local and regional) is still lack of trust, including a deficit of transparency and openness in decision-making [Słupińska, Wypych 2012, p. 199]. Not all local self-governments can afford criticism of the solutions proposed by the Marshal's Office, which, although open to dialogue, may remain in ignorance of the existing problems.

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