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CITY CATEGORIES AND THEIR POSITION IN POLISH LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM[1]

Abstract:

This study offers a short introduction to the development of cities in general, their types, functions, position and points of differentiation. It stresses the importance of multifarious factors that determine the importance of particular entities. The main part of the study though is concerned with Polish cities. It takes into consideration their origins, geographical location, administrative and political importance, city reforms, demographic and economic factors as well as their functions and finance to assess the role and salience of different city categories. It analyses the impact of the aforementioned factors, especially of administrative and self-government reforms on self-government reforms, reflecting the international trend towards the unification of self-government system, have not led to the homogenization of cities in Poland, but that provisions introduced allow for individualisation of their internal structures and functions.

Key words:
city, self-government, Poland, city- a history

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Introduction

The city, from its very beginnings, has been both a diverse and complex form of organisation of social life (Rybicki 1972: ch. I; Jałowiecki & Szczepański 2006: ch. II). It can be easily seen when we juxtapose it with a village. Throughout history, especially in the modern period, lots of rural settlements were established where people earned and still earn their living from rendering services (touristic and recreational villages, health resorts, but also villages specialising in traditional crafts). There are also residential settlements, very often located near bigger cities. Still, the dominating type of rural settlement is a village where its inhabitants occupy themselves mostly or exclusively with farming (Rybicki 1972: 17-22). The village was and still is a settlement that is much more homogeneous than the city. There are lots of factors influencing such a state of things: relatively small number of inhabitants, similarity of social roles played by them (especially those connected with work), the fact of belonging to the same social class, similarity of material status and living conditions, domination of family ties and close contacts with neighbours, as well as high level of functional and normative integration of people. Its functioning is also based on the same or similar value systems and social norms, similarity of customs, common traditions and rituals (Tönnies 2002).

Reasons for the establishment and development of cities are multifarious (Rybicki 1972: 25; Jałowiecki & Szczepański 2006). Among the crucial ones are economic reasons which are believed to be the main drives for the creation of most cities (Rybicki 1972: ch. II).

Looking at city history, there are not many cities where their inhabitants lived off farming and animal breeding. Those were typically rural occupations. On the other hand, even in the Early Antiquity people were establishing settlements in order to trade. People living nearby were drawn by those new settlements, as they enabled them to sell their goods or exchange them for different ones. What is more, those settlements were places where people of all kinds of professions and occupations were coming to, to live within the city walls or in close proximity to them.

Economic reasons were the foundations for the development of cities – colonies. In the Antiquity they were being set up along the coast of Mediterranean Sea and Aegean Sea. Carthage, Syracuse and Messina are the most known cities and their beginnings can be traced back to that period. Such settlements were being set up also in later periods in Asia, Africa and in North and South America. They were built by sailors, merchants, soldiers and state officials. Their development is due to the advancement of sea travel, new geographical discoveries, and later also the process of colonisation (Rybicki 1972: 36-39).

Since Antiquity many great cities were founded as harbours. They were located along water transportation routes. They enabled travelling and shipping of goods to different parts of the country, other countries or even other continents. At the time, when sea trade was not threatened by other means of transport of goods, harbour- cities gained international cities status. To this day such a position is attributed to cities that were part of Hanseatic League: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Szczecin or Gdansk. Some cities became world's trade centres, like London. Till nineteenth century, when land transport started to pressurize sea transport, harbour -cities were among the richest ones (Rybicki 1972: 42-44).

The Industrial Period and urbanisation led to the reversal of the proportions of people living in the city and in the rural areas but it also introduced a new type of a city. In the near proximity of mines, steelworks, chemical plants and industrial plants new settlements were built for people who worked there. In this way industrial cities developed (Jałowiecki & Szczepański 2006: 94-124). But not all settlements were built from a scratch. Some best known examples are Królewska Huta and Nowa Huta. The discovery of advantageous conditions for industrial activity, for example natural resources, altered economic and social characteristics of cities set up even couple of centuries earlier – like Bytom, Gliwice, Rybnik or Bielsk. Other cities, like Katowice, Zabrze or Sosnowiec evolved from rural settlements.

Industrial cities are probably the most vivid example in history of the domination of economic factors in the process of urbanization. Such cities usually had two primary functions: production and residential. Rapid growth of population and of urban space at first curbed the development of other spheres of city life which were underdeveloped and could not match its economic and residential functions. It was only in the next phases of the development of industrial city that such spheres as trade, services, education, culture, sport and recreation or social organisations expanded (and matched the importance of the primary functions) which led to equalization of functions (Rybicki 1972: 46-50).

Nineteenth century marks the beginning of the establishment of cities offering mostly services. In the next century this trend was continued. Such cities come in two guises. First form is a city offering traditional services: tourism, recreation, health care. Polish examples of such cities are: Zakopane, Naleczow, Sopot and Ciechocinek. With the commercialisation of culture, cities regarded as cultural centres like Paris, London, New York, Milan or Los Angeles were also incorporated into this group. Second form is a city built close to universities and research institutes. These centres of advanced technologies, with different profiles (space exploration, information technology, telecommunications, biomedicine) develop at the greatest pace, no matter whether within the city structure or outside it.

City emergence and development is also due to political and administrative reasons (Sjoberg 1960; 1965). Dwellings of rulers for centuries were the centres of political decisions, places of crucial importance for the state. Cities built around kings' residences, because of their riches, possibility of service to the king, but most of all because of the power held by dignitaries were urban centres people wanted to live in. Babylon, Thebes, Athens, Persepolis, Rome were great and significant cities, not only at that time. Rome was the first city in history to reach a population threshold of one million (second one was London but it had to wait till 1851).

Difficulties connected with the realization of political and administrative functions of the capital of a country or region made authorities move the seat of state government to cities built from scratch, like Saint Petersburg, Washington, Canberra or Brasilia, or to existing cities that were once small towns, like Bonn or Hague. Usually, political and administrative functions are not autonomous, but they do exert a great influence on the form of the city. It is because they are the most important functions. What is more, it is worth remembering that public institutions offer employment possibilities for large numbers of inhabitants.

Irrespective of the degree in which realization of public and administrative functions is shaping and forming the character of cities, all of the cities that perform these functions are important centres of not only political, but also social life.

Origins of cities can be also traced to centres of religious practice. The history of the oldest ones like Thebes, Delphi or Jerusalem begins in antiquity. Others in turn, like Rome, Lhasa, Mecca or Medina were erected in the first centuries of our era. Cities which evolved around Christian centres of Marian devotion, for example Czestochowa, Lourdes or Fatima, were set up in the Middle Ages or even later. Those cities sprung and developed to offer goods and services to priests and monks – both for everyday use and for religious cult. What is more, pilgrims travelling to holy places also needed food, drink and shelter, especially when they planned to stay for a longer period of time. Since the Middle Ages people started trading devotional articles and other souvenirs from pilgrimages. With time such cities expanded their functions, becoming, like Czestochowa, centres of trade and industry or like Jerusalem, centres of tourism (understood not only in religious terms). Nevertheless, their religious function is still, if not a dominant one, at least an important one.

Another category of cities encompasses cultural, artistic and academic centres. As early as in twelfth and thirteenth centuries universities in Bologna, Padua, Florence or Paris were known all over Europe. Equally renowned are two British universities – Oxford and Cambridge. Cities built around them are considered to be the centres of academic and scientific life. Similarly,

New Haven is known in USA and abroad for one of the oldest federal universities – Yale University. Cambridge is known for Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

All the aforementioned determinants, conditions and circumstances of cities' emergence are vital but not the only sources of differences between them. What also shapes the city is the scope of its independence from external powers, especially state, or, as it is in the case of private cities – their owners. It is connected with two factors. First one is the specific character of the location of the city. Settlers, when erecting a city, could do it on more or less favourable terms dictated by the owner of the land. It is clearly seen on the example of cities created on the basis of Polish and German law (that was called Magdeburg Law). Immigrants coming to Poland from Germany tried to gain rights and privileges which were granted to Magdeburg. Establishing a city in accordance with German law meant that city had the right to its own court, to its own city council and major (Drabina 2000: 27). It is in those cities, established on the basis of German law, that first institutions of local self-government and professional self-government started to appear (Rybicki 1972: 250-255).

Municipalities could expand their level of autonomy by buying privileges. The most eagerly acquired ones were those that enabled cities to organize a marketplace. At first, sporadic and irregular in form, trading activities soon became regular and important for the city's development. Rulers or magnates that governed the city expected that this form of activity, which brought cities income and elevated their status, should take place in accordance with their decrees or after obtaining a written consent of the owner of the land. Both decrees and landowner's consent had to be bought by cities. Additionally, cities had to make yearly payments to keep the right to privileges. In some countries it led to the creation of a distinct category of cities. An example can be found in Great Britain, where cities granted royal charters were called boroughs (Supernat 1999: 20).

Irrespective of costs and cities' legal and administrative situation, privileges enabled trade and advancement of crafts as well as territorial expansion and technical development of cities, what in turn led to their growing salience in county's economy and politics.

A special role in economic, social and political life, since the emergence of first civilisations organised into states, was played by capital cities, which were the seats of rulers (Jałowiecki & Szczepański 2006: 82-87). They were and are the most important centres of political life as the seats of public administration bodies, which were at first going through the process of centralisation (in absolutism and first phases of industrial society) and then decentralization reflected in the changes of the nineteenth and twentieth century democratic

states. Nevertheless, state authorities have never wholly relinquished their right to steer and oversee public administration, nor have they relinquished their right to direct the apparatus of central administration. Administration is, after all, one of the most important institutions employed in the realization of political agenda, an institution which guarantees the integrity of a state.

For centuries, capital cities, except for those, which were set up for the realization of political and administrative functions, have been the most significant economic centres. It is partly due to the centralized structure of states, especially centralization of political power and administrative functions. It was easier to obtain a certificate, permission, order, guarantee etc., while living in a capital city. Merchants and producers were able to influence economic decisions made by state authorities more effectively. Rendering services and providing goods for public institutions was also profitable. Those circumstances influenced decisions of industrial enterprises, trade companies and service firms, assurance companies and financial institutions to set up their main offices in capitals. Capitals are also large sales markets and centres of trade. What is also important is that capitals are often located in the centre of a country. Thanks to this fact the distance from capital to other regions of the country is similar. In the time before the advancement of modern means of communication and cheap transport, the geographical location of a capital was crucial for low distribution costs and favourable terms of trade.

Capitals are also centres of cultural life. Lots of artists came to cities to seek patronage. Others were lured by the riches of burghers to whom they offered their services. Some of them were captivated by the diversity of life-styles in the city. As a result, one could find artists in almost every capital and some residential quarters, like Montparnasse or Broadway gained international recognition.

The causes and circumstances of the establishment of cities, their size, lines of development, economic and political importance are not the only areas of their differentiation. Among other factors are the system of city authorities and their competences. Differences between city authorities are visible not only when we compare them with their counterparts from other countries, but very often, there are significant differences in the set up of city authorities in one country. Till the modern era regulations pertaining to cities were of varied character. Cities were located not only on monarch's lands but also on lands belonging to magnates where it was them who made decisions. Because of that, magnates' regulations were being supplemented with administrative decisions of special character, which granted cities additional rights and privileges, for example, to vary the ways of tax raising, to set up city courts, to undertake certain economic activities, to enter professional associations, or to elect a city council.

The evolution of the system of cities in Poland in 19TH and 20TH centuries

The case is similar for city self-government. Netherlands are commonly considered to be its cradle. It was there that this institution spread first and it was there that it evolved the most. We can, of course, find city self- government in other European countries – since eleventh and twelfth century, but it was smaller in scope and had less powers. Till the end of the Middle Ages, and even till the beginning of the Industrial Era, self-government was of estates of the realm character. It was the representation of patriciate and rich burgher. As a universal political institution it emerged in nineteenth century, although not in all European countries. Local, as well as regional self- government, developed most of all in democratic and economically well developed countries (although it also appeared in German Empire and Austro-Hungarian Empire). At that time local self- government was established also on Polish territories, although it took different forms in different partitions.

Uniform regulations were introduced in Germany. In the cities, self-government was introduced by reforms of Prussian minister of internal affairs Baron von Stein. It was a long process. On Polish territory under Prussian partition local self-government was introduced by the Act of 30 May 1853. All landowning citizens chose city council, which was then responsible for choosing an executive - first in the form of Magistrate, later a mayor.

In Austrian partition city self-government was created in two phases. First, by the power of imperial edicts self-government was established in Cracow and Lviv. In 1889 the reform was extended onto other cities.

In Russian partition city self-government, as opposed to local self--government created in rural areas, was not introduced till 1914.

After its resurgence, Poland tried to establish some unified framework for city self-government (as other European countries). It was not achieved until 1933, by an Act on Partial Change of Self-Government System (Dz. U. 1933 no. 35, item 294; Ajnenkiel 1975). The Act introduced three categories of cities. Most cities, with population under 75 000, were in the first one. Incorporated cities which were bigger than cities in the first group, were in the second category. The biggest cities: Krakow, Lviv, Vilnius, Poznan, Lodz and Warsaw were entitled to special powers, granted to them by the Polish President and enshrined in their statutes. However, closer analysis of the 1933 Act reveals, that in reality the Act made provisions for two more categories of cities. First one encompassed counties (powiats) – seats of the authorities of two self-government entities. Separate status was granted to Warsaw, the capital city of Poland. Executive functions were vested in a mayor and deputy-mayors, chosen not by

city council, but by Minister for Home Affairs. The Act of 16 August 1938 on the system of self-government in the capital introduced more separate regulations. First of all, Warsaw was regarded as a unit of local and regional self--government (local self-government entities are called municipality and county – gmina and powiat, regional self-governement entity is called voivodeship – województwo). Secondly, the whole city was divided into districts with elected councils. Thirdly, any changes in its territory or system of government had to be introduced under the authority of an act. What is more, a bit different regulations were devised for the most urbanized Silesian Voivodeship (Ujdak 1996: 238-244).

The Act then did not manage to unify city self-government system. Its authors decided to distinguish different categories of cities based on demographic, economic and political criteria. Those differences were reflected in different functions and powers of particular self-government entities, in different shape, number and competencies of their bodies, and when it comes to the executive bodies particularly, also in their names. What is more, institutions responsible for oversight were different too. Control over cities was the responsibility of county executive – starosta. Incorporated cities were controlled by a government-appointed governor called a voivode (wojewoda). In the capital control was attributed to a Minister for Home Affairs.

Although such attempts have been made, after World War II, a unified system of self-government in the cities has not been created either. A three-tier structure of administrative system was introduced together with a unified system of local public authorities which allowed for formal equalization of cities' position. However, five cities – capitals of voivodeships that were the biggest ones: Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow, Wroclaw and Poznan were granted more powers than the others, what made some scholars argue, that since the end of 1950' till mid 1970' there were 22, not 17 voivodeships (Jastrzębski 1977: 67-73). Other 12 cities that were capitals of voivodeships were also of great political importance. They were the seats of the main offices of political parties and of public authorities, so they were economically and administratively advantaged. A separate category were county cities (miasta powiatowe) (Tarkowski 1974).

After 1975 the structure of cities in Poland has been simplified, at least from the legal point of view. In the second phase of the administrative reform counties (the second tier) were abolished, and a two-tier structure of government was introduced. What was left were municipal cities and cities – capitals of voivodeships. The number of the latter was almost tripled. But this time again authors of the reform failed to deliver unity to the system of territorial division. Among 49 new voivodeships, 3 encompassed big cities and their surroundings. In fact, although a bit bigger in size, Wroclaw Voivodeship had

the same character as Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow voivodeships. On the other hand, Katowice Voivodeship, when it was one of just 17 voivodeships, had the biggest economic and demographic potential and the highest level of urbanization. The distance between it and other voivodeships grew after the creation of 49 second – tier units.

After couple of years after the reform it became obvious that differences between small and big capital cities of voivodesips persist and, at the same time, all capitals of voivodeships develop faster than other cities. Medium and small capitals of voivodeships, irrespective of favourable economic, political and administrative conditions connected with their status did not become big cities in 1990' (by big we mean 200 000 or at least 100 000 inhabitants).

City categories in Poland

Authors of the Self-Government Act of 8 March 1990 (Dz. U. 1990, no. 16, item. 95), which opened the way for its restitution after 40 years since its abolishment only partially followed the authors of 1933 Unification Act. All 2489 units of lower tier of self-government (municipalities – gminy) were characterised by the same legal, organisational, economic and administrative properties. There was one set of obligatory tasks for them. Also, a unified structure of municipal authorities was introduced with clearly delineated competences. State authorities were to undertake unified forms of control of municipalities' actions (Dz. U. 2001, no. 142, item 1591).

Among important characteristics that differentiate municipalities in Poland one has to enumerate: separate categories of rural municipalities, urban--rural municipalities and urban municipalities, what is also reflected in the names of their legislative bodies (municipal council, council of a municipality and city, city council) and executive bodies (mayor of the municipality called wojt in rural municipalities, burmistrz in most urban and urban-rural municipalities, or prezydent in urban municipalities).

Voting system in council elections introduces yet another categorisation: smaller units, where plurality voting system is being used and bigger units of self-government with proportional representation voting system.

County Self-government Act of 5 June 1998 (Dz.U. 1998, no. 91, item 578) distinguishes between two more city categories. First one encompasses county cities, usually most urbanised human settlements in a county. In the second one there are cities with county rights (miasta na prawach powiatu often called powiaty grodzkie). They have a special status as they combine functions of a municipality and a county. It is worth mentioning one more group of cities, that can be put into a separate category. There are cities, which are the

seat of both land counties authorities (władze powiatów ziemskich), and authorities of cities with county rights. There are over 50 cities of this kind, among them Katowice and all capitals of voivodeships.

In 1990 separate regulations were devised for Warsaw (the self-government system in the country's capital has been in the meantime changed several times).

Taking into consideration: the size, demography, economic salience, administrative functions and legal status and its impact on the surrounding cities, we can distinguish several categories of cities. First one encompasses small towns which are parts of municipalities. Those are the smallest municipal units, with small number of inhabitants, low economic potential, badly developed technical infrastructure and scarce number of public institutions.

Second one is made up of municipal cities. Under the Act of 29 October 1972 (Dz. U. 1972, no. 49, item. 312), in place of 4315 units of first-tier of territorial and administrative division called clusters and settlements, 2365 municipalities were created (Rocznik Statystyczny 1973: 55). Such move marked a return to solutions introduced in the first half of the last century. Municipalities were to be bigger units that their past counterparts, they were to have social and technical infrastructure that would enable them to cater for the needs of their inhabitants. This aim was realized although the potential of particular municipalities was varied. In a way it is proved by the reduction of the number of units of territorial division. In Rzeszow Voivodeship, in place of 380 clusters only 164 municipalities were created, in Katowice Voivodeship the numbers were respectively 256 and 112, in Zielonogorskie 144 clusters were abolished and 100 municipalities were created (Służewski 1977: 120). In practice, small rural municipalities were already being distinguished on the basis of the domination of farming, cities were distinguished as entities basing on industrial production and services. Jerzy Służewski identified a third, intermediate category of suburban municipalities, evolving on the brinks of big cities, which inhabitants were enjoying the closeness of a big city and its services, labour market and goods (Służewski 1977: 118).

The reform resulted in the creation of 804 cities (Rocznik Statystyczny 1981: LVIII). There were 375 settlements with a city status that were combined with neighbouring settlements to create urban-rural municipalities. The rest were given the status of urban municipalities (Służewski 1977: 119). In the last 40 years the number of urban-rural municipalities has grown to 616. The number of cities with the municipality status has also grown by 26%, what makes 582 entities (www.pkw.gov.pl). At this moment, in Poland there are 915 cities (www.pkw.gov.pl), inhabited by 61.5 % of Poland's population. Most of them are not densely populated. The biggest category are cities with the population

size not exceeding 20 000. There are 697 units of this type what makes 76% of all cities. Demographic potential of one out of eight cities does not exceed 40 000 (there are 111 cities of that kind). There are 72 cities with population size varying from 40 000 to 100 000. Next 34 cities can be considered as big cities, with population reaching 0.5 million people. Five cities are inhabited by over 0.5 million people, but only one has a population of 1 million. There are 534 cities with only municipal functions and among them 303 are urban municipalities, the rest are in the urban-rural municipality category.

County cities are a third category. Initiators of the local government reform, since the beginning of its implementation, considered it as a first step in the overhaul of the system of territorial and administrative governance which was to lead to decentralization of the state. They planned to achieve it through the reintroduction of a three-tier administrative division of the country and by the introduction of new tier of self-government – on the level of county (which was reintroduced after almost a quarter of a century).

At first there were 200 of such units planned to be introduced. However, their number, in the course of parliamentary work on new self-government acts systematically grew. Finally, Sejm voted for 307 counties. Since then their number has slightly grown to 315 units of county self-government (Dolnicki 2012: 104-122; www.pkw.gov.pl).

Granting a city the status of a seat of county authorities depended on fulfilment of some criteria. The first one was demographic. Such cities were to be populated by at least 10 000 inhabitants and had to be the largest cities in a county. What is more, as such cities had to realize county functions, enumerated in the County Self-government Act, bigger chances for obtaining the status of the seat of county authorities had those cities, which had a proper infrastructure and institutions. The decision was based on whether the city had: police departments, fire stations, secondary schools, health facilities (especially specialised), social help services, sports and recreational facilities, cultural institutions with a supra-municipal remit. What was also important was whether the city had buildings where self-government authorities and county administration could be seated.

The first two criteria were difficult to implement in practice. In the East of Poland there are not enough cities with proper demographic potential. Some of the cities which became seats of county authorities, did not have a proper institutional background either. In some of the self-government entities, institutions like police departments or employment agencies were set up after their creation, some institutions on the other hand were closed down (for example hospitals).

Duty to carry out tasks of supra-municipal character was extended to 66 urban centres, which without losing the status of a municipality, gained an additional status of cities with county rights (Wierzbica 2005). It is a separate

category of cities distinguished first of all by their size. It encompasses all cities with population over 100 000 and over half urban centres with population over 50 000. Only two cities with county rights are cities with population of 40 000. Secondly, cities we are talking about are of significant administrative importance. All capitals of voivodeships and most of the former capitals of voivodeships are cities with county rights and branch offices of voivodeships offices are located in those entities. Only couple of cities resigned from such status – Siedlce, Ciechanow, Pila and Walbrzych.

There are cities though that do not meet the demographic or administrative criteria. Those are seven cities located in Silesian (Myslowice, Siemianowice, Piekary Slaskie, Swietochlowice and Zory), Pomeranian (Sopot) and West-Pomeranian (Swinoujscie) Voivodeships. The decision to grant them the city with county rights status was based on their location within an urban centre and relative size.

Incorporated cities (miasta wydzielone), neither in Poland nor in Europe, are not a new idea. In Germany, 118 biggest cities are such units (Korczak 1999: 14). In France, separate laws were created for Paris, and two other cities: Marseille and Lyon (Jeżewski 1999: 179-182). In Great Britain districts were divided into unitary authorities and non-metropolitan districts (Supernat 1999: 24). There were also 6 metropolitan boroughs created.

Cities with county rights are responsible for the realization of functions of both municipalities and counties. Thanks to that they can better adjust the size and structure of local administration and their organisational units than counties and municipalities. They also have more opportunities for lowering the cost of running public institutions and of providing services. It is because of the high demand for their services, economies of scale and rivalry over pupils, patients, viewers and consumers of other goods and services they provide.

But not all spheres of functioning of big cities can benefit from economies of scale. Costs of supplying people with water, energy, costs of drainage, waste disposal or road maintenance are often higher than in smaller units. Density of those networks raises costs of their maintenance and modernisation.

Additionally, costs are higher because some of the people who use city's facilities or buy its services are inhabitants of other municipalities, counties and even voivodeships. They are drawn by the quality of medical services, education and cultural events.

Economic and social importance of cities with county rights is further strengthened by their revenue. For example, revenue of Warsaw in 2015 amounted to PLN 13 483 million (www.um.warszawa.pl), Krakow's revenue was PLN 4 495 million (www.bip.krakow.pl), and Lodz's PLN 3 533 million. (www.bip.uml.pl). Cities with population between 100 000-200 000 usually

have a revenue of PLN 500-900 million. For comparison, one can look at the revenue of self-government on the regional level. Mazovian Voivodeship's revenue amounted to PLN 2 613 million and Silesian Voivodeship's to PLN 1 422 million. Revenue of cities with county rights, especially capitals of voivodeships, makes them the richest units of self- government. The most important source of revenue comes from participating in state taxes, especially in the personal income tax (they are entitled to half of it) and local taxes and local charges. In spite of much bigger, in comparison with municipalities and counties, number of tasks and their remit, they are able to finance additional, non obligatory own and delegated tasks.

A separate and dominant category is cities that are the seats of land counties authorities and authorities of cities with county rights. Those are, as already mentioned, almost all capitals of voivodeships and 31 other cities with a county rights. Only 15 cities in Silesia, Gdynia, Sopot and Swinoujscie do not realize this double function.

Among cities with county rights a special attention should be paid to cities that are the capitals of voivodeships. If we assume, as the creators of regional self-government did, that the third tier of administrative division of the country is made up of regional units, we can say that those cities are urban centres of regional importance. They usually dominate other cities because of the greater territory and larger population. One in three inhabitants of Mazovia lives in Warsaw. Lodz is populated with 30% of the voivodeship's population, every fourth person living in Lesser Poland Region lives in Krakow. Only Katowice stands out, inhabited by 7% of Silesian Voivodeship population. But if we consider the whole number of people living in Silesian conurbation, the percentage rises to 50%.

Regional cities stand out not only because of their population. All of them are academic centres and except for Gorzow and Kielce they are considered university centres. In most of them there are also economic and technical universities, and in the biggest ones also medical universities and artistic academies.

What is more, in their remit, one can find lots of cultural institutions – music centres, theatres, exhibition places, arts galleries - that have a regional influence.

Commercial services, gastronomy and transport services are of good quality. What differentiates them from their surroundings is the network of facilities offering goods that are rare and luxurious or modern and new on the market.

In such urban centres the labour market is usually in good condition. Unemployment rate is visibly lower than in the rest of the country and in other big cities. Unemployment rate in Warsaw, Poznan and Katowice is around 3-7%.

Labour market usually offers a wide variety of profession choices, also untypical professions. Salaries are higher too, although this is balanced by higher costs of living in such cities, connected with estate prices, costs of services and prices of all kinds of goods.

Regional centres also have a well developed technical infrastructure. All or most of households are connected to water supply system, sewerage system, power grid. Lots of households are connected to heat distribution network. In such cities the number of households with the Internet access is the biggest.

As the analysed cites ale located close to the network of roads and motorways and railway routes they are linked to each other and to the outside world. This stimulates cooperation within the country and with regions from abroad.

Capitals of voivodeships are different from each other in many aspects, like:

a. genesis. The importance of Gdansk or Szczecin can be traced back to their salience as harbour cities. Krakow was established at the intersection of trade routes. Katowice and Lodz developed as industrial cities. Opole has been a capital of principality, and later an important seat of administration,
b. traditions of being an urban centre. The oldest capitals were erected in 11th-12th centuries, young capitals were granted city status only in 19th century,
c. demographic potential. Warsaw's population is several times bigger than that of Opole or Zielona Gora,
d. wealth, as seen in their budgets, especially in their income from taxes,
e. economic potential and importance in the economy of a region, country, but also on an international scale,
f. openness to the world, what is measured by the intensity of contacts with other Polish cities and cities abroad,
g. possibility of shaping the organisation of all kinds of spheres of social life in the region and beyond, with an overarching role for city authorities,
h. receptivity to technological, organizational, cultural and political innovations.

Those differences are salient enough to state, that some of the analysed cities exert an impact on neighbouring regions while others have a potential that enable them to perform metropolitan functions only within the remit of their voivodeship, and even this role is not being realized in full.

The first category of capitals of voivodeships, which Bohdan Jałowiecki calls regional metropolises (Jałowiecki 2000: 20-24), we will call macro-regional cities, accordingly to terminological convention we applied when we assumed voiveodeship to be a region. Macro-regional cities are the most urbanized cities, with population exceeding 500 000 inhabitants. They are the centres

of agglomerations. In South-East Poland such role is played by Krakow, in South-West macro-region it is Wroclaw. Poznan is the centre of social processes taking place in the West of the country, Gdansk, or to be more precise, Trojmiasto, in the North. In the centre, although there is Lodz – a third city in Poland when it comes to the population size, the dominant macro-regional city is Warsaw. There are plans to build a high-speed railway line and a motorway linking both cities which is to lead to the creation of duopolis inhabited by 2,5 million people.

Katowice is a city of a very specific kind. It is a city aspiring to the status of macro-regional city. However, it is the smallest one among the aforementioned 6 cities, it does not dominate over its surroundings like Warsaw, Krakow or Wroclaw. The decisive factors that prejudge Katowice's dominance in Upper Silesian Conurbation are its administrative, political, academic, transport and exhibition functions. Upper Silesian Conurbation is the biggest urban area and one of the most important economic centres in Poland. If new forms of cooperation between cities belonging to the conurbation develop, if they will join efforts in spatial planning, communication, emergency medical services, the potential of the whole conurbation will raise. In this way, position of Katowice will be strengthened too.

One of the problems concerning spatial location of macro-regional cities in Poland is the closeness of Krakow and Katowice. Both cities fight for dominance in the Southern macro-region. For now, Krakow – capital city of Lesser Poland Voivodeship is winning. There simply is not enough space in the territory to the East of Opole region for the existence of two macro-regional centres.

Macro-regional centres differ from other urban centres because they are:

1. centres of the highest level of national and foreign investment,
2. the biggest centres of trade,
3. seats of the biggest national, regional and international enterprises, banks, insurance companies and financial corporations,
4. main academic and research centres cooperating with their counterparts abroad,
5. transportation hubs (transportation understood as road, railway, air and sea travel),
6. centres offering a wide variety of services to inhabitants of other regions and to international guests like: hotels, education, training, cultural events and exhibition spaces,
7. centres of specialised services of international scope (marketing, legal services, information services),
8. important centres of social communication (main television and radio stations, national and regional newspapers, mobile telephone networks),

9. centres of intensive human resources exchange with other regions and other countries,
10. seats of embassies and consular posts, seats of international foundations and social organizations,
11. urban centres, which authorities ensure intensive dialogue and lively cooperation with centres abroad (membership in international organizations, cooperation with other big cities, representations to international organisations – for example European Union) (Castells 1982).

Warsaw has a separate place in the structure of Polish cities. It is not only because it is the biggest Polish city with population twice as high as that of the second largest Polish city – Krakow, nor because it is Poland's capital what makes it the centre of political life and most important administrative centre. It is the only Polish city with widely developed international functions. Its location in the centre of European continent allowed for the delineation of its transportation hub function on the route from Russia and Belarus but also from farther Asian countries to Western Europe. After Poland had joined the European Union, Warsaw has become one of the easternmost big cities of countries of the European Union. Warsaw is also located on the route from the Baltic Sea countries to the rest of the continent. Finally, Warsaw, through Gdansk, links Scandinavian countries with the Southern Europe.

A convenient geographical location, its functions of the international centre of trade, academic and cultural cooperation and, although to a lesser extent, of political life and diplomacy, make Warsaw one of the most important cities in Central Europe. In fact, there is, although concealed, rivalry between Warsaw and Prague over the status of Central European metropolis.

Warsaw is Poland's richest city, the only one, where average GDP per capita exceeds the European Union average. It is the seat of the headquarters or branch offices of the biggest number of Polish and international companies. It is in Warsaw that most social organizations with national scope are based. It is the seat of central government. It is an international convention centre and a centre for information sharing.

Multiplicity of city categories is only partially reflected in the diversity of measures concerning cities' position as self-government units. In the vast majority of European countries one can see a drive to the unification of the system, tasks, competences and finance of local authorities. Only in few countries there is a diversity of possible models of self-government system, with differentiated range of tasks that depend on the size of local community or uneven regulations concerning the legislative body of a municipality which allow for direct democracy institutions, as well as elected councils.

Drive to unification of regulations is also visible in Polish law on self--government. It not only unifies the status of self-government entities at the same level, but also introduces identical provisions concerning different levels of self-government. It is easily seen when one analyses the provisions concerning the competences of legislative bodies, or the executives at the county and voivodeship level.

However, complete unification is not possible. There is no way, even with eager introduction of provisions that are to unify the system, to disregard in the process the existence of significant differences (of varied origins) between settlements, among them cities. That is why in self-government acts, and other provisions, next to regulations applying to all or most of local and regional communities one can find regulations providing for alternative solutions. Some of them are concerned with cities.

Polish City`s status as a self-government entity

Probably the most important characteristic that differentiates cities is their status as self-government entities. Self-government system acts provide us with four types of regulations in this matter.

Provisions concerning the structure of municipal self-government enable local councils to create within the remit of a municipality auxiliary units. Those units play a subordinate administrative role. In rural areas these are called village representation (solectwa), in towns they may be residential quarters (dzielnice) or housing estates (osiedla). What is important, the town itself, located within the remit of a municipality, may be designated as an auxiliary unit (Dz. U. 2001, no. 142, item 1591, art. 5). Municipal council can create such a unit after consultation with local community. It also decides, by passing an auxiliary unit statue, about it tasks, authorities, competencies, budget and oversight over its activities.

Council and executive body of an auxiliary unit, also when it is a town, function in a similar way as councils and executives of village representations and residential quarters. They make decisions concerning tasks delegated to them by a municipal council. The scope and binding power of resolutions adopted by a council of an auxiliary unit depends on regulations of their statutes. Auxiliary units do not have any revenue of their own, except for revenue granted to them by municipal council. Very often, the cost of running of an auxiliary unit is covered from the local government entity's budget.

A vast majority of Polish cities are municipalities. Their status can be twofold. Firstly, a city can be a municipality itself. But it can also belong to a municipality with other neighbouring towns, cities. Differences between those

two categories are visible but not significant. They are reflected in the names of authorities, but more importantly, also in local economy and occupational and social structure of local community.

From 1 January 1999, 65 Polish cities, among them the biggest ones, were given the status of cities with county rights. In this way separate self-government entities were created that fit neither to the category of municipalities nor counties. If we look at their place and role in Polish self-government system from the perspective of their functions, they constitute the fourth tier of self-government, located between counties and voivodeships. They were, after all, created for the purpose of providing a broader remit of tasks than other local government entities. Cities with county rights have also got higher budgets. What is more, their position in local self-government structure and possibilities of service provision are shaped by such determinants as aforementioned – demography, economy, communication and infrastructure. Although when we compare their number to the number of counties or other cities and we see that there are not many of them, their influence on economic and social development of neighbouring localities, regions but also the whole country is impressive. It is even more so, if we remember that most of cities with county rights are seats of land counties' authorities and every fourth one has a status of a capital of voivodeship. They are characterised by accumulation of political and administrative functions.

Polish capital city has its own act on self-government. It is, like metropolises of most European countries, and obligatory association of districts with a municipality status. It is the only Polish city with a two-tier self-government.

Another sphere that differentiates cities from other self-government entities are their tasks, even though self-government acts provide us with uniform catalogues of tasks for all municipalities, counties and voivodeships. Differences in this matter are of threefold nature. First of all, they concern municipalities' own compulsory tasks. Cities with county rights are responsible for tasks of two types of self-government entities - municipalities and counties. The catalogue of tasks is extensive and the tasks can be grouped into four categories. Those are tasks that are:

1. the same, realized by both municipality and county, like: public transport, promotion, membership in communal associations and agreements, public roads, environment protection and pro-family policy,
2. complementary, like: education, health care, social services,
3. municipal, connected with spatial order, water supply systems maintenance, energy supply, the removal of urban waste, marketplaces, communal graveyards maintenance,

4. county tasks, like: support for persons with disabilities, counteracting unemployment and activating local labour market, geodesy and cartography, water policy, protection from emergency situations and emergency situations prevention, agriculture, forestry, inland fisheries, consumer rights protection, building supervision.

Secondly, differences are also seen in the provision of municipalities' own optional tasks. Self-government entities that are bigger and have higher budgets undertake the realization of such tasks more often and with a broader scope than is required by the laws, because they are often co-financed by city authorities.

Other determinants that differentiate the scope and ways of realization of tasks are community needs connected with the level of poverty, unemployment and infrastructure, for example buildings, facilities intended for third sector organisations, kitchens at schools, social services offices.

The carrying out of commissioned tasks reveals the biggest differences between self-government entities. Types of tasks commissioned by the state, but also by voivodeships or counties, their scope and ways they are being fulfilled are the most important criteria of divisions in this matter between municipalities.

Acts on public finance, self-government entities' revenue and budget introduced a unified finance structure on all levels of public life. Sources of state and self-government entities revenues, budget structure, rules and procedures concerning budget expenditure have been meticulously defined. But again, those regulations do not provide for identical provisions for all municipalities.

Only part of municipalities' (among them cities') revenue is of obligatory nature. Others, like money from the sale of municipal property or bonds depend on the will of other subjects or random events.

Some key factors that make a municipality attractive, like geographical location, location in terms of transportation, state of the environment, excellent climate, natural assets and touristic value of the municipality are ones that are difficult or impossible to change and councils cannot really do a lot to alter them. But these factors may be important arguments in favour or against a decision about investing in the municipality, what brings additional revenue. New investments and economic development influence property prices and subsequently property taxes.

Attractiveness of a municipality can be also raised by the state through the creation of special economic zones.

As a consequence, the structure and amount of revenue of cities vary significantly, regardless of legal provisions on that matter or the size of the cities.

The most visible difference in that respect exists between cities with county rights and other cities. Cities with county rights receive funds for the realization of tasks of municipalities and counties. In other words, they are entitled to a bigger share in state taxes, subsidies and grants. The biggest part of total budget revenue of cities with county rights is allocated to the realization of municipal tasks. Funds needed to finance the realization of county tasks constitute a very diversified percentage of cities' budgets. For example, in Opole it is 18%, in Zabrze 20%, in Wroclaw 22%, in Swinoujscie 26%, in Poznan 27%, and in Rzeszow 41%.

Different status of the cities is also reflected in the names of authorities. In urban-rural municipalities legislative body is called city council or municipal council. In urban municipalities – city council. Similarly, names of local administration offices are also differentiated.

The executive body is called in three different ways and two of the names are used in the city structures. Executive power is held by the directly elected mayor called burmistrz in municipalities which are the seats of municipal authorities. In 107 cities, among them in all cities with county rights executive power is vested in prezydent.

Competences of different categories of councils, that is also councils in cities with county rights do not differ significantly, except for councils of auxiliary units.

Authors of County Self-government Act and Voivodeship Self-Government Act based lots of their regulations on the provisions of Municipal Self-government Act. For example, provisions as to the competences of local authorities' bodies, except for regulations on the election of the executive and local taxes, are almost identical. Then, they could not have influenced different powers of councils of cities with county rights in relation to other legislative bodies in other categories of cities.

Nevertheless, the situation of executive bodies is a bit different. Mayors of cities with county rights have wider competences than mayors of other cities because they have some of the powers of the county executive (starosta). Additional powers include supervision of county fire brigades and supervision of inspection bodies, powers to manage extra-ordinary situations and coping with natural calamities. They can also give their opinion about candidates for the positions of city police commissioner and chief fire officer.

City self-government in Poland, similarly to its European counterparts, is not as diversified as the cities themselves. Aspiration to create equal conditions and possibilities of addressing the needs of local communities was a reason enough to devise unified norms that regulate the functioning of municipalities. Special regulations were passed only for 66 big cities and Poland's capital – Warsaw.

It does not mean that in the case of other cities we can talk about a full standardization of self-government. Probably the most important source of diversity of shapes, structures, forms and remits of its functions and activities are legislative provisions enabling local authorities and local communities to make choices in lots of spheres of their lives. City authorities can decide not only what services to provide but also how and by what means. City council has the freedom to determine the number, character and scope of competences of its committees, it can also decide on the minimal number of councillors in a club and on the number of clubs.

City council is also responsible for setting the rules of communal assets management, that is conditions of their disposal or lease. It decides about its participation in mixed capital companies, private and public ones. It makes decisions whether to establish public utilities that are responsible for realization of municipal tasks.

Self-government acts allow mayors to establish specialised cells of local administration according to city's character, its spatial and economic arrangement. Mayors are also responsible for drawing up organisational regulations – they prepare regulations and decide how the city hall is working. They decide how many and of what type of organisational units are going to be set up in the city.

Additional opportunities for actions directed at realization of local communities' needs come with the cooperation between self-government entities, especially in municipal associations. They enable cities to share funds and technical and organizational measures which in turn allow them to provide some services like public transport, waste and wastewater management, water and energy supply, spatial planning, public roads and ecology, in cooperation.

Polish laws regulating the functioning of local self-government support individualisation, not homogenization of city self- government structure and its functioning. We can distinguish two kinds of city self-government: one is present in cities with county rights (with a special role of those cities that are the seats of both cities with county rights authorities and land counties authorities), and the second one, introduced in other 800 cities.

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