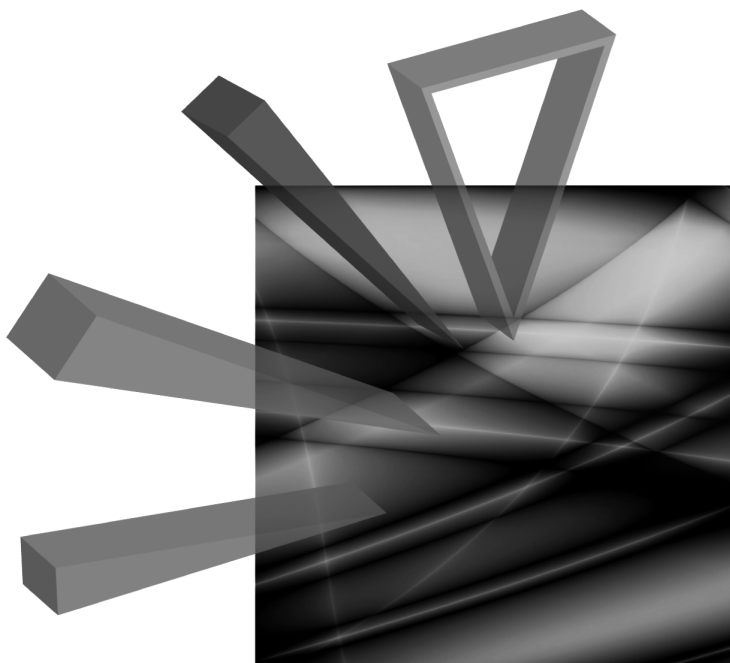


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**THE HISTORY AND THE PRESENT
OF THE INTER-COOPERATION NETWORK
– THE STUDY OF THE NEW HANSEATIC LEAGUE
AND THE LUSATIAN LEAGUE¹**

Summary: The towns belonging to so called The New Hanseatic League and The Lusatian League represent networks of twinned towns. Their specificity is the historic nature of the relationships initiated during the Middle Ages and after a long break, resumed at the end of the last millennium. In this article similarities and differences between these groups are analyzed on the background of characteristics of both compounds.

Keywords: international co-operation of local government, a network of partner cities, The New Hanseatic League, The Lusatian League.

1. Introduction

Civil unions also known as twin, sister, or twinning unions are one of the most common forms of international co-operation of the local government units. Terms such as international co-operation, foreign contacts, partnerships etc. which function in practice, will be treated, for the purpose of this study, interchangeably. One can specify them as external relations (foreign), whose players are mostly cities, municipalities, districts, provinces and also local governments, associations of these units and other partner institutions operating within these relationships, such as schools, libraries, etc. Cooperation between cities, often situated far from each other is the fact known since the beginning of the first urban agglomerations. The specific nature of these compounds distinguishes it from political, economic or corporate international relationships which have been existing for centuries.

¹ This article is adapted from the English-language study: Z. Przybyła, *Wymiar historyczny terytorialnych więzi sieciowych – studium przypadku nowej Hanzy i Związku Miast Łużyckich*, [in:] *Polityka regionalna i lokalna – aspekty praktyczne*, ed. M. Malicki, Wyd. Economicus, Szczecin 2009, pp. 129-138.

The main assumption of such projects is to achieve uniformity while maintaining diversity². This is connected with learning other customs, language and culture of every country, so that people would be able to accept the prevailing differences with tolerance and understanding, as well as overcome stereotypes and misconceptions.

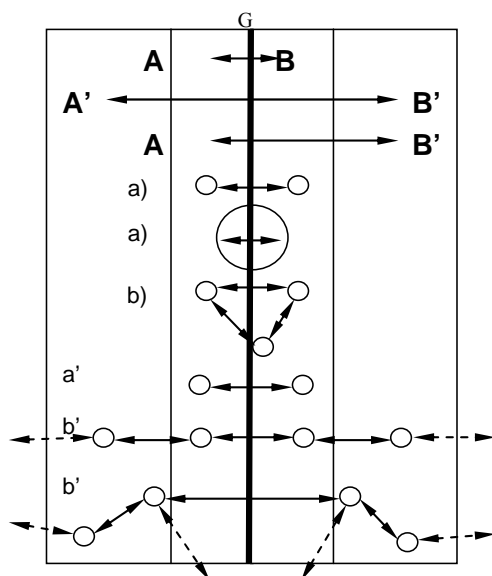
It also offers the chance to become directly acquainted with a number of system solutions for the phenomena in various spheres, such as administrative, local government, social or economic. This enables the transfer of experience from other countries to their land, which in many cases helps to solve social problems, builds a vision and creates programs of urban policy. An important element in the process of European integration is to develop twinning and thickening of networks, as they provide the basis for building common Europe. It is a way of mobilizing communities of different countries in the process of co-creation of Europe without borders, Europe of citizens. This leads to friendship among local communities, which usually differ in their culture, traditions and experiences, often regardless of their formal intergovernmental or international relations. It should be stressed that, regardless of the distance between the cooperation partners, the most common form of interactions are so called bilateral ties (between two sides). However, it may be noted that so-called networks (both; already functioning and those in the process of creation) acquire the increasing significance. This cooperation is a common manifestation of inter-cooperation³.

It is worth mentioning that the graphic approach of the external relations among territories is only important illustrative (Fig. 1). Found in the socio-economic reality of spatial configurations of the links they are certainly more numerous and are transformed over time. In the presented drawing network connections (b and b') have significant position next to the dominant bilateral trade. The presented relationship of contact network is limited to cooperation at the local level, which in fact is accompanied by less numerous and spectacular regional networks⁴. All the actions directed towards the renewal of old, previously severed, ties among European cities which had been networking should be considered as an extremely interesting phenomenon (of a socio-economic and political nature). A classic example is in this regard The Hansa and the Lusatian Leagues – organizations associated with the medieval and modern Polish history.

² E. Pancer-Cybulska, *Integracja na poziomie miast i gmin*, [in:] *Postęp w integracji europejskiej a rozwój regionów*, ed. L. Cybulski, J. Gogolewska, PN No 742, AE, Wrocław 1996, p. 105; E. Pancer-Cybulska, *Uwarunkowania procesów integracji Polski z Unią Europejską na poziomie regionalnym i lokalnym*, PN No 1065, AE, Wrocław 2005, p. 180.

³ J. Pietrzyk, *Polityka regionalna Unii Europejskiej i regiony w państwach członkowskich*, PWN, Warszawa 2000, p. 291.

⁴ Z. Przybyła, *Zagadnienia współpracy zagranicznej samorządu terytorialnego*, [in:] *Polityka ekonomiczna – współczesne wyzwania*, PWN, Warszawa 2007, pp. 345-355.



Legend:

- G – state border
- A B – cooperation of border regions
- A' B' – cooperation of internal regions
- A B' – cooperation of the border region with the inner region
- a – cooperation at local level, municipalities and counties border
- b – bilateral relations, and network cross-border cooperation at local level
- a' – foreign cooperation at the local level of municipalities and internal counties
- b' – networking configurations

Fig. 1. Spatial inter-relationships of cooperation in border areas

Source: Z. Przybyła, *Zagadnienia współpracy zagranicznej samorządu terytorialnego*, [in:] *Polityka ekonomiczna – współczesne wyzwania*, PWN, Warszawa 2007, p. 345.

In this context, the article is to present the networking of the mentioned cities. In the final part of the paper an attempt to assess them in respect of differences and similarities is made, against the background of historical and contemporary characteristics of the contacts of the surveyed organizations.

2. The history and the present of cooperation

A New Hansa

The process of entering into relationships, creating unions or associations by cities can be shown on the basis of Hansas. The German Hansa or Hanseatic Association was a medieval trade town organization with a view to obtain privileges in trade and, particularly, to take control over the sources of supply and sales. First Hansas appeared in the twelfth century in the Netherlands and then in the thirteenth century in London (Hansa gathered together merchants from 15 Flemish cities).

The biggest fame was won by **The German Hansa** (in literature simply known as 'Hanza'), which in the fourteenth and fifteenth century gathered virtually all of the cities from the seashore of the North and Baltic seas. After obtaining a monopoly on these waters Hanza used to achieve great profits, and the cities belonging to it just then experienced its splendor. The political influence of the Hanseatic League was equally great, especially in Germany and the

Nordic countries (including the victorious war against Denmark, 1368–1370 – owing to the peace of Stralsund Hanseatic League guaranteed 15% of profits from the Danish Trade). The proceeds of the Hanseatic League and England reached Novgorod. Rich cities were often able to expose larger and more powerful armies of mercenaries than poor monarchs whose armies consisted mainly of gentry militia.

During the peak period of development, Hanza gathered about 160 cities under the guidance of Lübeck and official language of the Union was German (dialect of Lower Saxony from the area of that city). Delegates from the Hanseatic cities gathered there from time to time and elaborated a common policy (gentry militia Hansetage).



Fig. 2. The Medieval Hanza

Source: <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanza>.

With time, however, the importance of the organization began to decline. Cities have become less independent of their monarchs, there appeared discrepancies in the interests of individual members, the reluctance of consumers to high prices dictated by the League, and finally, the competition of independent Dutch merchants led to the collapse of the organization. In 1478, the Hanseatic merchants were expelled from Novgorod. Eventually, Hanza lost its role as a result of great geographical discoveries and the establishment of sea routes linking Europe with America and India. The last congress of delegates of the Hanseatic League was held in 1669⁵.

Against this background, a particularly interesting expression of historical continuity is the renewal of twinning of the towns currently representing New Hanza. This organization founded in 1980, is the largest international voluntary union of

⁵ <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanza>.

a network of cities. According to the data from the year 2000, the structure of the New Hanseatic League formed under the chairmanship of Lübeck was created by 205 cities, mainly the members of the old Hanseatic League. There were 122 cities, i.e. about 60% of German ones among them. Nineteen Polish cities represent about 9% of the total, which gives quite a significant position. They are: Białogard, Braniewo, Chełmno, Darłowo, Elbląg, Gdańsk, Goleniów, Gryfice, Kamień Pomorski, Kołobrzeg, Koszalin, Sławno, Ślubice, Słupsk, Stargard, Szczecin, Toruń, Wrocław and Wolin. It may be concluded that, in a historical context, the list of Hanseatic Polish cities has declined of Kraków, but has included Ślubice. In the composition of Modern Hanseatic League the participation of the Baltic States, Russia and Belarus is significant, including 8 cities in Latvia, 4 in Estonia, and 1 in Lithuania (1)⁶.

The purpose of this association is the development of tourism and trade in the member cities. Annually organized reunions of participants of the New Hanseatic League in different cities of the organization are the external symbol of their cooperation.

3. The Lusatian League

The establishment of the Lusatian League – like the New Hanseatic League – is the expression of continuation of historical ties. The first organization possessing the features of a network was established in 1339 and was called the Union of Eight Cities including: Bautzen, Kamenz, Laubau, Görlitz – without Zittau yet, but already with Silesian cities of Breslau, Ohlau, Strehlen and Neumark. These cities agreed on the prosecution of criminals. It was concluded for 12 years and renewed in 1369. After some time even more cities and governors of Wrocław, Głogów and Kłodzko and the mayor of Lower Lusatia joined it. The emergence of this confederation proves economic links of both Lusatia and Silesia that overcame boundaries of districts and required security guarantees. In the meantime, on 21 August 1346, The Loebau Federation of Upper Six Cities (GZSM) was founded, which included the four above-mentioned cities and Zittau and Lubań. This association was one of the most important trade cities union in the Middle Ages between the towns lying along the Lusatia Royal Way (Via Regia Lustica). Therefore the name of the whole country was also Sechslande, Land un Sechsstadte or Sechsstadteland. Bautzen, Kamenz and Loebau lay on the Bautzen ground, and Goerlitz, Zittau and Lubań in the duchy of Zgorzelec.

The direct cause of establishing GZSM was insecurity in Lusatia. Polish armed raids reached it from the Brandenburg March. The residents were also exposed to

⁶ Based on: <http://hanza.gdansk.pl/mhanza.html> and, *Hanza władczyni mórz*, ed. H. Samsonowicz, Wyd. Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1958; H. Samsonowicz, *Późne średniowiecze miast nadbałtyckich*, PWN, Warszawa 1968.

the actions of knights, robbers and highwaymen. Therefore they formed a protective association, due to which the trade routes were to be secured, and the political power of the nobility strengthened and developed. The leading purpose was the protection of the merchant interests through the strengthening of economic and political power of the cities within the union.

It should be stressed that the formal activity of the Union began in 1355, when Charles IV approved its creation. Then the union was the most important peace organization in Silesia. Although Charles IV did not include it in the Golden Bull from 1356, it served him in his internal business and peace policy. The alliance allowed the emergence of urban centers which could exist in Upper Lusatia. The time of their heyday fell on the first 200 years of the federation. The agreement on mutual legal and military assistance strengthened the position of burghers – the Union became the largest political force in Upper Lusatia surpassing even the position of the nobility. Bautzen city council conducted the entire business correspondence on behalf of all the cities and the annual conventions of delegates were held mostly in Loebau. In 1547, King Ferdinand of Hungary and Bohemia imposed a huge penalty on the union cities for the alleged betrayal during the Schmalkald War in the Mühlberg battle. The alliance of the cities was disarmed and penalty contributions amounted to (astronomical, for the times) the sum of 100 thousand guilders. Moreover there were imposed: a tax on beer, the forfeiture of foreign goods to the crown and the loss of privileges. Despite the economic development of federation towns over the next decade, the political power of the union was never rebuilt. In 1815, after the acquisition of Lubań and Görlitz by the Prussian authorities, the union was finally resolved. Meetings were still held but rarely and secretly. There were neither princesses nor kings who took part in them over many centuries, but self-aware citizens and they did it through the municipal government. The union as an informal entity survived until 1868, after that the significance and traces of the association completely disappeared⁷.

The modern history of GZSM was launched on 21 April 1991 when, during the 770 anniversary of Loebau, the union was reactivated. After 176 years, an agreement was signed between the cities of Bautzen, Loebau, Görlitz, Kamenz, Zittau (Germany) and their Polish partners, such as Lubań and Zgorzelec.

Nowadays the idea of the association is to promote the spirit of common history. The cooperation agreement states that the New Cities Association should express the will of carrying all the best what is in its power, and what might make for the prosperity of all the inhabitants of the region and European community. In practice, the cooperation between partners is based on common cultural activities, sports, and in the field of tourism and education. Common joint promotion is of great importance.

⁷ Based on R. Aurig, *Strassenschutz und Strassenzug Zur Verkehrspolitik Karls IV „650 Jahre Oberlausitzer Sechsstädtebund 1346-1996“*, Oettel Bad Muskau 1997; www.wikipedia.org/wiki/zwiazekszesciumiast; F. Adamczuk, *Związek miast i jego rola w promocji regionu na przykładzie Związku Sześciu Miast Łużyckich*, [in:] *Gospodarka Przestrzenna nr VIII*, Wyd. Plan, Jelenia Góra 2005.

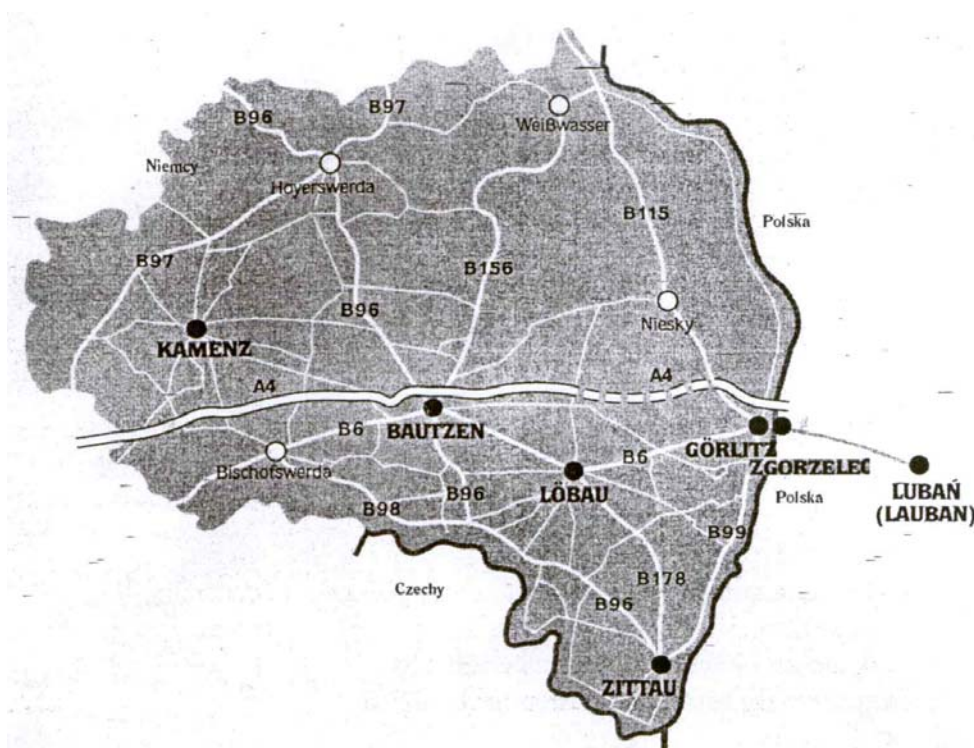


Fig. 3. The cities belonging to the Lusatian League

Source: F. Adamczuk, *Związek miast i jego rola w promocji regionu na przykładzie Związku Sześciu Miast Łużyckich*, [in:] *Gospodarka Przestrzenna nr VIII*, Wyd. Plan, Jelenia Góra 2005, p. 34.

It is worth noting that the "network" cooperation of the mentioned cities is not the only form of their mutual contacts. It should be stressed that they belong to the structure of cross-border of the Neisse Euroregion and bilateral relations. In this regard, the most spectacular co-operation of the cities has been conducted since 1992. It is the idea of Europe–Cities represented by Görlitz and Zgorzelec. Perhaps because of that, it is Lubań which stimulates the partnership in GZSM on behalf of Polish cities⁸.

4. Similarities and differences

Making a comparative analysis of both networks of cooperating cities, one cannot notice a lot of similarities or differences in these groups. Undoubtedly, the common

⁸ Based on Umowa o współpracy w ramach Górnołużyckiego Związku Sześciu Miast (materiały UM w Lubaniu); *Miało miejsce 650 lat temu*, „Ziemia Lubańska” 1996, nr 16; Z. Przybyła, *Europa miasto Zgorzelec-Goerlitz – unikalny przykład współpracy partnerskiej*, [in:] *Współczesne problemy polityki ekonomicznej*, Biblioteka Regionalisty, nr 5, AE we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2006.

feature is the period of formation of the Hanseatic League and the Lusatian League dating to the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as well as the flowering phase of these organizations in XV–XVI century.

A characteristic feature of compounds is also the size of member cities. A significant example in this regard represents Hansa; which was historically considered the largest association of cooperating cities. The geographical position of both organizations should also be taken into consideration (northern and central Europe) as well as the obvious domination of German cities in case of the Hanseatic League and the unique German character of the Lusatian League. The historic continuation of the unions in the late twentieth century (after a long period of oblivion) is particularly commendable. The most significant difference between the two compounds (apart from the number of cities) can be noticed in the commercial and economic cooperation in case of The Hanseatic League and in the defense character of The Lusatian League.

Modern history of both compounds indicates a highly developed spatial structure of the New Hanseatic League, including the cities in a lot of European countries which cooperate with it. Against this background, the relations of cooperation of GZSM cities are limited to two countries, namely Germany and Poland.

Although two organizations treat the continuation of historical ties and interfaces as a priority, the practical importance of bilateral contacts and benefits of participation in other inter-cooperation institutions are becoming increasingly evident. Cross-Border Cooperation is among them. In comparative terms a definite advantage in this respect is represented by GZSM whose all cities are members of the Neisse Euroregion. As far as territorial marketing is taken into account; everybody agrees that more noticeable is the New Hanseatic League.

As it was already mentioned, both compounds of twinned towns are an example of the continuity of contacts and on this background of various forms of direct cooperation of foreign governments.

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HISTORIA I TERAŹNIEJSZOŚĆ SIECI MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ WSPÓŁPRACY – STUDIUM PRZYPADKU NOWEJ HANZY I ZWIĄZKU MIAST ŁUŻYCKICH

Streszczenie: Miasta należące do tzw. nowej Hanzы i do Związku Miast Łużyckich reprezentują sieci miast partnerskich. Ich cechą charakterystyczną jest historyczna natura zależności zapoczątkowanych w średniowieczu i reaktywowanych po długim czasie pod koniec ostatniego tysiąclecia. W artykule przeanalizowano podobieństwa i różnice między tymi grupami na podstawie charakterystyki obu związków.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca międzynarodowa samorządów lokalnych, sieć miast partnerskich, nowa Hanza, Związek Miast Łużyckich.