

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS AND INTERCOMMUNAL COOPERATION – THE CHANGES OF GEOGRAPHICAL DIRECTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MUNICIPAL COOPERATION IN FRANCE, GERMANY AND POLAND

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Abstract

The article describes geographical directions of the international cooperation of the municipalities of big cities in France, Germany and Poland. The study was conducted on the existing twinning agreements of the cities in the years 1945-2009. Particular attention was paid to the years 1980-2009. As a big city was recognized a city with the population above 100 thousand inhabitants in 2009. The political changes of 1989 in Europe, influenced the cooperation of the cities. While before 1989 the municipal international cooperation in Poland was rather small and limited to one side of the Iron Curtain, the end of the socialist system resulted in the rapid expansion of the international cooperation. That growth can be identified especially for Poland. The geographical directions of the cooperation of Polish cities changed and moved from East Europe and the so called neutral states to West Europe. At the end of the period of the analysis, the links with East Europe were reestablished in Poland. The cooperation in Germany was characterized by the existence of inter-German twin cities agreements. France is presented in the study as a comparison country. There are visible links with the Northern Africa countries. Cities from all the analyzed countries are establishing intercontinental partnerships, which could be understood as a sign of globalization.

Keywords: *twin cities, international cooperation, Europe, transition*

Introduction

The cooperation of the cities across the borders has had a long history and different forms. There are many fields where intercommunal cooperation can be observed, as for example in the fields of economy, culture, education or politics. Municipalities and their official institutions (e.g. public schools) cooperate with each

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other often strengthened by official general agreements between two cities. It has to be mentioned that not only the municipalities and official entities are taking part into that cooperation. However, for this article the key consideration was to decide whether non-formal cooperation was counted. Due to the methodology it was decided to concentrate on the cooperation which was recognized by the municipal authorities as a part of a twinning agreement. Among the different types of agreements there are some covering a general cooperation (not concentrated on a particular project), signed without time limits and usually referred to some common characteristic of two cities. They are used as symbolic signs of political interests towards a particular city or country.

There are different names for that official cooperation of two cities from different countries (Furmankiewicz 2005; Kaczmarek 2005; Płoszaj 2013). Among those names are: partner cities (gr. Partnerstädte, fr. jumelage), sister cities or brother cities. The last term was used mostly during the communist time in Eastern Europe (rus. города-побратимы, pol. miasta braterskie). There is a discussion about which cities were cooperating first. Some authors stated that these were Brugg in Switzerland and Rottweil in Germany in 1918 (Zelinsky 1991) or Keighley in Great Britain and Poix du Nord in France (Furmankiewicz 2005). Other authors indicate, as the first twinning cities, German Kiel and Danish Sonderborg, which started their cooperation in 1925, or German Wiesbaden and Austrian Klagenfurt, which started their cooperation in 1930 (Winberger 2007). It can be assumed that the twinning cooperation started before the World War II and spread around the world after that time (Furmankiewicz 2005).

The aim and methods of research

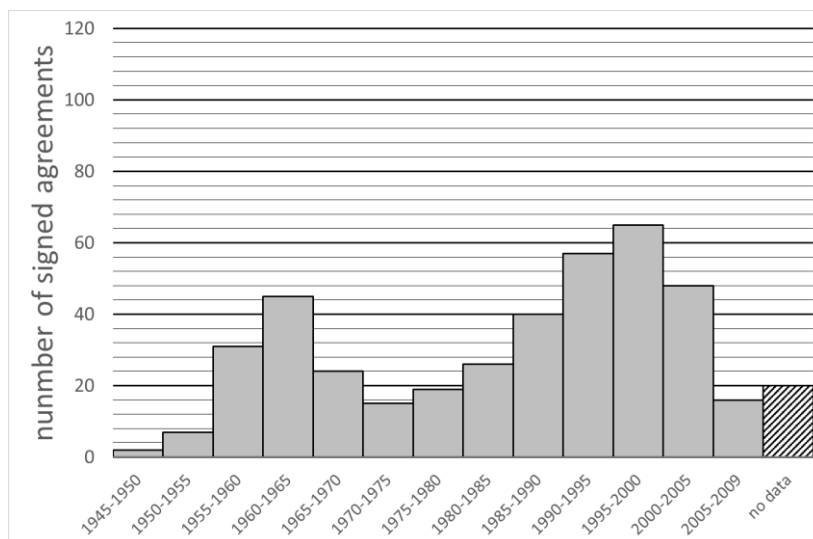
The article compares the situation in three countries namely: France, Germany (both German states counted together before 1989) and Poland. France and Western Germany were in the free democratic Bloc and Poland was in the Eastern Bloc of socialist countries. Due to that fact, such bottom-up initiatives as twinning agreements were easier in the western part of Europe than in the eastern. The direct relations between authorities on a local level in two different blocks were very limited. The differences in the political situation, together with the location on one of the sides of The Iron Curtain, influenced the dynamics and intensity of the twinning cooperation. The aim of the article is to verify this hypothesis. Another question is whether the twinning agreements can be an indicator of political changes. The selected countries were chosen due to the differences in their history described in the previous paragraph. They represent as well the majority of twinning

agreements. Germany is the country with the highest number of twinning partnerships in Europe (Płoszaj 2013). The number of twinning agreements between German and French municipalities is on the first position. The connections between Poland and Germany are on the fourth place (Płoszaj 2013). The period of the analysis covers the years 1945-2009 with the focus on the changes in the years 1980-2009. As an object of the analysis cities that had in 2009 more than 100 thousand inhabitants were chosen. There were 169 cities which fulfilled that criterion (53 in France, 77 in Germany and 39 in Poland) which contributed to 1458 signed partnership agreements at that time. Among them were 415 agreements of French cities, 661 from Germany, and 382 from Poland. The data on the signed partnership agreements were taken in June 2009 from the official websites of the town halls.

The dynamics of the twinning agreements in the years 1945-2009

Looking into the dynamics of the signed partnership agreements, there can be observed periods with a fast development of the twinning cooperation mixed with years of a slowdown (Kaczmarek, Strykiewicz 2000). It is due to the fact that a municipal international cooperation is very sensitive to changes of the political situation (Furmankiewicz 2005; Dosch et. All 2005). The same situation is observed in this case study. In the analysed countries the periods of a fast growth of city twinning were in the sixties and nineties of the XX century. It is clearly visible for the twinning agreements in France (Fig. 1).

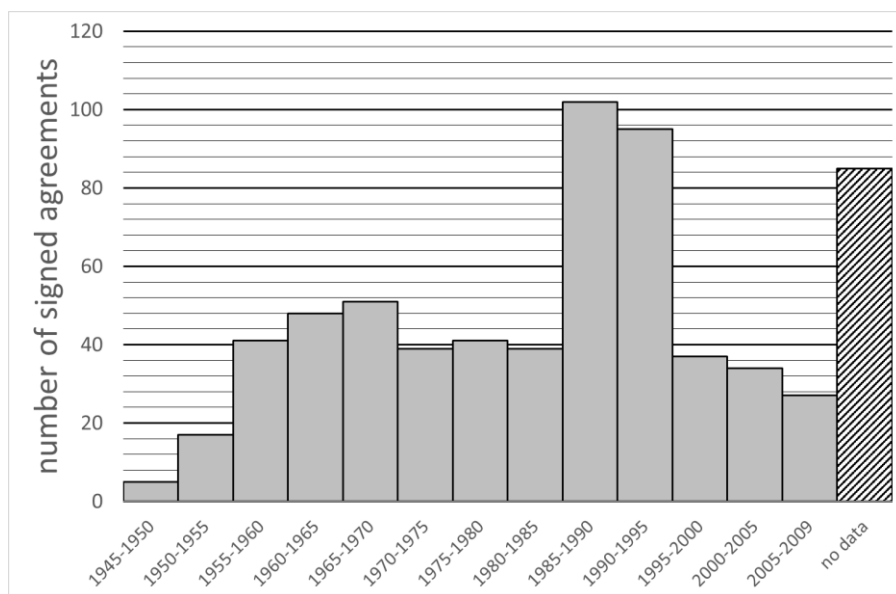
Fig.1. Number of the agreements signed in France



Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in France (access year 2009)

The first period of intensive growth of the twinning agreements had been the late fifties and early sixties of the XX century. The growth dynamics city twinning slowed down in the seventies. From the late eighties of the XX century a further growth of agreements was observed. The highest intensity of new twinning agreements occurred among French cities in the nineties of the XX century.

Fig.2. Number of agreements signed in Germany



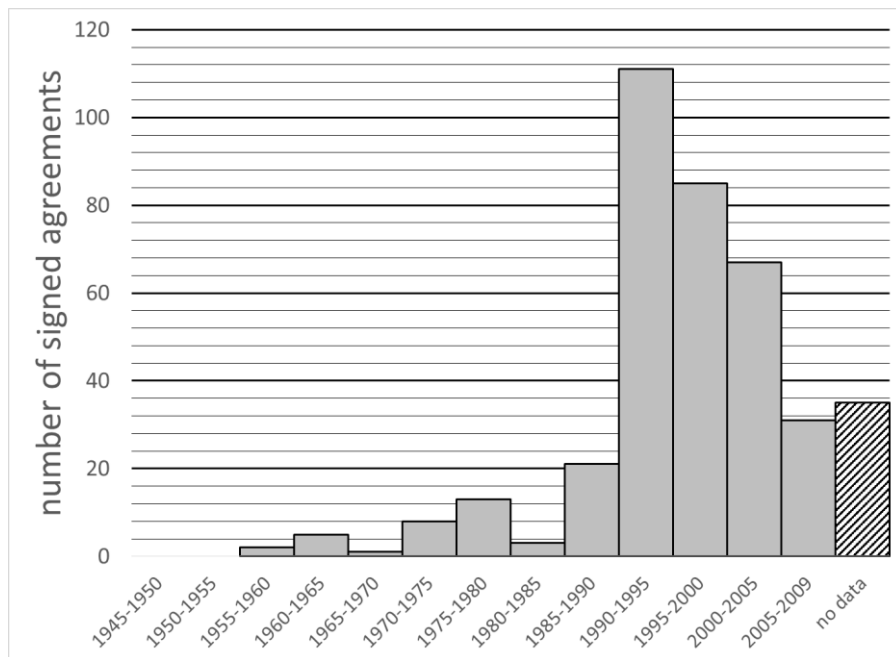
Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in France, Germany and Poland (access year 2009).

German cities twinning cooperation had been influenced by political changes as represented in the Fig.2. The first peak of growth of twinning agreements was observed as in France in the sixties of XX century. The biggest boom of intercommunal cooperation happened at the end of the eighties and beginning of nineties of the XX century. The increase was connected with the political changes as the process of political convergence of the two German states (German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany), leading to a closer cooperation. As both countries practically did not recognize each other as independent states for a long time during the Cold War, cooperation was not possible.

The political changes, that started at the end of eighties and resulted in the fall of the Iron Curtain, enabled a rapid growth of a cooperation between German cities. First, it was a cooperation between cities in two different countries, which was continued within one country. As a result, the twinning of German cities with other

German urban centres is quite frequent. Such phenomenon is rather not occurring in other countries (Kaczmarek 2005). Due to the political situation, the first growth of the twinning of cities was not as dynamic as in the case of France. It has to be stressed that after the rapid growth of the twinning agreements in the period of the political transformation, nowadays the dynamics stagnate as in the previous periods.

Fig.3. Number of agreements signed in Poland



Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in France, Germany and Poland (access year 2009).

In Poland the dynamics of the twinning agreements had been even more connected to political changes, as shown on Fig. 3. Till the political transformation the international cooperation just as the twinning agreements of cities, was limited only to the Eastern Block (Kaczmarek 2005; Furmankiewicz 2005). Some of the agreements were signed in the sixties or at the end of seventies of XX century, which was the time of an ease in Polish international politics due to the general opening of the country. The following years, which had been characterized by the internal struggle between the ruling party and the democratic opposition resulted in a small number of new twinning agreements as Poland was isolated on the international scene.

Changes in the global and domestic political situation, as the end of the division of the world into two blocks and the end of socialism in Poland, resulted in a rapid growth of twinning activities (Stryjakiewicz 1998). Every city dared to sign a twinning agreement with the west in general and Western Europe in particular (Kaczmarek 2005). After the end of the first phase of the Polish transformation the dynamics decreased, mostly due to the fact that all cities had already signed twinning agreements with other partners. A similar situation was observed for France and Germany (Kaczmarek 2005).

The geographical directions of the twinning cooperation of big cities in France, Germany and Poland

The geographical directions of the twinning agreements were changing in the analysed period. They were following two paths. The first was a growing geographical distance from new twinning cities. At the beginning the twinning agreements were signed mostly with cities from neighbouring countries, usually in close proximity (Dosch et al. 2005; Kaczmarek 2006; Scherhag 2008). In the second phase partners were chosen in a farther distance, firstly on the same continent, then usually Northern America (USA or Canada), Far East (Japan or China) and from other parts of the World. The second geographical factor influencing the twinning cooperation was the political situation and division of the world into two blocks before 1989. Due to that division the first twinning partners for cities (in our example Poland and Eastern Germany) in the Eastern Block were from other Eastern Bloc states (Kaczmarek, Stryjakiewicz 2000; Kaczmarek 2005; Furmankiewicz 2005). A similar situation occurred in Western Europe. Neutral states like Finland had a specific situation. They were neither in the Eastern or Western Bloc and due to that fact the cooperation with cities from those states was acceptable for both sides of the Iron Curtain. For cities in Poland and Eastern Germany Finland was an important partner. The country served as a window for the cooperation with the western World and became a key partner for cities in the Eastern Bloc (Kaczmarek 2005; Mertelsmann 2011). In the eighties of the XX century this direction of the twinning agreements had a higher significance, since there was a higher acceptance of neutral state, as Finland, during the communist regime in Poland, than in the nineties, where the political importance dropped, although the number of the agreements slightly grew. After the political changes that window was no longer required and therefore Polish cities started cooperation directly with other European countries a closer geographical proximity. The direct cooperation with western countries like France increased. Table 1 summarises the detailed data of the existing twinning agreements

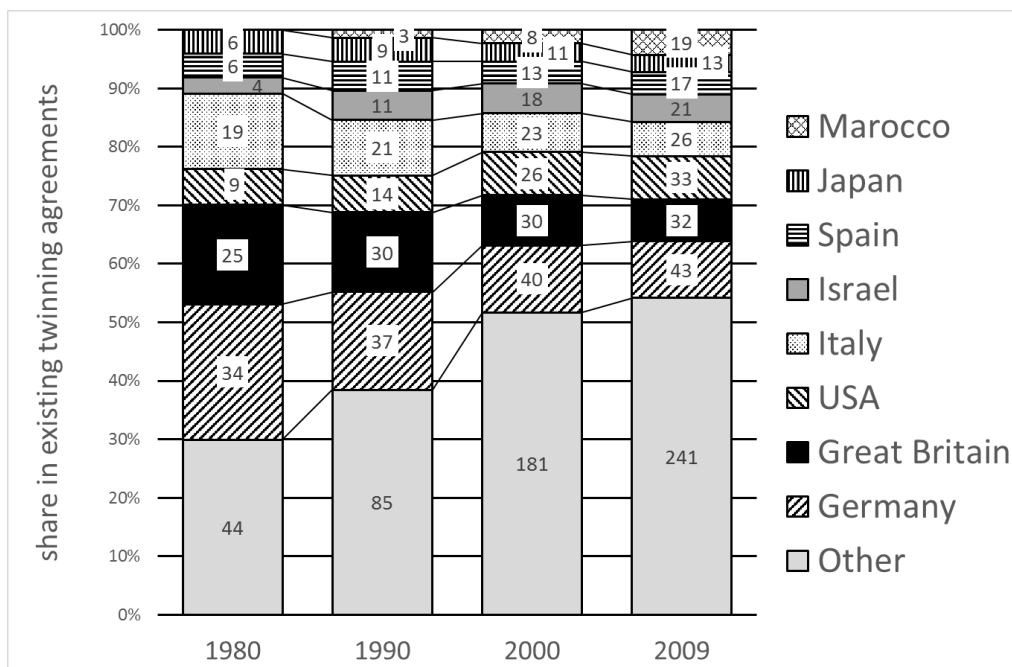
in the years 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2009 of the analysed group of the cities. It can be observed, that some of countries cooperate with some partners more than with other.

Tab.1.The number of the existing partnership agreements in Germany (DE), France (FR) and Poland (PL) according to the country of a partner city (for cities bigger than 100 thousand inhabitants in 2009).

	2009			2000			1990			1980		
	DE	FR	PL	DE	FR	PL	DE	FR	PL	DE	FR	PL
Algeria	0	10	0	0	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Austria	9	1	4	7	1	2	6	1	1	6	1	1
Belgium	8	5	3	6	5	3	4	5	0	4	4	0
Belarus	0	4	9	0	3	6	0	3	0	0	2	0
Brazil	0	5	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
China	25	17	12	11	12	5	6	6	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	14	5	13	11	4	6	6	3	1	5	2	1
Finland	14	1	8	12	1	8	12	1	7	11	0	2
France	85	X	35	70	X	23	67	X	7	59	X	4
Greece	4	5	4	3	4	1	2	2	0	0	1	0
Spain	10	17	6	8	13	3	6	11	0	0	6	0
The Netherlands	17	3	12	13	3	10	13	3	0	10	3	0
Israel	26	21	6	21	18	5	16	11	0	4	4	0
Japan	13	13	1	10	11	1	7	9	1	5	6	0
Canada	2	8	2	2	5	1	2	5	0	0	4	0
Lithuania	6	1	14	4	1	10	2	0	0	1	0	0
Marocco	0	19	1	0	8	1	0	3	0	0	0	0
Germany	64	43	57	58	40	43	38	37	17	5	34	8
Nicaragua	13	0	0	11	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
Palestine	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	42	12	X	35	9	X	19	1	X	12	0	X
Russia	37	11	21	30	10	15	17	3	0	6	1	0
Romania	5	9	7	2	8	1	2	1	0	1	1	0
Tunesia	4	7	0	3	6	0	3	2	0	2	0	0
Turkey	20	2	1	8	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	0
Ukraine	10	3	35	9	3	15	6	3	0	1	3	0
USA	34	33	19	28	26	18	15	14	4	9	9	4
Hungary	12	5	15	8	3	7	3	1	2	1	1	1
Great Britain	70	32	17	59	30	10	56	30	3	48	25	2
Italy	25	26	13	19	23	7	14	21	4	14	19	2
Other	91	95	65	66	76	45	50	29	8	36	16	4
Total	661	415	382	515	331	249	383	209	55	242	143	29

Source: Based on the information of the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in France, Germany and Poland (access year 2009)

Fig.4. The share of twinning partners by country for French cities in the years 1980-2009



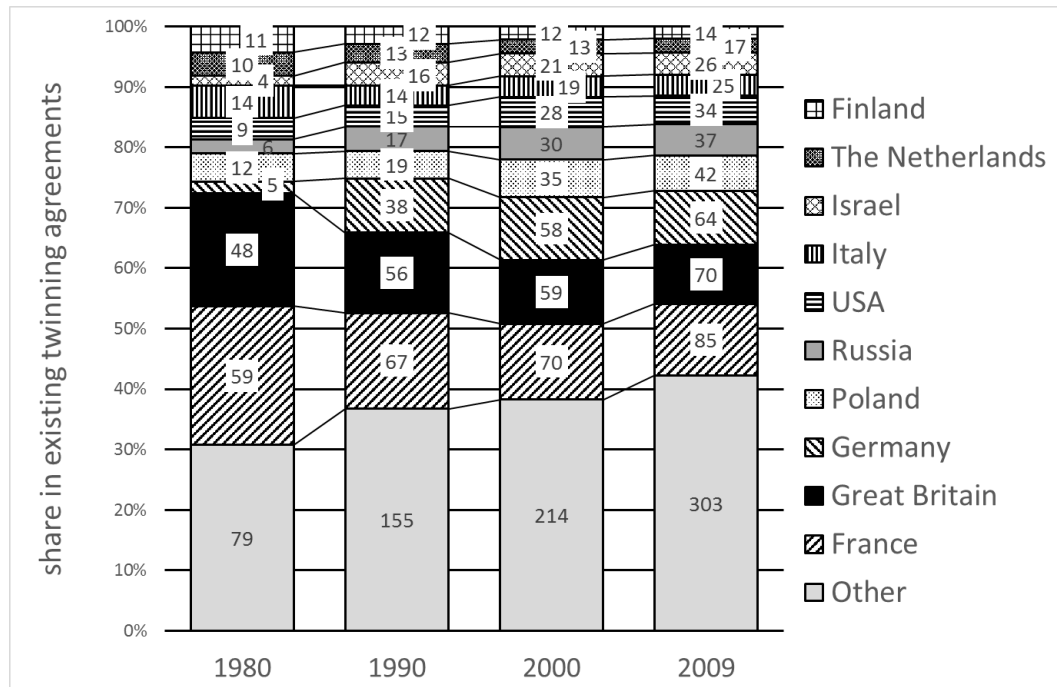
Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in France (access year 2009)

In 1980 the most important partners for French cities (Fig. 4) with twinning cooperation was Germany (34 agreements, 23,1% share), Great Britain (25 agreements, 17% share) and Italy (19 agreements, 12,9% share). These three countries contributed to more than half of the existing twinning agreements of the analysed group of cities.

During the analysed period, other countries gained importance, although Germany was still the most frequently chosen country for the twinning cooperation of big French cities. The USA increased its importance as twinning partner, becoming in 2009 the second twinning partner with 33 agreements (7,4% share). Italy lost its importance as a twinning partner (falling on the fourth position – 26 agreements, 5,8%).

There had been a remarkable growth of cooperation with Israel in the eighties of the XX century and in the nineties and at the beginning of the XXI century with the Maghreb countries like Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Representing countries that, due to the history of the colonialism and origin of migrants, France is deeply linked to (Byrnes 2008, Pickles 2016).

Fig.5. The share of twinning partners by country for German cities in the years 1980-2009



Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in Germany (access year 2009)

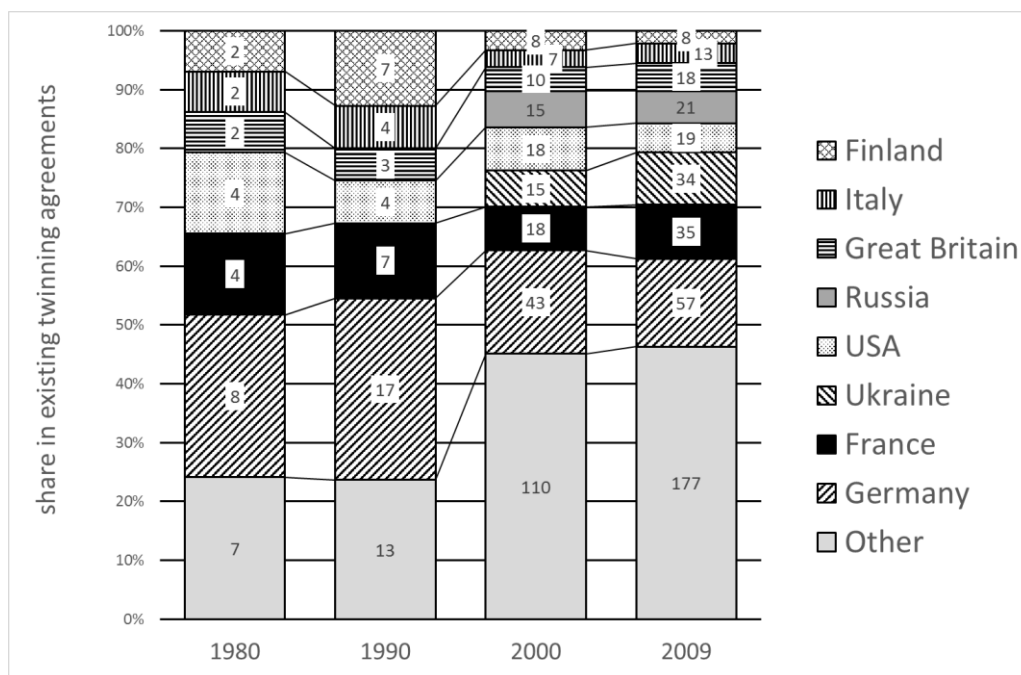
In 1980, the most important twinning partner for big German cities (Fig.5.) was France (59 agreements, 23 % share) followed by Great Britain (48 agreements, 18,7 % share). Other important countries of cooperation were Italy (14 agreements, 5,4 % share), Poland (12 agreements, 4,7 % share) and Finland (11 agreements, 4,3 % share).

The changes in the importance of the international cooperation can be linked with the political turnovers. Exceptional are the internal cooperation between East and West German cities, which usually had been established shortly before the political transformation and the reunification of Germany. In 2009 there were 64 agreements contributing into 8,9 % share. The particular high increase of international cooperation between the cities from two (at that time) independent German, states was observed in 1988.

The countries whose importance for the international cooperation of German cities increased are Russia (from 6 agreements in 1980 to 37 in 2009, from share of 2,3 % to 5,2 %) and Israel (from 4 agreements in 1980 to 26 in 2009, from share of 1,6 % to 3,6 %). A slight growth of importance was observed for Poland and the

USA. Within the countries that lost their importance as a twinning partner for German cities are Finland, Italy and the Netherlands.

Fig.6. The share of twinning partners by country for Polish cities in the years 1980-2009



Source: Based on the information on the signed partnership agreements available on the official websites of cities in Poland (access year 2009)

The most important country for intercommunal cooperation of Polish cities is Germany (Strykiewicz 1998; Kaczmarek 2005). As depicted on Fig.6, Germany was the most important twinning country for Polish cities in 1980 (8 agreements, 27,6 % share) and in 2009 (57 agreements, 14,9 % share). The role of Germany decreased in the analysed period due to the overall growth of cooperation agreements with other countries. The second important partner is France (4 agreements with 13,8 % share in 1980 and 35 with 9,2% share in 2009). At the beginning of the analysed period a very important partner were cities from the USA (13,8 % share) but they were latter replaced by cities from closer countries (Ukraine and Russia) and their share in the twinning agreements fell down (to 5% share).

The cooperation with cities in Ukraine and Russia is noteworthy. During the communist time so called brotherhood agreements between the number of Polish and Soviet cities had been established. They were not well seen by an influential part of the Polish society. They had been criticised as being politically connected to the

previous system and top-down forced (Furmankiewicz 2005). As to these reasons and the process of the rebuilding self-government in Poland on a local, there is little information on some of agreements before 1989.

Summary and discussion

The article showed the changes in the dynamics and geographical directions of the twinning cooperation of big cities in France, Germany and Poland. The shifts in the geopolitical constellation influenced strongly the dynamics of intercommunal activities. This is clearly visible in the example of Germany and Poland, where the period of easing international cooperation resulted in a high number of new twinning agreements. The directions of the international cooperation changed as well according to the political constellation. The political instability and isolation of the two blocs on cooperation did not promote the growth of intercommunal cooperation. At the beginning of the nineties, when the political situation changed, there was a rapid growth of intercommunal cooperation between the different sides of the Iron Curtain. The twinning agreements for the countries and the research period were a good indicator of the geopolitical shifts.

The results achieved in this article are comparable with those obtained by other authors (Furmankiewicz 2005). Similar results are:

- 1) The leading role of Germany and France, as twinning partners for Polish cities, including the growth of their importance,
- 2) The dynamic development of the international cooperation of Polish municipalities after the political transformation,
- 3) The switch of directions of the international cooperation of Polish cities from the East (and Finland) to the West after 1989.

From the perspective of political transformation, the slowdown of twinning activities in Poland in the XXI century (and similar in Germany) can be linked with a decrease in attractiveness. At the beginning of the nineties of the XX century the inter-municipal cooperation was a chance for touristic journeys of civil servants or representatives of authorities (Kaczmarek 2005). Those journeys were important and fruitful for participants as the country was for nearly fifty years cut off from the technological and cultural development in Western Europe. It was also important that, due to the low affluence of the society, foreign journeys were beyond financial possibilities for the majority of the Polish population at that time. Therefore, even with mostly touristic motivation, those journeys were, to some extent, reasonable.

That situation changed, the society enriched, some of the technologies or organizational schemas for public utilities were transferred from more developed countries or developed on the spot from the beginning.

It has to be mentioned that, currently, the international cooperation among cities in the European Union, got slightly more a grant seeking attitude (Kaczmarek 2005; Dosch et al. 2005). The cooperation, sometimes understood as pure political meetings between authorities, lost its importance as in that way is not bringing more significant benefits for the cooperating partners. The cities are engaging themselves in the cooperation with the purpose to receive funding from the European Union (especially the INTERREG fund) than due to a general need for cooperation. For such purposes it became more valuable to cooperate in networks. Networks such as the METREX or the Eurocities are gaining importance. Still, those links established between cities only as projects are more fragile and changeable than established twining partnerships. Due to aforementioned processes, the twining cooperation of cities, especially within the EU, is losing its importance but it is still an important indicator for international relations.

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