

# **Development of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia as the result of globalisation processes in the opinion of its inhabitants – a theoretical and empirical view**

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## **Abstract**

Globalisation is a multidimensional phenomenon. Homogenizing processes in the macro scale are accompanied by differentiation and integration in the local dimension. The perfect example of the influence of global trends at the local level is the metropolization process which takes place in the Silesia region, and which has resulted in the creation of the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia.

This paper considers the metropolization process as the result of globalisation from the social actors' points of view, who participate in this process. Its empirical base will be the quantitative and qualitative research made in the beginning of 2009 among the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia citizens. The goal of the project was to map the opinions on the metropolization process, its origin and results for the new rising metropolis area.

**Key words:** globalisation, metropolization, regional identification

Upper Silesia belongs to such kinds of Polish regions, in which regional identity associated with the specific historical past of this area has been developed. The Silesian regionalism, as well as other regionalisms in Poland and Europe, experiences its own renaissance constituting an answer to the phenomena of homogenization and standardization process at the global level. This renaissance shouldn't be a reason for concern because it has an open and modern character which is far from any forms of separatism. Open regionalism basis of which are an openness to others, cooperation, exchange and collective experience is the symptom of maturity of local and regional communities which having their own specificity also benefit from the consequences of globalisation.

The Upper Silesia characteristic shown above is also confirmed by the integration of this region's towns. We refer to this process as the metropolisation of the Upper Silesian conurbation. Integration also occurs via dynamic international cooperation done in Silesian Region on both the regional and the municipality level.

Metropolisation as a process is part of the reality of the XXI century made by two apparently contradictory processes: a process of integration, standardization and globalisation of our lives in the wide sense of the word on the one hand, and on the other the process of localism and regionalism motivated by a need to define our own identity in a shrunken world in which everybody seems to be similar due to common consumption patterns and participation in mass culture.

The idea of metropolization is characterised by dualism because it aims to make stronger and maintain what is regional, our and specific, not only in the area of culture and folklore but also, or maybe first and foremost, in the pragmatic dimension, which is a chance for improving cooperation of one functional coherent area in the national and international scale. This process aims to emphasize the region's specification and demands standardization

and cooperation to integrate specific and different but close territorial units. It is based on the conviction that strength lies in unity.

The fear concerning the fact that formation of metropolis may be dangerous for some Upper Silesia conurbation cities seems to be unfounded. The complicated and difficult history of Upper Silesia, the region which used to be within the borders of several neighboring countries has resulted in a spontaneous and sometimes even intended cultural exchange and has made the mentioned region very culturally diverse. This diversity finds expression in the specific identity of its citizens characterized by multidimensionality strictly connected with different levels of its citizens' identifications. There is no obstacle to add a new dimension to this identity called metropolitan one. The identity must be of a modern human, pragmatic type because it is based on common economic interest whereby the urban centers become able to generate innovations and to stimulate further development. Which is more, the local identity connected with a small homeland will be easier to adopt in the coherent metropolitan area which will cultivate cultural diversity rather than cultural isolation.

The article is an attempt at looking at the metropolization process, from social actors' side, who take part in this process. The empirical basis will be the quantitative and qualitative research made at the beginning of 2009 among the citizens of The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia. Its aim was to study the citizens' opinion on the metropolization process, its sources and potential effects for the new metropolitan area.

There is no doubt, that today's biggest world metropolises belong to the leading actors of the global, political and economic arena. In these metropolitan areas the decisions, which determine the shape of the contemporary world, are taken. In those areas the most modern technologies, innovations and the fastest development are generated (Gorzela, Smętowski 2005, 9-12). One of the elements which creates the metropolis is the population potential which constitutes the basis for the occurrence of processes and phenomena giving a particular area metropolitan character. The size of the population itself a kind of power but it doesn't determine existing specific qualitative factors, which in this case might have fundamental character. Among the last, innovation potential in the economic, political, and socio-cultural dimension, the domination of the best services in the public and market sector as well as modern infrastructure play the most important role (Jałowiecki, Szczepański 2002, 222).

The metropolisation process taking place in the central area of Upper Silesia is specific due to its polycentric conurbation. The prototype of this metropolis which is the effect of the rank-and-file reaction of the Silesian towns' decision makers is The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia although the metropolitan bill has not been enacted yet.

The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia was formed in 2007 as a result of the Upper Silesia cities' Presidents initiative. Although more regional territorial units were interested in participation in creating a new association, the lack of legislative rules made it impossible for them to join it because they were too small as Polish administrative units. The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia which is the base for the new Metropolis of Silesia has a surface area of 1468 km<sup>2</sup> and more than 2 million citizens. While the Metropolis of Silesia is not large or populous compared with other European Metropolises, in population density it ranks very high (compare with the French Metropolis Nord-Pas-De-Calais, surface area 12.414 km<sup>2</sup>, population of 4.026.000, population density - 326 people for one km<sup>2</sup> or the Metropolis of the German Ruhra Region, surface area 4.435 km<sup>2</sup>, population of 5.317.000, population density - 1200 people for one km<sup>2</sup>. The Metropolis of Silesia' population density on the level of 1620 people for one km<sup>2</sup> made this territory one of the most urbanised area in Europe.([www.gzm.org.pl](http://www.gzm.org.pl))



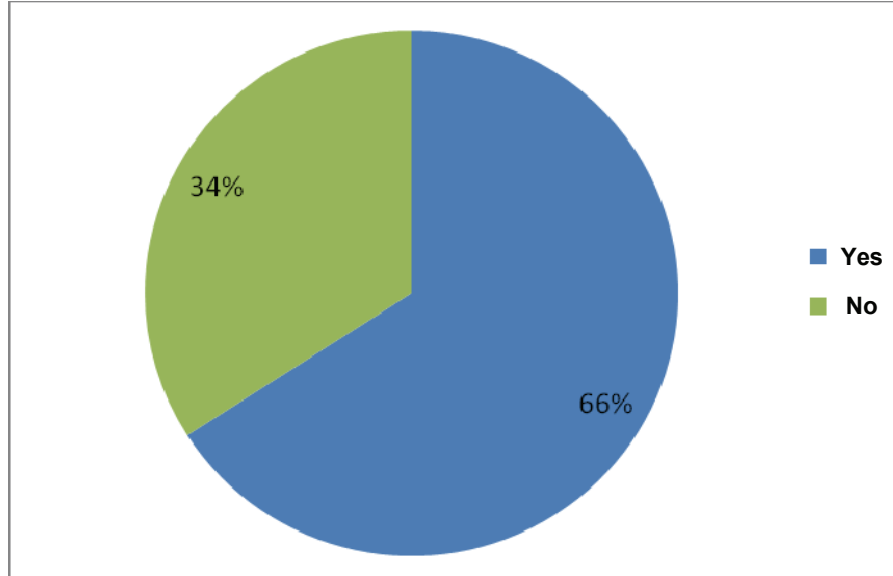
Picture 1.( [www.gzm.org.pl](http://www.gzm.org.pl))

There are about 40 universities and institutions of higher education where 11% of Polish students get their education. The Metropolis of Silesia has a big economic potential described by the following indicators: more than 200 thousand investments located inter alia in the Katowice Special Economic Zone and the investment expenses on a level which locates the Metropolis of Silesia at the second place in Poland, just behind its capital city. Metropolis of Silesia takes care of its citizens as far as health care is concerned. There are also a lot of diverse cultural attractions in this area. The most important aim of the Office for Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia is preparing an institutional and organizational but also social base for the new Metropolis of Silesia by establishing one common strategy for the promotion and development of the Metropolis Silesia.

The aim of our research was to characterize the attitude of the Metropolis' habitants towards the formation of the Metropolis of Silesia, as well as to describe its opportunities and threats. The author was also interested in citizens' identification with the area of the metropolis as a common social urban space. The research was conducted by the author from January to April 2009, taking as a sample 600 citizens of the region.

As far as the inhabitants' knowledge about the formation of the Metropolis is concerned, the research showed that 66% of the respondents were conscious about this fact and the main sources of this information were the press and the television.

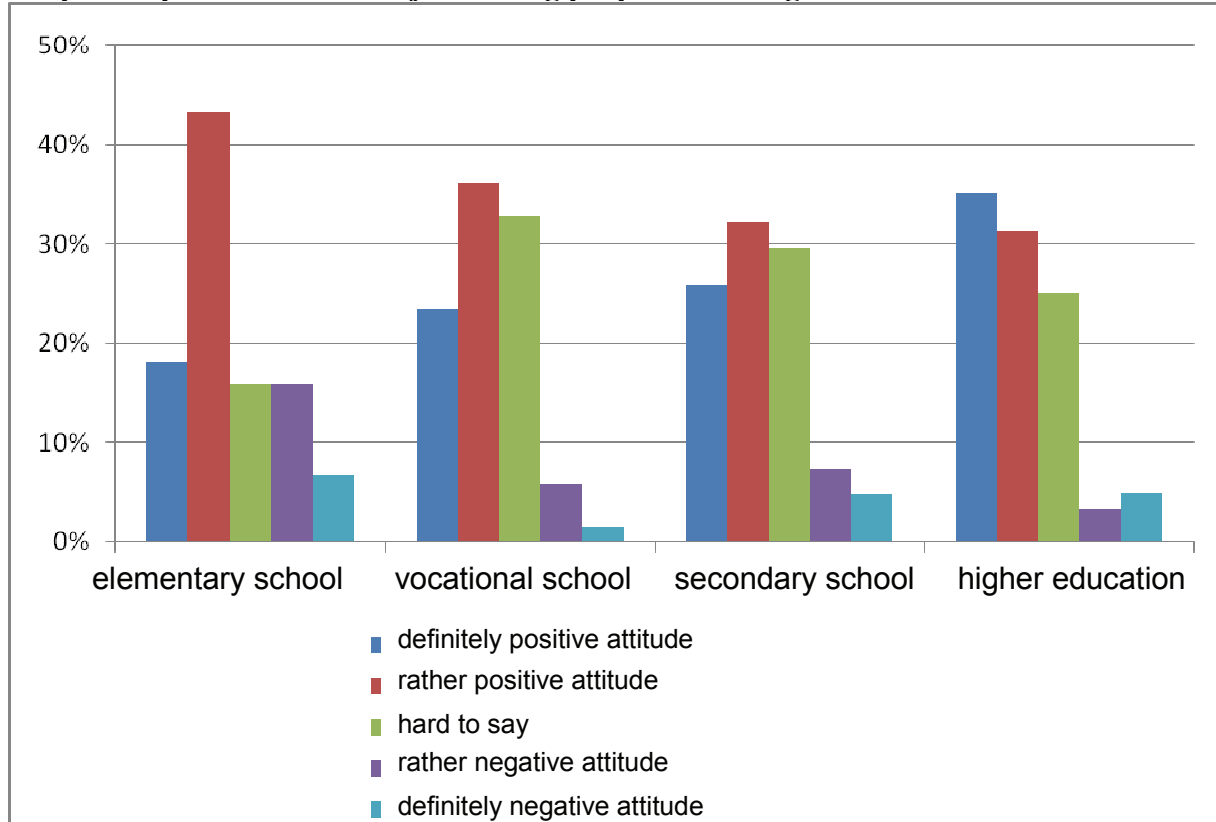
**Graph 1. Respondents' knowledge about the Project of the Metropolis**



The source: own research. N=600

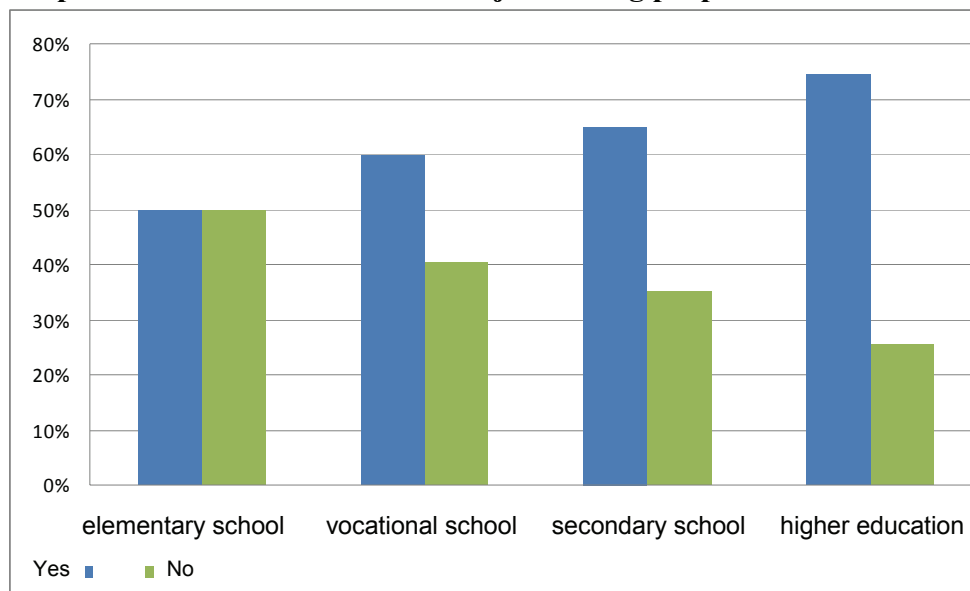
The great majority of respondents expressed their positive attitude to the idea of the Metropolis (71%). Only one person out of ten was against this idea. The essential influence on the attitude towards the formation of the Metropolis has the place of residence but also the level of knowledge about the project positively correlated with the level of education. People with higher education, who in great majority have knowledge of the project (70%), expressed their support, meanwhile respondents with elementary education, who had slight knowledge about the project were rather its opponents (22,7%). The research also showed a slight but visible relationship between the support for this project and the respondents' age, where younger people presented a stronger support to this project.

**Graph 2. Opinions on the Project among people according to their education level**



The source: own research. N=600

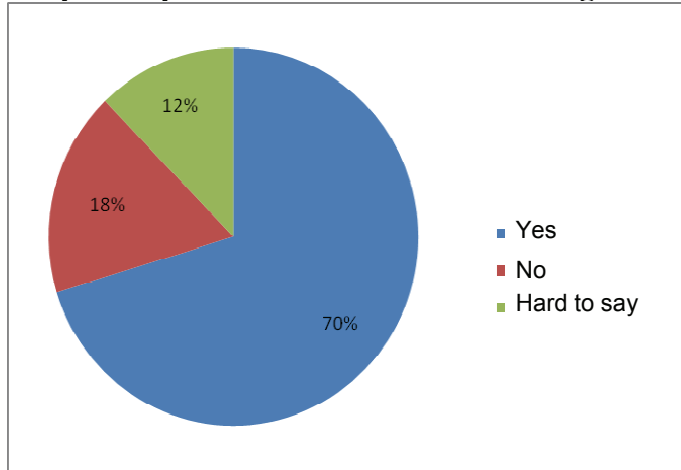
**Graph 3. Information about the Project among people with different education**



The source: own research. N=600

As far as the manner in which the metropolis should be formed is concerned, the great majority of respondents of individual member towns of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia supported the idea of a referendum. More often this answer was given by people with lower education, meanwhile people with higher education found a referendum unnecessary.

**Graph 4. Opinions on referendum deciding on towns' membership in the Metropolis**

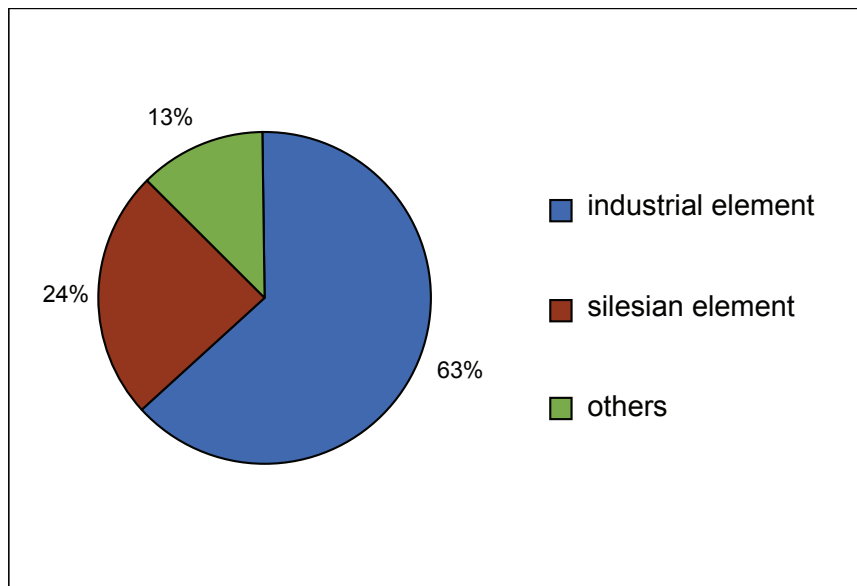


The source: own research. N=600

The research also showed the problem with names for the new formed Metropolis, which seems to be quite controversial as it is strictly connected with the historical division of the Silesia Region whose weak but returning echo might be felt in the relations between some towns of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia which have both Silesian and Dabrowski origin. This problem is decreasing because every third respondent was for the name – the Metropolis of Silesia.

As far as symbols of the new Metropolis are concerned, a significant majority of respondents showed that it should be an element connected with the coal industry and Silesia. It is a confirmation of the fact that in the consciousness of the Metropolis' inhabitants the image of an industrial and mining Silesia is still deeply ingrained although dynamic restructuring processes have been taken.

**Graph 5. Graphical elements in Metropolis' symbols**

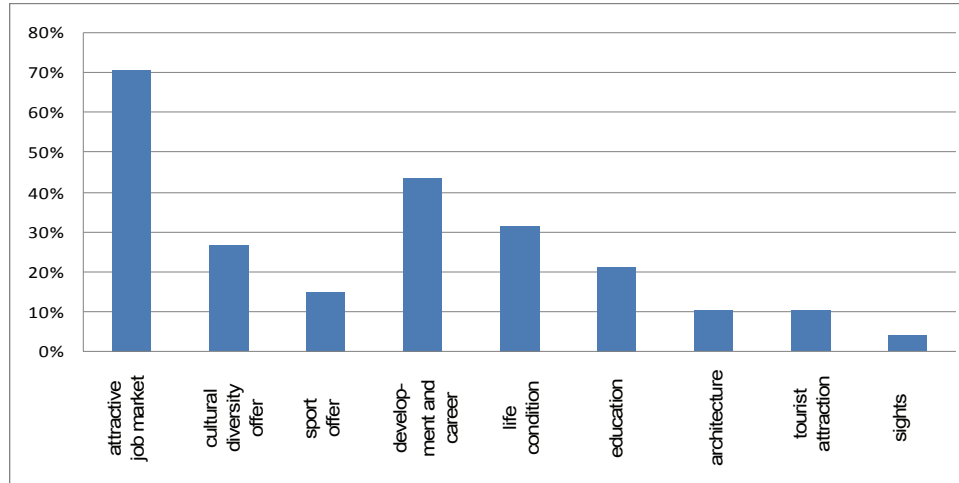


The source: own research. N=600

The research also studied factors which the Metropolis of Upper Silesia could use to attract others regions' inhabitants. In this case a large majority of respondents (70,7%) chose as the answer "attractive job market", the other two most favored answers (nearly 45%) were

“possibilities for development and career” and “life condition”. “Cultural diversity” (26,5%) and “education” (21,1%) ranked fourth and fifth. The mentioned answers might be the consequences of the high position of the Silesian Region where there is a good (low) level of unemployment, high average salary and attractive opportunities for investment.

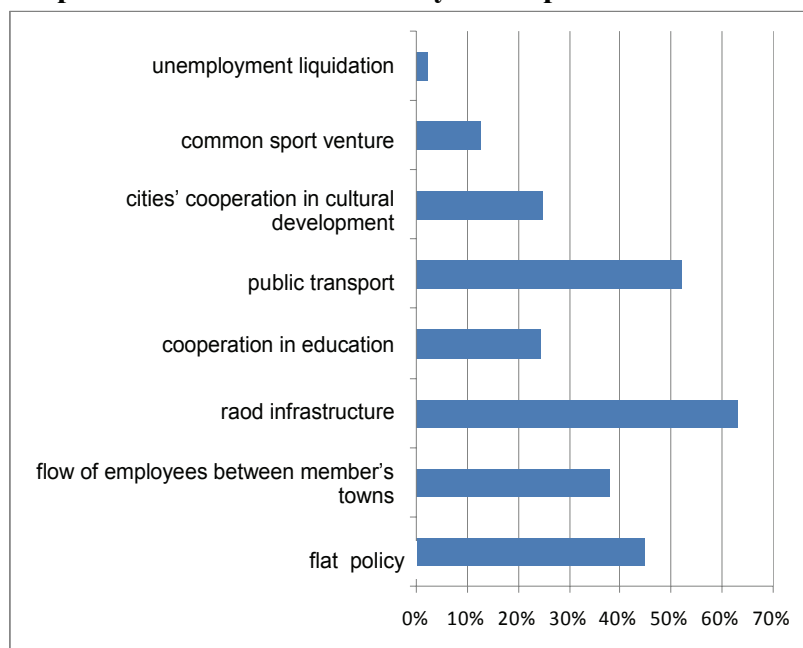
**Graph 6. Respondents’ opinion on the attractivity of different aspects of the Metropolis**



The source: own research. N=600

A great majority of respondents (79%) were convinced that the formation of the Metropolis will increase the competition between member towns. This view also dominated among respondents sceptical to the metropolitan idea. Among the problems on which Metropolis should focus its activities, respondents mentioned the problems with roads (63%) and public transport (52,2%). Just behind them were listed the problems of housing (44,8%) and the flow of employees between member towns (38%). Respondents’ answers reflect the vision of the Metropolis as a common urban space based on unconstrained flows of inhabitants.

**Graph 7. Problems identified by Metropolis authorities**



The source: own research. N=600

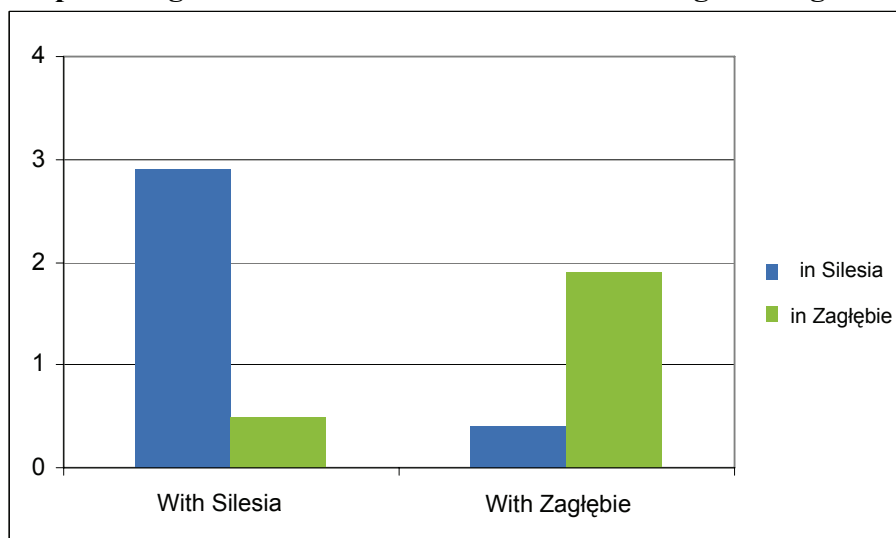
The research also focused on the identification and identity of the inhabitants of the fourteen member towns and showed diversity as far as regional identification of respondents is concerned. The clearest difference in the level of identification is between the Silesian identification and Zagłębie region identification. Inhabitants of the Silesian cities decidedly more strongly identify themselves with their region (2,92 people out of 4 people) and city (3,07 people out of 4) as well as with their Polish country (3,21 out of 4) and they have rather high European identity (2,28/4). Meanwhile Zagłębie's inhabitants in first sequence they identify themselves with their city (2,02 / 4), then with the region (1,91/4), Poland (1,82/4 and the European Union (1,24/4) but in all cases the level of identification is much smaller than Silesian's. This situation might be explained by the specific historical past of both regions and today's level of the development of regional organizations.

**Table 1. Level of regional identification of inhabitants**

	Level of regional identification with:					
	Own city	Silesia	Zagłębie	Silesia Voivodeship	Poland	European Union
GZM	2,91	2,54	0,77	2,32	3,03	2,12
Śląsk	3,07	2,92	0,59	2,59	3,21	2,28
Zagłębie	2,02	0,79	1,91	1,08	1,82	1,24
Jaworzno	2,93	1,80	0,43	1,93	3,59	2,10

The source: own research. N=600

**Graph 8. Regional identification of Silesian and Zagłębie region inhabitants**



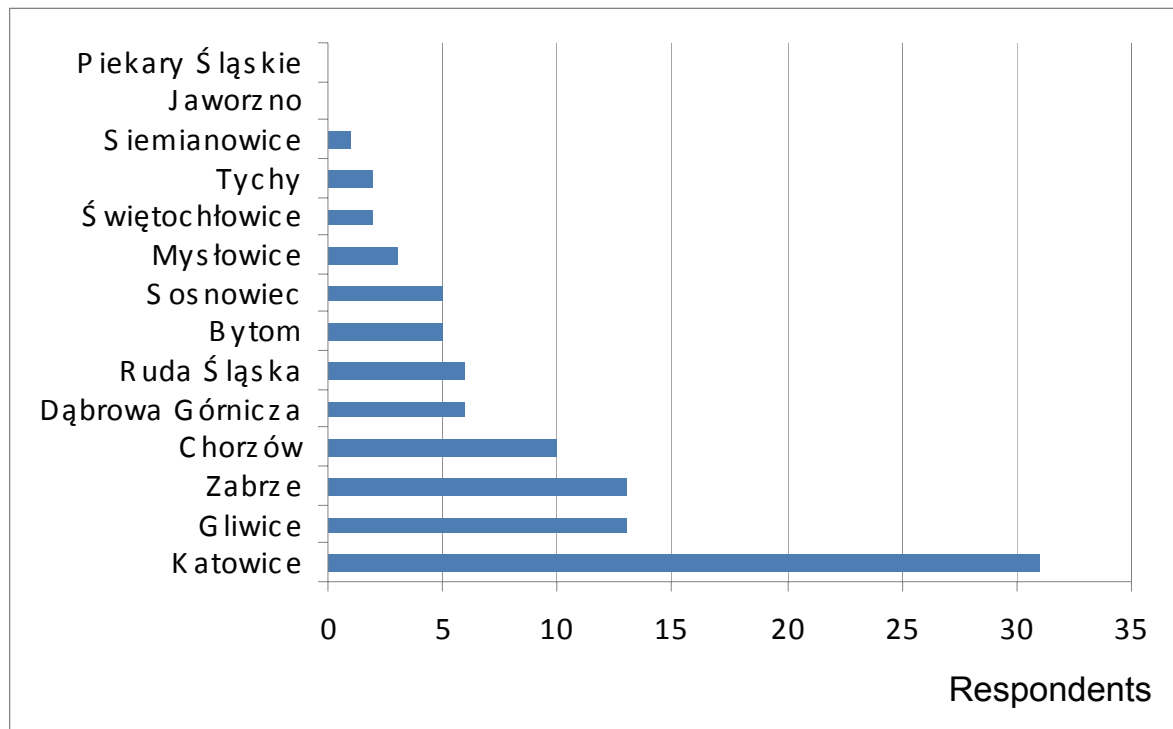
The source: own research. N=600

One of the important questions of my research was the location of the capital city of the Metropolis in view of the polycentric character of this conurbation. I wanted to find out if the inhabitants considered some location as the Metropolis centre and which of the member cities should fulfill this function. The majority of respondents claimed that the Metropolis of Upper Silesia should have its own capital city (graph no. 9). The researchers did not want to ask directly their respondents which city should be the capital city; that is why they asked only about important cities which the respondent could characterize as his own. Obviously the majority of respondents mentioned the city they live in as the most important for them, but on the second place they enumerated the city they work or study in or go shopping to. The most frequently mentioned place was Katowice, the capital of the Silesia region. This might



suggest that Katowice will be the most acceptable city as the natural capital city of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia.

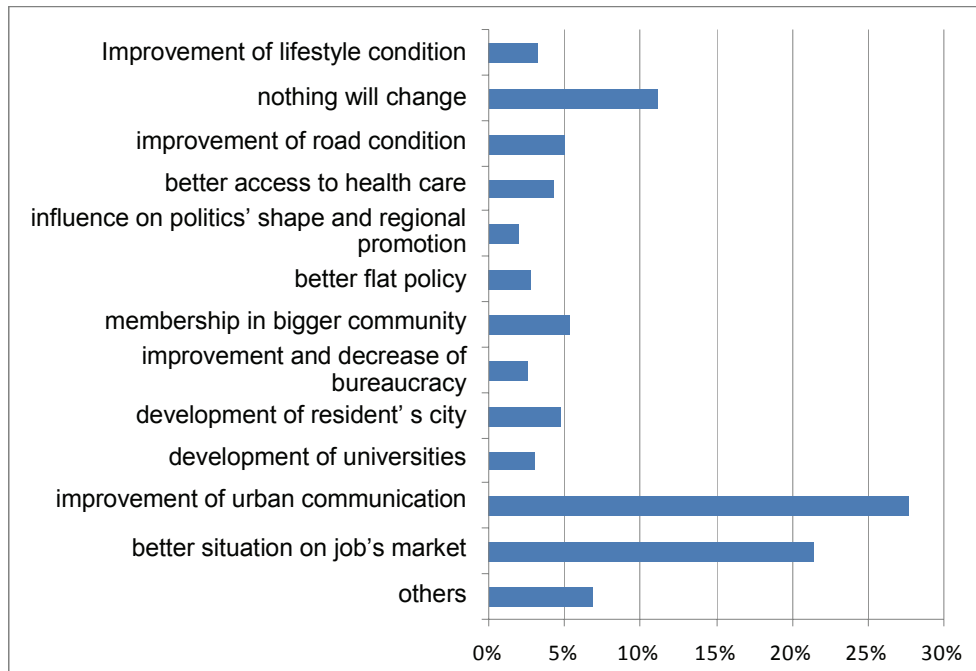
**Graph 9. Cities characterized as „mine” except for the city the respondent lives in**



The source: own research. N=600

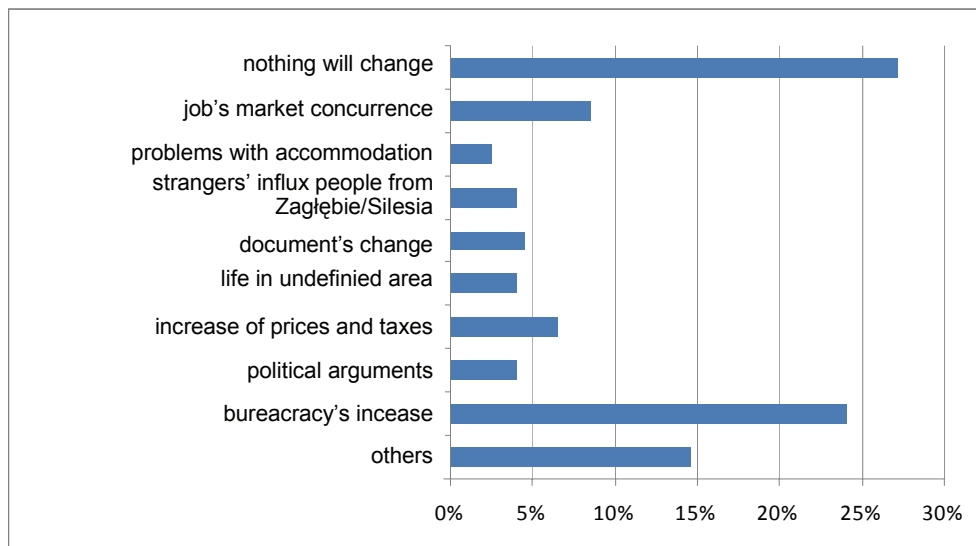
Research authors also concentrated on the opinions of the inhabitants associated with the results of the formation of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia. At first the respondents were asked about the expected positive impacts of the newly formed Metropolis on their lives. The great number of respondents (27,7%) enumerated the improvement of public transport and improvement of the situation on the job market (21,4%). (graph no. 10). Among the potentially negative results of the project respondents mentioned the growth of bureaucracy and competition on the job market.

**Graph 10. Positive results of the project for respondents**



The source: own research. N=600

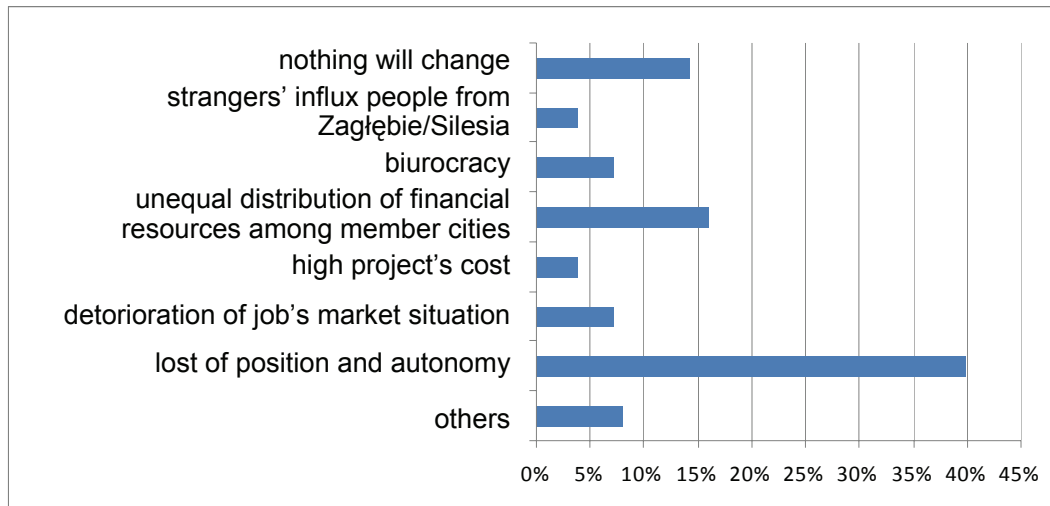
**Graph 11. Negative results of the project for respondents**



The source: own research. N=600

Among the positive consequences of the formation of the Metropolis for the city where the respondent lives, economic development and an increase of investments (27,5%) were mentioned. Among the negative consequences the respondents most frequently mentioned the loss of the city's position and the partial loss of its autonomy (40%) and also the unequal distribution of financial resources for member cities of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia (at about 16%). As far as the whole region is concerned, the main fear is connected with potential competition for power and the marginalisation of towns which were not allowed to join the metropolis.

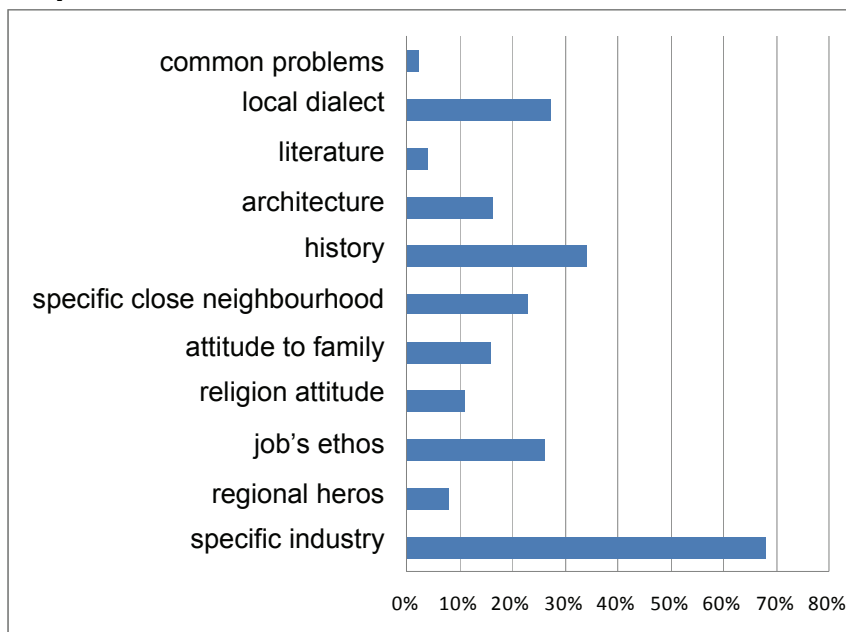
**Graph 12. Negative consequences of Metropolis formation for respondent's city**



The source: own research. N=600

As the principal uniting factor, the respondents mentioned the specific industry (68%), history (34%) and local dialect (27,5%), mentioned by the Silesian people.

**Graph 13. The element which unites the inhabitants of the Metropolis of Silesia**



The source: own research. N=600

Summarizing the research results we can say that the formation of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia is in its initial stage. Nevertheless, it has a solid social base which is also a potential and also a guarantee for the continuation of the Upper Silesia and Zagłębie metropolization in the future. Two out of three people who live in the Metropolis of Upper Silesia confirmed that they are conscious of the Metropolis formation. Moreover, the majority of its inhabitants had a positive attitude towards this process, hoping that it will be a possibility for regional development but also a chance for the improvement of public services and infrastructure. The respondents' opinions on the formation of the Metropolis confirmed that its strengths are an attractive job market and possibilities for career development.

Meanwhile the main fears are connected with an increase in bureaucracy and a loss of city autonomy.

The process of the formation of the Metropolis of Upper Silesia is very dynamic and its success depends on the determination of member cities authorities and the political will of the local decision makers. A strong and important impulse to the integration of other Silesian cities and towns will be the newly enacted bill regulating the formation of metropolises.

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