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# Probing the application of the place-based policy concept – case studies of the chosen Integrated Territorial Investments in Europe

**Abstract:** The place-based approach is a new development paradigm that has been gaining popularity over the last decade or so. This is thanks to the European Union's Cohesion Policy, which supports its implementation through tools such as Smart Specialisation, Community Led Local Development (CLLD) or Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). The article's main purpose is to probe to what extent the place-based concept was implemented within the Integrated Territorial Investment mechanism in the chosen European agglomerations during the programming period 2014–2020. Three agglomerations are presented: Olomouc Agglomeration in the Czech Republic, urban agglomeration Rijeka in Croatia, and Walbrzych Agglomeration in Poland using the case study method, the comparative analysis method and the questionnaire for responses from the representatives of the before mentioned agglomerations. The study shows that there are significant differences between countries in terms of how place-based policies are implemented. Agglomerations attempt to implement the idea presented by the European Union but do not fully exploit the potential of municipalities, applying the ITI guidelines without a clear understanding of the benefits of the approach. The conclusions of the presented study can make a valuable contribution to the literature on the subject and provide a starting point for further research and discussion on the necessary changes to the European Union's Cohesion Policy.

**Key words:** territorial development policy, urban functional area, urban agglomeration, territorial cohesion

## Introduction

Regional development is a process of constant change in a given time and space, which is oriented on the set of unique region's characteristics (spatial, economic and cultural), values and needs (Szewczuk et al. 2011). The 'one-size-fits-all' policy is the old approach to development policy, which was proved highly ineffective as it can't grasp the complexity and diversity of the territories and can't

fully exploit the potential for regional development (Demblans et al. 2020). Now a new approach, a more territorially oriented place-based approach, is gaining ground among the regionalists and is slowly implemented with European Union instruments such as Smart Specialization, Community Led Local Development (CLLD) or Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).

The article's main purpose is to probe to what extent the place-based concept was implemented within the ITI mechanism in the chosen European agglomerations during the programming period 2014–2020. Three agglomerations are presented (Olomouc Agglomeration in the Czech Republic, urban agglomeration Rijeka in Croatia, and Walbrzych Agglomeration in Poland) using the case study method and analysed using the comparative analysis method based on the original criteria derived from a review of the relevant literature. The analysis presented in the article shows in which areas the agglomeration administrations implement the place-based concept, in which areas they don't and what changes should be applied in the next programming period to achieve better effects.

## Materials and methods

The article describes three case studies. The selection of case studies was based on STRAT-Board Tool after application of the following criteria:

- The ITI mechanism was implemented there during the programming period 2014–2020;
- The functional urban area is the agglomeration territorial focus;
- None of the cities co-creating the functional area has the status of the country's capital;
- No two agglomerations came from the same country;
- The strategy for the agglomeration can be categorised as a Sustainable Urban Strategy;
- The strategy has a minimum 6 thematic objectives;
- Financing of the agglomerations strategy comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

The description of each case study follows the same pattern of presenting information gleaned from the policy documents (mainly the ITI Strategies and reports on their implementation), the official websites of the units studied and the survey form. An original survey was conducted in February and March 2024 and completed by the ITI employees (one for each ITI) responsible for implementing or monitoring the Strategy. The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed and 2 open questions, from which information was extracted on the delimitation of functional areas, the thematic areas of the Strategy, the characteristics of agglomerations, the types of projects implemented, the forms of cooperation between the ITI and local actors and the stages at which they occurred, the monitoring and evaluation system and the future of partnerships within the ITI. The information from the survey was confronted with information from the policy documents and supplemented by examples of projects enlisted on official ITI websites (all

selected projects had to: have a status of completed projects and documented on the ITI website, touch on different thematic areas identified by the described ITI and be of different nature (hard and soft) with emphasis on the presentation of soft projects).

The collected information is the basis for the comparative analysis of all three agglomerations. The comparison was founded on thirteen original criteria consistent with the characteristics of the place-based policy concept identified in the first section of the article. Each agglomeration was assessed in all thirteen criteria on a three-point scale: × – phenomenon does not occur or occurs to an insignificant degree; + – phenomenon occurs at an average level; ++ – phenomenon occurs at a significant level. The level of each phenomenon was assessed by the author of the publication based on its quality, what was presented in tabular form and further described referring to excerpts from the case descriptions, which argued for the assessment made.

## **A place-based approach to regional development**

Place-based policy is a comprehensive territorially oriented approach, that focuses regional development policy around the unique characteristics of a given territory. In this approach development policy has been under the territorialisation process, i.e. the embeddedness of the spatial dimension in the policy. This type of process can be observed within the changing economic situation of the territory or in creating a unique social network as the consequence of local institutional context and action (Hess 2004).

In the place-based concept, the territory consists of three dimensions: spatial, relational, and institutional (Nowakowska 2018). The taken action is oriented towards endogenous capacity building based on a meticulous analysis of the development factors of a place. It shows a strong local community orientation and institutional partnership building – local actors play an important role not only in the policy-making phase but also in its implementation. This approach reveals the benefits of dialogue and cooperation within the process of regional development, supporting multi-level governance, thus ensuring coherence and synergies that maximise the effectiveness of the activities undertaken (Nowakowska et al. 2021). It emphasizes the value of relations, which can be decisive in terms of building or constraining mutual development. It also changes the perspective on governing the space, where it's moving towards territorial governance (Nowakowska 2018). Demblans et al. (2020) emphasise, that the right governance of place-based policy is crucial and probably the most challenging aspect of applying the territorial approach, as it should lead to the mobilisation of the right people around the right priority areas through the right set of tools. As a result, we should obtain the horizontal governance set in a specific place as well as the vertical cooperation with other government levels.

In this concept, a region is regarded as a functional area, the boundaries of which are defined by common features and the strength of the linkages that can

be established (Churski 2018b). The characteristics linking an area can be based on cultural, social, economic and institutional conditions. The shaping of an area's specificity can take place spontaneously or deliberately building up territorial capital. Policies should be tailored to these conditions leading to cohesion in a spatial context (Suedekum 2021).

Based on the literature (Reynolds, Lamb 2017, Churski 2018a, Nowakowska 2018, Demblans et al. 2020, Duranton, Venables 2021, Nowakowska et al. 2021), we can define the following characteristics of place-based policy documents and intervention:

- The diagnosis for the territory identifies key thematic areas influencing the development of the region that clearly distinguishes it from its surroundings – these distinctions can be positive (competitive advantages) or negative (barriers to development).
- Taken action is project-oriented and interrelated – integrated in terms of set goals and chosen instruments, creating a coherent vision.
- Taken action takes the form of infrastructural projects, but also gives great importance to soft projects, which can bring more long-term positive effects. As a consequence, the policy uses multiple instruments that have complementary characters.
- The policy is coordinated across space (the policy includes differences between areas and accommodates their needs having in mind common goals of agglomeration), function (integrates policies across different thematic areas creating multisectoral strategy), time (is created in long-term perspective including the current and future perspectives) and different levels (it takes into consideration the hierarchical system of governance – different responsibilities and development visions at each level).
- The implementation of the vision takes place in cooperation with local actors, based on the relationships that exist between them. Cooperation can take the form of institutional partnerships, but it is not only based on a formal agreement but is also evident in the mutual respect, trust and equal treatment of all partners. Networking is evident, encompassing the whole local system and not just sections of it. Collaboration occurs at all stages of policy implementation. As a result, the multi-actor and multilevel governance are achieved.
- The bottom-up approach is implemented – taken action comes from local initiatives and uses local knowledge of citizens and local actors. The authorities take the role of facilitators and connectors of different stakeholders involved in territorial development.
- The policy implementation is monitored and evaluated – the system of measurement is designed based on territorial capital, which means it's adequate to the capabilities of the region and the development goals.

A variety of instruments are being used to achieve the objectives of place-based policy on a regional level. As part of the 2014–2020 reform of the European Union cohesion policy, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITAs) were introduced (Wyrwa et al. 2017). Integrated Territorial Investments promote a partnership model of cooperation and shape the skills of an integrated approach to devel-

opment. They are dedicated to functional areas, whole cities, urban agglomerations, neighbourhoods or specific zones within a city, or even networks of areas without common borders (Zawora, Kowalska 2021). They are characterized by a strategic approach using different forms of cooperation (including various forms of participation methods) reflected in comprehensive projects that are mutually integrated and complementary (Szafranek 2019), which reflects the assumptions of the place-based concept. Nevertheless, as for now, no publication analysing the presence of the place-based policy concept in the application of Integrated Territorial Investments was found in the literature.

## **Integrated Territorial Investments – case studies**

### **ITI Strategy for Olomouc agglomeration**

The Olomouc agglomeration is made up of 240 municipalities with a total population of around 450,000 (Strategie ITI... 2016). The area's boundaries were determined through a delimitation process based on the delimitation of urban areas proposed by the government.

The agglomeration in its diagnosis covers multiple thematic areas: environment, economy, education, culture transport. Each area is described in detail, supported with statistical analysis and concluded by identifying the key conclusions. For the Olomouc agglomeration as key problems should be mentioned decline in population, lack of childcare facilities for the youngest children, low level of foreign investment, low local investment activity and underdeveloped public transport network. Agglomerations development potential lies in well-developed cycling infrastructure (adapted more to tourist purposes than to the daily needs of inhabitants) and in the agglomeration's science and research centres and former industrial sites (Strategie ITI... 2016). Numerous projects have been implemented within the framework of the Strategy, for example:

- Construction of a cycle path between Plumlov and Mostkovice as a route to work, services or school (Cyklostezka Plumlov-Mostkovice... 2023);
- Organising training and work placements for people under 25 and over 50 years of age (Máme práci!! 2023, Nikdy není pozdě 2023);
- Construction of a pre-school facility (Mateřská škola Přerov 2023) and expansion of existing facilities (MŠ Rooseveltova... 2023, Zvýšení kapacity... 2023);
- Investment in the technical infrastructure of local small and medium-sized enterprises (Posílení konkurenceschopnosti... 2023, Rozvoj společnosti... 2023);
- Construction of a new block of the UP Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer where companies using the results of science and research are created and cooperation between research institutions and industrial manufacturing entities takes place (Centrum inovací... 2023);
- Construction on a former industrial site of the facility for the material recovery of waste plastics (Zpracování plastů... 2023).

Local actors representing different backgrounds were involved in the work on the Strategy: local public institutions (such as schools and hospitals), scientific and innovation institutions, universities, non-governmental environmental organisations, faith communities, civil rights associations and foundations, local government associations, mayors of the cities and Environmental Protection Agency. They were involved in the process of diagnosis of the agglomeration and evaluation of the Strategy. They could submit projects, choose which one will be implemented and be involved in their realisation. The strategy has also been the subject of public discussion by involving the residents of the agglomeration area in the development of the ITI diagnosis. They were also informed about the work on the Strategy through local newspapers, website dedicated to ITI, billboards and other promotional materials such as atlas, publications, and information leaflets.

The ITI Strategy for Olomouc agglomeration didn't have a monitoring system (this was the answer given in the survey, which is inconsistent with the published ITI Strategy, where it is indicated that a report on the implementation of the Strategy will be prepared once every six months (Strategie ITI... 2016), but it did have an evaluation system, which was based on evaluation criteria. According to the Strategy, the agglomeration was to carry out a mid-term evaluation and subsequent ad hoc evaluations were to be carried out based on the identified need. The criteria for conducting an evaluation were included in the Evaluation Plan attached to the Partnership Agreement signed by the municipalities. In the mid-term evaluation analysis was carried out concerning, inter alia, implementation of the participation principle, plans for implementation of projects, ITI administration (identification of 3 areas in which there are complications and 3 possible solutions to improve them), adequacy of submitted projects to the objectives set in the Strategy, degree of integration of the Strategy and projects (Integrated Territorial Investments... 2018). Through the use of the evaluation system, changes were made to the ITI Strategy process of implementation to ensure better results.

The Olomouc agglomeration will continue to implement the ITI in the 2021–2027 programming period, but the boundaries of the area will change as a result of delimitation changes imposed at the ministerial level by the Czech authorities. It was indicated that there will also be changes related to the implementation processes, funding, choosing projects etc.

## **Strategy of urban agglomeration Rijeka**

The urban agglomeration of Rijeka, located in Croatia, includes 10 municipalities, which are home to more than 180,000 inhabitants (Strategija Rozvoja... 2016). The boundaries of the agglomeration were determined based on the delimitation of urban areas proposed by the government and on expressions of interest from different municipalities in joining the ITI.

The Strategy carried out a diagnosis of the area in six thematic categories: transport, socio-demographic background, economy, culture, brownfield sites,

and energy. Based on the analysis key problems and competitive advantages were defined for the SWOT analysis. The region stands out for its multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism and rich cultural heritage, around which the seasonal tourist offer is oriented. The agglomeration's economy is driven by small businesses (up to 99% of registered businesses are small). The agglomeration's scientific and research centres can be a competitive advantage and good public transport between municipalities is one of the benefits for the development of the region. Barriers to the development of the agglomeration include: an ageing population, youth unemployment, an outdated district heating network and the presence of brownfield sites (Strategija Rozvoja... 2016). Responding to the identified challenges and competitive advantages in the agglomeration area, projects such as the following were implemented:

- Revitalisation of the Benčić – Brick and T-facility complex which consisted of the reconstruction and equipping of the Brick Building into the Children's House and the T-Building into the City Library, i.e. the conversion of these facilities for public cultural and educational purposes (Potpisan Ugovor... 2018);
- Purchase of low-emission buses as part of the modernisation of the public transport fleet (Potpisani ugovori... 2020);
- Restoration, preservation and revitalisation of cultural and historical heritage objects and the creation of a new cultural and tourist offer by revitalizing 12 locations and building a new building – the House of Halubajskega bell ringer (Objavljen javni... 2019, U projektu... 2020);
- "Stori po svom" program that encourages children and young people to acquire different knowledge and skills to create an environment in which they learn by acting in their community, increasing their quality of life and creating additional value for themselves and others by learning through working in a specific social and social environment through informal, networked, peer and collaborative learning, motivated by fun, personal and social development (Potpisan sporazum... 2021);
- The MentoRi project comprised of a series of activities to ensure that people at risk of social exclusion receive the necessary opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life (MentoRi n.d.).

The projects were chosen and implemented in cooperation with local actors. Among them were representatives of local government associations and public institutions, representatives of scientific and innovation institutions, representatives of non-governmental environmental organisations and private entrepreneurs and investors. Apart from being systematically informed about the progress of the strategy and its implementation, they were also involved in monitoring the strategy (as a source of data used for the analysis). In the urban agglomeration of Rijeka, the workshops for citizens' associations were organized as part of citizens' involvement in the diagnosis of the agglomeration. The municipality residents were also involved in the implementation of at least some of the projects and informed about ongoing works on the Strategy.

The monitoring system of the Strategy was based on indicators (such as the size of revitalized areas expressed in m<sup>2</sup> and the number of public transport users) which were analyzed from the perspective of performance and results. The performance was measured yearly, while the results were to be measured at project entry (baseline) and upon project completion (target) (Strategija Rozvoja... 2016). The Strategy was evaluated by the reporting system based on pre-defined criteria in three stages: before implementing the strategy (ex-ante), during implementation (yearly reports) and after implementation (ex-post) (Strategija Rozvoja... 2016). The monitoring system and the evaluation system did not cause any changes in the works of the Strategy implementation.

After the programming period 2014–2020, the Rijeka urban agglomeration will continue their cooperation within the same boundaries, as the ITI authorities claim that they created good cooperation between municipalities and built partnerships for the future.

### **ITI Strategy for Walbrzych agglomeration**

The Walbrzych agglomeration, located in southern Poland, is made up of 22 municipalities with a population of around 415,000 (Strategia Zintegrowanych Inwestycji... 2016). The boundaries of the agglomeration covered by the ITI Strategy have been determined based on expressions of interest from different municipalities in joining the ITI and common characteristics and relations between municipalities.

The diagnosis of the area carried out for the Strategy addressed a number of thematic areas: socio-demographic background, environment, housing, economy, education, transport, security, health, culture, sport and recreation, land use. The complexity of the diagnosis allowed the identification of the key problems and competitive advantages of the Walbrzych agglomeration, which are defined in the Strategy for each thematic area in a synthetic way. The agglomeration is distinguished by the spa towns located in its area and by its high landscape value (with natural attractions and material heritage sites), which represents a huge untapped potential in terms of tourism development. Despite the location of R&D institutions and post-industrial zones with investment plots, there is a low level of entrepreneurship in the area. The agglomeration is affected by social problems (an ageing population, long-term unemployment, social exclusion) and suffers from poor technical infrastructure (low sewerage coverage, outdated housing stock and post-military and post-industrial sites in the process of degradation). There are problems with the provision of public transport services – its technical condition and quality of services do not meet the needs of residents (Strategia Zintegrowanych Inwestycji... 2016). In response following projects have been implemented at ITI (Poznaj projekty... n.d.):

- Support in the form of grants for specialist consultancy services for 150 enterprises (SMEs) based in the Walbrzych agglomeration;
- Support for general investment in small and medium-sized enterprises in the agglomeration – e.g. financial support for the purchase of modern technology

for a local bakery, the creation of a new fitness club, robotisation of the production process for a company producing paving stones;

- E-government services and applications (including e-procurement, IT support measures for public administration reform, cyber security, trust and privacy measures, e-justice and e-democracy) and e-health (including e-care and modern technologies to serve the elderly);
- Reconstruction, renovation and thermos-modernisation of public buildings and existing residential buildings;
- The purchase of low-emission buses for transport lines, the construction of cycle paths, Park&Ride, Bike&Ride and the replacement of lighting with energy-efficient lighting;
- Construction of a mechanical and biological wastewater treatment plant and a sanitary sewer system;
- Upgrading local cultural facilities (in particular adapting facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities) and expanding their cultural activities;
- Extending the scope of the educational offer of the 'Choina' centre for ecological education and making natural resources available for educational and tourist purposes.

The diagnosis of the agglomeration and implementation of some of the projects was carried out in cooperation with various local actors. They represented local public institutions, local community organisations, civil rights associations and foundations, faith communities, non-governmental environment organisations, scientific and innovation institutions, private entrepreneurs. Citizens were also involved in the diagnosis, but also they could submit and implement projects and were systematically informed about ongoing works through local news sites, the ITI website and the local newspaper.

The Strategy had a monitoring system, which was based on defined indicators. Each course of action had a set of several indicators with baseline, intermediate and target values, source of data and frequency of data monitoring (Strategia Zintegrowanych Inwestycji... 2016). According to the questionnaire respondent the Strategy had also an evaluation system with defined criteria, but the Strategy doesn't include these criteria. The document mentions that the evaluation will be carried out in accordance with the evaluation criteria of the Managing Authority for EU funds at the voivodeship level.

The cooperation under the agglomeration of Walbrzych will continue, but the municipalities co-creating it will change.

## **Comparative analysis of the agglomerations from the place-based policy perspective**

On the basis of the conducted research, the comparative analysis of three ITI agglomerations was carried out (Table 1). In their delimitation process, the Czech and Croatian agglomerations relied heavily on the government's decisions, while

in the Polish case, the municipalities on their own decided if they want co-create ITI. The strategic documents reveal that the municipalities in all cases have some common territorial characteristics however, the survey carried out cannot conclusively indicate whether these are the municipalities that have the most in common.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the case studies from the place-based policy perspective

Criteria	Strength of the phenomenon		
	ITI Strategy for Olomuc agglomeration	Strategy of urban agglomeration Rijeka	ITI Strategy for Wałbrzych agglomeration
The delimitation process was based on territorial characteristics	+	+	+
The diagnosis included multiple thematic areas	++	++	++
The diagnosis identified key characteristics of the area (territorial capital)	++	+	+
Taken action includes key characteristics of the area	+	++	+
Taken action included soft and hard projects	+	+	+
Taken action is interrelated (projects are connected)	+	++	++
Taken action is multisectoral	×	×	×
Multiple types of local actors were included in developing and implementing the Strategy	++	++	++
The local actors were included in all stages of work in creating and implementing the Strategy	++	+	+
The citizens were included in all stages of work in creating and implementing the Strategy	×	+	+
There was an effective monitoring system for the Strategy	×	+	+
There was an effective evaluation system for the Strategy	++	+	×
The document created a long-term vision for regional development	+	++	+

Legend: × – phenomenon does not occur or occurs to an insignificant degree; + – phenomenon occurs at an average level; ++ – phenomenon occurs at a significant level.

Source: own compilation based on Olomoucká aglomerace (2016), Urbane aglomeracije Rijeka (2016), ITI Wałbrzych (2016).

In all agglomerations the diagnosis was carried out in great detail, covering multiple thematic areas with statistical support. It allowed the identification of key problems and competitive advantages for all three agglomeration, but the Strategy of Olomouc agglomeration in this respect deserves a mention. In this case, each thematic area is concluded with defined problems and directions for further development, which provides a clear logic to the argument. A similar procedure was applied in the Wałbrzych agglomeration, but, in this case, only the problem areas were identified. All diagnoses are concluded with a SWOT

analysis covering all thematic areas, which should be the basis for choosing the projects. In the case of the Olomouc and Walbrzych agglomeration, however, predominantly projects address the agglomeration's problems rather than its potential advantages – in Rijeka, a greater balance of measures is apparent. Nevertheless, all agglomerations are dominated by hard projects rather than soft projects, which are interrelated within their own sector. It's well seen, especially in Rijeka and Walbrzych where many projects related to financial and infrastructural support are correlated with skills development within the same area of action (e.g. in the context of social and entrepreneurial development), but still, projects rarely cover at the same time more than one domain.

In all researched agglomerations multiple types of local actors were included in developing and implementing the Strategy, but their level of involvement varies. The widest range of local actors were involved in the Olomouc agglomeration (from the stage of the area diagnosis to the evaluation of the Strategy implementation). They also had a significant contribution to the Rijeka agglomeration, where they were involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, but their participation in the diagnosis of the area was not indicated (which may be a major shortcoming with respect to the place-based idea). In the case of Walbrzych, on the other hand, they cooperated in diagnosing the area and implementing the Strategy, but their opinions were not taken into account in the monitoring and evaluation phase.

A different picture is evident in the context of involving residents in the Strategy work processes. In the case of the agglomerations from the Czech Republic, the inhabitants were only involved in the diagnosis process, so their involvement can be considered minimal. In the other two agglomerations, they were involved not only in the diagnosis of the area, but also in the project implementation process, which presents these areas in a more positive light, but still seems to be too low a level of participation.

The agglomerations presented very different attitudes towards monitoring and evaluation systems. In Olomouc agglomeration, no monitoring system was in place, while the evaluation system can be considered highly transparent and effective, addressing not only quantitative aspects in the implementation of the Strategy but also qualitative aspects in the context of the implementation system. In Rijeka agglomeration, on the other hand, both systems were in place but were based only on defined quantitative indicators and did not affect the implementation process of the Strategy. In Walbrzych agglomeration the monitoring was also based on quantitative indicators, while the evaluation criteria are highly vague, which may raise doubts about the whole evaluation system.

All described agglomerations plan to continue inter-municipal cooperation, but only in the case of the Croatian area will the borders of the cooperation area remain unchanged. This may be a basis to conclude that in this case there will be an observable continuation of the development idea, while in other cases this is highly questionable. This also calls into question whether in the Polish and Czech agglomerations the original cooperation area was delimited in the correct way and the place-based idea was properly implemented.

## Conclusions

The study presented here has its limitations (small research sample, subjectivity in the qualitative assessment), nevertheless, through a close reading of the case studies and an analysis supported by the literature, it is possible to conclude that the agglomerations successfully implement place-based approaches in the context of a multi-thematic analysis of the area, the complementarity of ongoing projects and the inclusion of diverse representatives of local actors. Agglomerations, on the other hand, do not invest in the development of their competitive advantages (the Olomouc and Walbrzych agglomeration concentrate more on solving problems, and not developing their strengths), are unlikely to involve local residents in the whole process, implement mainly infrastructure projects and are unlikely to address more than one thematic or problem area in their projects. The agglomerations do not continue to cooperate within the same area boundaries, which, combined with the doubt about the correct delimitation of the area in the first place, may raise doubts about the efficiency of the whole process regardless of the correct implementation of the cooperation approach. Based on the literature and the conclusions of the research, two categories of recommendations can be identified: technical and ideological. Under the former, some universal tool or guidelines for the delimitation process should be created to ensure correct delimitation, based on complex analysis with some qualitative dimension (not strictly few statistical indicators). As for now, it relies heavily on the expression of interest from municipalities (the case of Rijeka and Walbrzych agglomeration), when it should consider its competitive advantages and key problems. The monitoring and evaluation of the strategy should be mandatory with the involvement of local actors (including citizens) and a qualitative dimension (based on the Olomouc example) to ensure economic effectiveness and multi-perspectivity. In the context of ideological recommendations, a change in thinking among local authorities seems necessary to understand the benefits of: 1) the development of their brand by investing in their competitive advantages, 2) the long-term effects from the implementation of soft projects, 3) the effectiveness of multi-sectoral interventions, 4) public support when involving residents in the process and 5) long-term positive change when cooperation continues. As the study shows ITIs mainly implement infrastructure projects (all agglomeration implement soft projects mostly in the context of social problems) and there is no multisectoral intervention, low levels of involvement residents (in all three cases) and lack of continuity of cooperation in the same boundaries (the case of Olomouc and Walbrzych agglomeration) the changes should be made, and can be achieved by conducting research in above mentioned areas and disseminating the results to local authorities. These changes would bring the ITI instrument much closer to the idea of place-based policy, although in its current form it is already an example of a tool that reflects the basic tenets of this concept.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest and assures that the work is the result of his own creation.

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## Badania zastosowania koncepcji place-based policy – studium przypadku wybranych Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych w Europie

**Zarys treści:** Podejście zorientowane terytorialnie to nowy paradygmat rozwoju, który zyskuje na popularności dzięki polityce spójności Unii Europejskiej. Stosując metodę studium przypadku, metodę analizy porównawczej i kwestionariusz odpowiedzi, w artykule oceniono, w jakim stopniu koncepcja place-based została wdrożona w ramach mechanizmu Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych

w wybranych aglomeracjach europejskich. Badanie pokazuje, że aglomeracje próbują wdrożyć ideę place-based bez jasnego zrozumienia wytycznych ZIT dla tego podejścia, przez co nie wykorzystują w pełni potencjału terytorialnego. Wnioski z badania stanowią cenny wkład w literaturę przedmiotu i punkt wyjścia do dalszych badań i dyskusji na temat niezbędnych zmian w polityce spójności UE.

**Słowa kluczowe:** terytorialna polityka rozwoju, miejskie obszary funkcjonalne, aglomeracje miejskie, spójność terytorialna