ACADEMISATION OF A CITY.
REGIONAL STUDENTS' CENTRES –
IDEAS AND EFFECTS

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On the territory of current Silesian Voivodeship, higher education institutions have a rather short history. Two were founded immediately after World War II: Silesian University of Technology (1945) and Medical University of Silesia (1948), and it was not until 1968 that Silesian University was founded. The main part of the Silesian Voivodeship (which after 1945 changed its name several times and underwent some territorial changes) is the Upper Silesian Industrial Region, which maintains a structure of a conurbation containing over a dozen cities. A single, strong academic unit was never present there – faculties of the universities were dispersed, albeit not present in every town of the conurbation. Since most students lived in their home towns and commuted to their university locations to attend classes, an idea was forged to establish Regional Students' Centres (Regionalny Ośrodek Studencki), which were supposed to be in charge of cultural animation of the students' activities outside the academic cities. The present study is devoted to the functioning of the Regional Student Club "Kocynder", which became an important place of artistic and educational activity for the local community in Chorzów, but also, to a certain degree, for other nearby towns. "Kocynder" was established as a grassroot initiative, being more of an answer to a current need than a project with articulated goals, which is why in 1970 its founders could not have foreseen the effects of their work. The author has labelled the process involved academisation of the city.

Keywords: academisation of a city, Regional Students' Centres, Chorzów, "Kocynder", animation of culture, student's culture.

АКАДЕМИЗАЦИЯ ГОРОДА.
РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЕ СТУДЕНЧЕСКИЕ ЦЕНТРЫ:
ИДЕИ И ЭФФЕКТЫ

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Высшие учебные заведения на территории нынешнего Силезского воеводства имеют довольно краткую историю. Два университета были основаны сразу после Второй мировой войны – Силезский технологический университет (1945) и Медицинский университет Силезии (1948), тогда как Силезский университет был

учреждён только в 1968 году. Основной частью Силезского воеводства (которое после 1945 года несколько раз меняло название и претерпевало некоторые территориальные изменения) является Верхнесилезский промышленный район, в котором имеется структура городища, содержащего более десятка городов. Там никогда не было единой, сильной академической единицы – факультеты университетов были рассеяны и присутствовали далеко не в каждом городе. Поскольку большинство студентов проживали в своих родных городах и ездили на занятия в свои университетские локации, была выдвинута идея создать региональные студенческие центры (Regionalny Ośrodek Studencki), которые должны были отвечать за организацию культурной деятельности студентов за пределами академических городов. В статье рассматривается работа регионального студенческого клуба «Kocynder», который стал важным пространством художественной и образовательной деятельности для местного сообщества в Хожуве, а также, в определённой степени, для других близлежащих городов. «Kocynder» был создан как инициатива снизу, являясь скорее ответом на текущую потребность, нежели проектом с чётко сформулированными целями, поэтому в 1970 году его основатели и не представляли последствий своей работы. Исследуя данную практику, автор показывает процесс «академизации города».

Ключевые слова: академизация города, региональные студенческие центры, Хожув, «Kocynder», культурная анимация, студенческая культура.

There is probably no need to convince anyone that educational institutions, especially those representing the higher level education, change – sometimes completely – the face of a city in which they are located. A spectacular example can be the Volhynian Gymnasium, later called Krzemieniec Lyceum (1805–1831 and 1922–1939), which in the first decades of the 19th century, over a very short period of time, transformed the small and unremarkable town Krzemieniec into Volhyn's intellectual capital, one that would soon be known as "the Volhynian Athens" [Przybylski 2003]. Naturally, such cases are relatively rare, albeit they "condensate" and illustrate the changes that take place in various areas of culture; two of the same should be a subject to further consideration. A school is not only a specifically managed physical space, buildings, classes (i.e. libraries, workplaces, laboratories), the preparation of which requires developing concepts and designs, employing the help of specialists who have the required experience, it is also an endeavour requiring one to secure sufficient financial resources. Material objects, which enable the institution's functioning, root and consolidate the presence of the school in the area, while helping to establish it (through specific organisation of space) and giving it an axiological meaning. A school is also a dynamic social sphere that also brings dynamism to the local environment – teachers recruited from the outside or sent outside to acquire knowledge, local and incoming students who, in time, create the growing circle of alumni willing to support their alma mater in various ways[1]. Such a group of educated individuals whose example

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[1] The better organisation and staff of a given unit, the greater its influence; although the presence of any school will always contribute to educational potential of a given area. Also the territorial and material frame is significant, although its role is somewhat autonomic – depending on the status of the

has an activating and modelling effect through directly formulated personal models, can have a tangible influence on the local environment and its educational and professional aspirations, as well as its openness.

Even relatively less formal educational or activites related to education (outside of the national system of education), can support revitalisation, and sometimes be its fundament – that was the case (again, a spectacular example) with the small Croatian town of Grožnjan. In the aftermath of the post-war territorial changes, the town whose documented history reaches a millennium into the past, lost a fair amount of its residents in the mid-1950s (the so-called Istrian-Dalmatian exodus), and as a result, also its town charter. The deserted city slowly turned to ruin until 1969, when the International Cultural Centre of Jeunesses Musicales Croatia was established there. The goal of the institution was to organise the "first international music camp in the world", which would give young people from around the world an opportunity for (mainly musical, but also in a further sense – artistic and architectonic) education[2]. Grožnjan, the city of galleries and festivals, was named the "City of artists". It regained its administrational independence as well as the town charter in 1993, and has since become an interesting tourist destination and meeting place for young artists, albeit some of the city's inhabitants still cultivate the land (mainly growing olive trees and grapes)[3]. Although the town's population (around 200 people) remains small compared to that from the beginning of the 20th century (over 1.6 thousand people), the city is no longer in danger of depopulation or degeneration of the urban fabric, while other cities face this danger[4]. What the two aforementioned unique examples have in common is the fact that the educational activity along with its necessary background was carefully planned and implemented by professionals who were aware of the project's significance and aimed to achieve specific goals.

The study presented in this article presents the activity of a single student club, which became important – as seen from the perspective of several decades – for the local community, but also, to a certain degree, for other nearby towns, as a place of artistic and educational activity. Regional Student Club "Kocynder" [Regionalny Ośrodek Studencki „Kocynder"] was established as a grassroot initi-

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institution – as it broadens the social space of a given place, becoming a place of integration between new arrivals and members of the local group. Therefore, closing down even small village schools (often the only common places available) can significantly weaken the mechanisms that bind people together.

[2] On the JMI's page we read: "The purpose of ICC JMC in Grožnjan is not only renovation & restoring houses and city which was at the end of 60's in ruins and neglected, but also to return urban function trough out the intensive cultural activities" (https://www.hgm.hr/groznjan_MKC_eng.htm). See also http://www.groznjan-grisignana.hr/index.php/hr/kultura-i-umjetnost/umijetnicka-tradicija.

[3] See https://www.groznjan-grisignana.hr/index.php/hr/mjesta-opcine/groznjan.

[4] It is not an exception in this area – Završje (it. Piemonte d'Istria), which is a part of the Grožnjan municipality, has an equally interesting and even longer history. Some of its oldest monuments date back to the Roman era. Once rich and populated, surrounded by a double city wall, with three churches, it is now populated by around 50 people (right after the war there were around 250 people living there); only a few houses are occupied – the rest are in ruins (https://www.tz-groznjan.hr/index.php/en/mjesta/zavrsj).

ative, being more of an answer to a current need than a project with articulated goal, which is why its founders in 1970 could not have foreseen what the effects of their work would be.

Although the study focuses primarily on the area of Chorzów city, we must reflect upon it as a part of a larger conurbation, since the specificity of the chosen institution is dependent on territorial conditions that far exceed the limits of the city itself. The conurbation located in the centre of the current Silesian Voivodeship extends over the territory of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin, also referred to as the Upper Silesian Industrial Region, which has been subject to intensive industrialization since the 19th century. Currently, Katowice can be regarded as the region's main academic centre accommodating the University of Silesia (formerly the School of Education [Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna], a branch of the Jagiellonian University), Academy of Music, University of Economics, Academy of Fine Arts, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, as well as faculties of the Silesian University of Technology and Medical University of Silesia. The Medical University of Silesia was established in 1948 in Rokitnica Bytomska, while the Silesian University of Technology was established in 1945 in Kraków and transferred to Gliwice in the very same year. Three of the universities: the Silesian University of Technology, the Medical University of Silesia, and the University of Silesia had (and still have) faculties located in several cities of the conurbation[5]. It should be added that similar dispersion has applied to other vital cultural institutions, such as theatres, museum etc.

In university centres housing numerous universities, the student life tended to be more concentrated, often around the respective campuses. This significantly facilitated integration of the academic environment, gave students the opportunity to work in clubs, realise their own ideas etc., but also separated them slightly from other residents. The specific situation of Silesian universities, i.e. the dispersion of faculties throughout the Katowice Voivodeship (Gliwice, Zabrze, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Sosnowiec, Rybnik, Katowice), coupled with the fact that many students did not live in dormitories but rather commuted to classes (which was possible thanks to a well developed transportation network) from all GOP cities (and even farther away) resulted in a situation where the cultural life was not as strongly connected with the universities themselves. Gliwice seemed to be the least affected by the situation, as many student clubs centered around the University of Technology were established there in the 1950's.

One of the institutions important to the academic life was Polish Students' Association (Zrzeszenie Studentów Polskich), established during the Congress of the Polish Students (Kongres Studentów Polskich) in April 1950. in 1973 Polish Students' Association was reorganised as the Socialistic Polish Students' Association (Socjalistyczny Związek Studentów Polskich), disbanded during the martial law in Poland, in 1982, and reactivated again as Polish Students' Association. The main goal of Polish Students' Association was to organise and coordinate the cultural activity of the academic circles through popularisation and promulgation activities as well as artistic and creative initiatives. In 1954

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5 Some units of the University of Silesia are currently situated in Chorzów.

a Students' Community Centre (Studencki Dom Kultury) was built in Gliwice under the auspices of the University of Technology. The first student club in the Silesian academic environment was "Spirala" (1956). As A. Wieczorkowska writes: "The name 'students' club' caused the places to gain an elitist character as in most cases, attendance was limited exclusively to students" [Wieczorkowska 1982, 7].

The situation changed during the late 1960's when Regional Students' Centres (Regionalne Ośrodki Studenckie) started to emerge (also within the structures of Polish Students' Association). The Regional Students' Centres were structurally subordinated to the District Council of Polish Students' Association (Rada Okręgowa Zrzeszenia Studentów Polskich). The cultural activity of young people undertaken in clubs maintained by Regional Students' Centres was mostly connected to the students' place of residence rather than the location of particular university faculties, as clearly evidenced by clubs that formed away from the cities where academic centres (or their units) existed. Clubs established both within and outside the main cities of the Upper Silesian Industrial Region included: "Pyrlik" (Bytom), "Siemion" (Siemianowice), "Novum" (Zawiercie), "Beanus" (Sosnowiec), "Pegaz" (Ruda Śląska), "Ethiopus" (Będzin), and "Panel" (Wojkowice) [Król, Matysik 1985, 5].

One of the clubs that continued its activity for a considerable period of time was "Kocynder" (formed as a Regional Students' Centre in 1970), active for several decades in Chorzów. Its founders and members are convinced that their work changed the cultural face of the city and had an impact on its residents – not only students of Silesian universities, but also school youth, as well as workers employed in nearby workplaces. Regional Students' Centres (as opposed to clubs that existed within official academic structures) were considerably more open. Due to their openness also to people outside the academic environment, they integrated local communities. Rather than instilling elitist sentiments in students by tearing them away from their own communities, the establishments aimed to shape and educate those environments. The former "Kocynder" activists are convinced of this – in hindsight, they can see the impact that the club had on the local community, although they are not always able to properly evaluate it, as this task would require in-depth, systematic studies. I was approached and requested to undertake such a research program. The analysis and interpretation of conversations with club members (carried out in a form of a structured questionnaire interview[6]), biographical information on possibly the most inclusive group of people connected to "Kocynder" in various ways[7], as well as the available (quite

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[6] The detailed questionnaire (prepared by Kamila Gęsikowska, corrected by Adam Pisarek) contains 16 questions, subject to adjustment (based on the function the person performed within the club's structures and the time of their activity etc.) as necessary on a case by case basis. The questionnaire was prepared in collaboration with Kocynder's members and we are prepared to continue expanding it.

[7] We intent to gather a larger sample of quantitative data concerning people connected with "Kocynder" in order to delineate some – probably time-dependent – "type" of a "Kocynder" member and their life path: place of birth, social upbringing, education (level, profile, completed schools, period of education), time of activity within Kocynder's structures, undertaken forms of animation and education activity, career (place of work, position), special interests and hobbies.

extensive, albeit dispersed) archival materials[8] is being processed and prepared by myself and my research team (Kamila Gęsikowska, Adam Pisarek, Małgorzata Rygielska). Detailed historical information concerning the first fifteen years of "Kocynder"'s existence has already been gathered and processed [Król, Matysik 1985; Wieczorkowska 1982].

Leaving home to pursue university education often tore young people away from their native environments and temporarily placed them in others. Thus, eventual graduates would often face a choice (somewhat limited by enforced employment in particular places and the difficult housing situation in Poland) whether to return home (where some of the social bonds would have been already torn or at least weakened) and thus limit the contacts established during the study period, or to remain in the big academic centre, while risking a loss of connection with the place of origin. Returning home sometimes also entailed loss or limitation of access to interesting cultural offer. On the other hand, when graduates remained in big academic centres, smaller towns were inevitably considerably weakened. The activity of Regional Students' Centres was intended to remedy this – it allowed students to pursue their interests and passions in their hometowns, while still taking part in full-time university courses. Students did not have to give up their local communities, and still had a creative impact on the same: often, then became the *gatekeepers* (term coined by Kurt Lewin), responsible for identifying and propagating matters that were important as well as attractive, also from the perspective of local environments that had previously been deprived of access to the benefits of education and had poor awareness of the educational and cultural offer available [Lewin 1943, 41–44]. This often helped students to choose a suitable life path and proceed to pursue it after graduation. Many people affiliated with "Kocynder" were later employed at cultural institutions in Chorzów, nearby cities, or even abroad. Therefore, those people are aware of the significance of educational and integrational activity.

For the purpose of the project we coined and employed the term "academisation of a city". It relates to the grassroots students' movement connected mostly with the organisation of cultural (or cultural animation) and educational activities aimed at educating and "opening" local communities in cities with no prior history of academic centres, dominated by "blue-collar" culture in which civilisational advancement and profound technical education was respected, but little heed was given to the importance of autotelic humanistic education.

Between the late 1960's and 1980's, academisation, as a process taking place in areas that did not have rich intellectual traditions, was a way of shaping new cultural, artistic and intellectual needs of people who did not undertake higher education, by those who did possess such experience. For those involved in this process, the activity was not only of ludic value, they had the awareness of its social importance. In this aspect, academisation was a form of implementing a certain intellectual ethos rooted in positivism. This ethos was connected to the tendencies towards the democratisation of the society characteristic of the 1960's and 1970's. Ultimately, such tendencies would lead to a system-wide transformation at the beginning of 1990's, and at the same time, to the end of the academisation

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[8] Unfortunately, some archives have been irreversibly damaged.

in non-university cities in the shape and form practiced previously. The number of higher schools increased, and the network of academic units thickened, rendering grassroots students' movements increasingly less viable.

When students established Regional Students' Centres they did so with their own needs in mind: "We cannot attend the distant clubs in Gliwice, but we can establish similar ones in our hometowns" [Król, Matysik 1985, 2], but with time, the social function of Regional Students' Centres went far beyond that initially assumed goal. The clubs became important centres of cultural life, and their eventual disappearance, natural from the perspective of the transformation processes, was regarded as a loss of an important part of smaller cities' cultural heritage. The reasons for this stem from the fact that the programmes of student culture inherently entailed (although most of the activists did not realise that at the time) its ultimate annihilation or at least marginalisation as observed by T. Skoczek: "Student press and publishing houses, student clubs, and student literature were never the only and exclusive platforms for discussion and polemics. Students needed a place for a lively and dynamic exchange of opinions, confrontation of ideas. The chances for this were mostly provided by the students' culture, with its various institutional possibilities, a separate and independent creative current that inspired activities of the whole society, shaped academic environments, but was also present in the awareness of social circles far more extensive than those strictly academic. The end of that Polish specificity came with the transformation. Paradoxically, political and social freedoms, liberation from administrative restriction, nullified the necessity of maintaining such asylums of independence and freedom by the animators and creators of the students' culture" [Skoczek 2011, 175].

The starting point in our research is the individual, their local background and places of origin. We hope to depict what Kurt Lewin referred to as "psychological regions" when pondering on the contents and extent of the psychological sphere of life. Lewin distinguished physical space from psychological space, while emphasising the pluralistic nature of the latter. The spatial, also in the social sense, dimension of the existence, limitations (regarded as various life circumstances) and possibilities are an important feature of individual life paths, also in the geo-biographical sense [Lewin 1936, Kaczmarek 2005]. We will consider not only the mobility of "Kocynder"'s members – territorial, environmental, institutional – but also the changes in the localisation of the club. "Kocynder"'s management changed with the passing cadences, consequently, its goals and forms of activity, as well as the ways of finding financial support for the club also underwent many transformations. The research goal will be realised by mapping those changes while taking into consideration the variables of time and space. Our chief focus will be on the administrative area of Chorzów, although the context for the research on "Kocynder" will be provided by other student clubs located within the conurbation. Such an approach will allow us in the future to undertake more in-depth (also territorially) research on the impact of Regional Students' Centres on the cultural life of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin cities.

Our respondents were convinced, although they did not always verbalise it directly, that the Regional Students' Centres activity brought a new quality to the Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin conurbation, that it changed not only the cul-

tural map of the Voivodeship (creating new concert, theatrical, cinema venues), but also, most importantly, changed the people who benefited from its activity[9].

We will consider in particular the tension between a certain type of autonomy and difference (due to functioning in academic structures) and openness to other social groups. Student' culture created a space for contestation, but at the same time – and this is particularly clearly visible in the context of Regional Students' Centres – it worked for the "cultural advancement" of the labourers. The problem of cultural advancement, understood mainly as a contact with "symbolic culture," and therefore, in Antonina Kłoskowska's perspective, autotelic, non-instrumental sphere of artistic communication realised through literature, music, theatre, and fine arts [Kłoskowska 1964, 77–93; Kłoskowska 1969, 379–403], connected with a reflection on social stratification and social mobility (cultural mobility), were more intensively worked on since 1960's [see Bokszański 1976; see also Goban-Klas 1971]. Polish researcher, unlike e.g. French scholars [Bourdieu 1969], pointed out the relational independence between forms of participating in culture and the social situation of the people involved. The activity of Regional Students' Centres was mentioned in corroboration of this thesis.

The popular awareness of the phenomena is starting to fade away as the changes in the political system in Poland also transformed the goals of animation and education work, as well as its forms.

People willing to share their reflections with us are convinced, that they took part in a social experiment which shaped their lives to a significant extent. They are aware of the importance of their group's achievements and its impact on the political changes in Poland. The upcoming "Kocynder" jubilee made them not only want to share their memories, but also interpretations concerning the importance of the work they undertook.

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[9] We propose to analyse Kocynder's and its members' influence (mostly environmental, but also territorial), building upon the possibilities offered by the geographical analysis of regions, formulated and introduced by Peter Haggett in his human geography concept [Haggett 1966], and network analysis [Haggett et al. 1977; Turner 1974]. We want to recreate the inner network of relations between people affiliated with "Kocynder" and the associated external networks: universities, cultural institutions, territorial administra-tion units. This will be the basis for mapping out the network of contacts with due consideration for their flows and limitations, as well as depiction of the hierarchy between certain areas and institutions [Haggett et al. 1977].

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