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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF POLKOWICE, ONE OF THE RICHEST COMMUNES IN POLAND

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### Summary

In this article the author discusses the image of a non-public university in the context of the image of the local government which functions on the territory where the university is located. The author discusses the mutual influence of both entities and the resulting benefits. In order to illustrate the subject the example has been taken of one of the richest and best-developing local governments in Poland — the Community of Polkowice — which in 2002 decided to establish its own university together with the District (poviat) of Polkowice. The university is financed to a large extent, which is probably an exception in all Poland<sup>1</sup> — with funds from the budget of local government. The Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship and Technology in Polkowice (DWSPiT) has been functioning on the higher education market for a decade. It has made a significant contribution to the building of a positive image of local authorities and unified the identity of the local community. Even though people from outside Polkowice also study at the university, it is often called a "local government university" or "local university", alongside the division into public and non-public universities, according to which it was categorized<sup>2</sup>, according to the law. One of the important things for potential students is the fact that the university is located in the region of Polkowice, which is developing fast and offers the possibility of studying, potential jobs and in the longer perspective also attractive living conditions.

The goal of the article is to try to show, on the example of Polkowice and the Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship, the impact that a non-public university may have on strengthening the positive image of local government and to present the scope of cooperation between a university and local government and its image value for the university itself. The subject, due to the limitations imposed by the form of this article, will be limited to only the most important issues.

**Keywords:** government, image, marketing, non-public university, relationship, student, university



## Introduction

In this article the author discusses the image of a non-public university in the context of the image of the local government which functions on the territory where the university is located. The author discusses the mutual influence of both entities and the resulting benefits. In order to illustrate the subject the example has been taken of one of the richest and best-developing local governments in Poland — the Community of Polkowice — which in 2002 decided to establish its own university together with the District (powiat) of Polkowice. The university is financed to a large extent, which is probably an exception in all Poland<sup>3</sup> — with funds from the budget of local government. The Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship and Technology in Polkowice (DWSPiT) has been functioning on the higher education market for a decade. It has made a significant contribution to the building of a positive image of local authorities and unified the identity of the local community. Even though people from outside Polkowice also study at the university, it is often called a "local government university" or "local university", alongside the division into public and non-public universities, according to which it was categorized<sup>4</sup>, according to the law. One of the important things for potential students is the fact that the university is located in the region of Polkowice, which is developing fast and offers the possibility of studying, potential jobs and in the longer perspective also attractive living conditions.

The goal of the article is to try to show, on the example of Polkowice and the Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship, the impact that a non-public university may have on strengthening the positive image of local government and to present the scope of cooperation between a university and local government and its image value for the university itself. The subject, due to the limitations imposed by the form of this article, will be limited to only the most important issues.

The development of free market economy after 1990 changed the approach to regions and education. People started to perceive both education and regions in commercial categories. At universities and in local governments willing to move forward, the focus shifted from just "administering" to "selling a product". What's more, the focus shifted to providing the recipients with an offer which would be regarded as unique<sup>5</sup>. At the same time universities started competing to attract



students, cities and regions started competing for, among others, domestic and foreign investors, as well as tourists. It turned out that in order to achieve success in the market it was necessary to communicate with current and potential clients, who as a result would form a specific image in the direct community<sup>6</sup>.

Consistent care for the image of universities and local governments nowadays is not just an issue of their authorities' prestige and satisfaction, but also a struggle for survival, considering the looming demographic crisis and growing competition for students, as well as national and foreign investors.

A perfect situation is the one in which the positive image of a university is correlated with the positive image<sup>7</sup> of a city or town in the expectations of potential students who will live in the city or have to commute there if they make the decision to study there. A less desirable situation is the one in which the image of a city and the image of a university are not coherent and evoke completely different emotions — it might seem that the standard of education at a particular university is high, but the city in which it is located doesn't satisfy the expectations of potential students or evoke any associations or emotions. A city which enjoys a great image may host a university which has a bad image or which bears no distinctive characteristics, from the point of view of the potential student. The negative, positive or neutral image of one of the two — city or university — may be crucial for the decision to start a relationship with a particular scientific institution for the time of studies, or with a region, perhaps for a whole life. For this reason it is essential to distinguish oneself from other similar entities — to highlight characteristic or distinctive features. This necessity has been emphasized by the currently mayor of Polkowice, W. Wabik: "(...) DWSPiT in Polkowice contributes to the development of the town and the whole commune. I have noticed that over the years constantly changing expectations of local authorities addressed at universities are still clearly articulated and visible in various aspects of functioning of the town. We do it with strong conviction. Especially that the goal is always the same — keep up with the requirements of the current times, and distinguish oneself in a positive way in an ever more competitive market of brands and ideas"<sup>8</sup>.

## About the image of a university

As E.M. Cenker thinks, the image of an institution or a company is a kind of image in the awareness of people who have direct or indirect contact with it — we are talking here about clients and students — as well as other participants in the market — observers strengthening the opinions about universities. The image is an external thing which a university can only try to form and model according to its needs<sup>9</sup>. Image can be treated as a cognitive category covering:

- in the cognitive layer — knowledge, convictions, opinions;
- in the emotional layer — feelings, valuating assessments;
- in the behavioural layer — defines inclination towards behaviour which may turn into the intention to "purchase" or withdraw from it<sup>10</sup>.

Creating the intended image of a university is leads to a strong distinctness so that fast and easy identification of the educational institution is possible. This is a relatively easy task, as on the market of non-public schools, as B. Iwankiewicz-Rak points out, names of schools, faculties, departments, teaching programs, and specializations are formulated in a similar way. The formation of image should be regarded as a process directed in such a way that non-materially perceived and rather similar educational services could materialize through, among others, the culture of activity, relations between the student and the lecturer, or a precisely formulated mission for a university — these things can distinguish one university from another<sup>11</sup>. Image is characterized by dynamics and is subject to changes, along with changes in the views and preferences of the environment. It doesn't always reflect reality, as it emerges as a result of a process characterized by subjectivity. Identity plays an important role in the formation of image. Identity means knowing who you are. It is worth pointing out here that identity is not a mirror reflection of image, as image is the final picture verified by many factors<sup>12</sup>.

Public relations understood by the author, based on T. Goban Klas, as a "function of management which establishes and maintains mutual,

beneficial relations between institutions and groups, which determine its success or failure"<sup>13</sup> serves the purpose of building image, including the image of universities.

The image of a university, as with the image of any other institution, is not uniform, and what contributes to its complexity are the convictions, impressions, thoughts, ideas, and emotions of an individual or a group of people concerning a particular object, which may be a university, a faculty or area of study. It is possible to view the multidimensional image of a school from a multiple perspective. The picture of a university can be created as an image: employers, creators of culture, an entity receiving financial support, moral authority, teacher or investor<sup>14</sup>.

Integration and coordination of image building in all scopes serve the role of comprehensive formation of the image of a university.

A good company image can serve functions which, adapted to the needs of a university, can be defined as follows:

- wins over public opinion for the brand of a university;
- eliminates the anonymity between university and the recipient;
- o facilitates mutual understanding;
- facilitates the creation of a beneficial approach to a university and its activities and influences a feeling of acceptance<sup>15</sup>.

In the formation of image, as E.M. Cenker thinks, the image of the whole branch, here the education sector, that is, the reputation of non-public or public universities, plays a major role. What's more, the image of the territorial space in which the product — here understood as the educational offer — has been generated has an impact on the image of a company or a product.

### About the image of local administration

It could be assumed that there is a relation between the territorial image and the image of a company or a product. Associations connect a country with a type of product: Italy — spaghetti, pizza, but also with the



manner of manufacturing: China — products often assumed to be short-lived, poorly made, which doesn't necessarily have to comply with the truth, under the condition that a high level of quality control is maintained in a well-organized company. The perception of a territorial area can be changed through promotional campaigns, targeted not only at the product, but also at the image of the area it comes from<sup>16</sup>.

When the transformation from communism to capitalism came, local administration gained completely new significance and its operation has become determined, as with universities, by the market. However, in this case the decisive role was played by such factors as decentralization of decision-making and management of public funds, as well as the clear opportunity to articulate local interests on economic and social grounds<sup>17</sup>. As a consequence of this, a necessity to develop the competitiveness of local authorities and regions emerged. The goal was to achieve external benefits in the form of various groups of capital: financial, material, social, intellectual (here: universities). This contributes to growth, raises revenues, provides employment, increases the attractiveness of the citizens' life and management of business activities. In the case of communes, what determines their competitiveness, compared to other local governments, is: urban planning, social and technical infrastructure, services provided — including educational services at various levels — tourist and natural attractions, as well as social-demographic and professional structure. These elements are used for building a strategy of changes, which make it possible to plan the development of local authorities in the context of competition among communes. Local authorities compete mainly for foreign investments, tourists and skilled personnel. Forming the image of a competent commune in multiple areas is directed towards both internal and external audiences. The first group consists of inhabitants, enterprises, local institutions, non-governmental organizations etc. The external audience is formed by, among others, investors, tourists, financial market entities, global entrepreneurs, students from outside the commune, and most likely potential students. The key issue in the case of local government, as in the case of a university, is to create a public image which allows emphasis on distinctiveness, individuality in the areas important for the social and economic environment, enabling unequivocal identification, against the background of the competition<sup>18</sup>.

For this purpose it is necessary to define the "territorial product" (also called megaproduct)<sup>19</sup>, which is understood as a composition of many elements — subproducts. These, in turn, may be copied by competing communes; with one exception — the cultural subproduct, specific and exceptional, associated with the place of production and offering. Along with this exceptional subproduct it is possible to build other subproducts, eg.: social, public, residential subproducts, subproducts associated with investments, tourism, fairs and exhibitions, trade and service, leisure and sports, as well as, significant in this context, the educational-social product. The educational-social product includes the following elements: schools, universities and other educational units operating in a particular town or city, the level of education of inhabitants, skills and qualifications of potential and current employees of companies and institutions, etc.<sup>20</sup>.

The created image and identity of a commune are used by the local authorities and their targets are the internal (local) and external communities<sup>21</sup>. As a positive image in people's awareness they serve the purpose of:

- identifying characteristics distinguishing them from the competition;
- integrating local community and building loyalty;
- presenting material and conceptual values for various groups of stakeholders;
- gaining social support and strengthening it for the vision and the defined directions of the development of a commune;
- maintaining power through highlighting benefits for the inhabitants.

Polkowice and the Polkowice subregion have from time to time faced the necessity of updating the elements of the image of local authorities over the last two decades, in particular the fields of subproducts of the territorial product. Both at the moment when communes were granted their local administration powers at the beginning of the 1990's and when powiat (district) government was established in the town in 1999, and also when economic development accelerated (the creation of the Legnica Special Economic Zone, negotiations with investors), as well as at other positive moments in the development of local administration in Polkowice — including the establishment of the Lower Silesian University of

Entrepreneurship and Technology in Polkowice in 2002<sup>22</sup>. The negative image, as can be concluded from discussions of the author with the inhabitants of Polkowice, as a mining town formed in the past, has been replaced with a new, positive image in the environment of market economy and advantageous budgetary conditions<sup>23</sup>.

## From village to "Super Town"

Polkowice (Lower Silesian voivodeship) only in the 1990's became the centre of the Polkowice subregion and in time the centre of administrative life — in 1999 the seat of Poviast Starosty was located here for the first time in history. This was possible only thanks to the determination of the municipal authorities of Polkowice, who strove to create the Poviast of Polkowice and achieved that by overcoming significant obstacles and resorting to complicated measures. This was a breakthrough moment, as Polkowice, in terms of administration had been always associated with the nearby Głogów or Lubin<sup>24</sup>. At the beginning of the 1990's Polkowice was called the "miners' bedroom" and a "backwater"<sup>25</sup>. As a town Polkowice was developed and expanded in the 1970's to accommodate a few thousand miners and their families, however, the central authorities didn't care about the town's development. Despite these negative opinions, it is necessary to remark here that in the times of communism in Poland, Polkowice offered better living conditions than other towns and cities in Lower Silesia. This was because the mining industry and the employees of the sector were treated well by the central authorities. This was reflected in, for example, a better range of products in local shops<sup>26</sup>. The inhabitants of Polkowice were mainly immigrants from many parts of Poland (settlement after the war and settlements following the discoveries of copper ore deposits), and their identity wasn't tied closely to the town — one conclusion arising from interviews with the inhabitants of Polkowice. Before 1990 the town didn't look attractive — it was grey, dominated by residential estates consisting of blocks of flats, designed without much architectural effort. For years, despite the fact that under the surface of the territory of the Commune of Polkowice most copper ore mines of the Polish copper giant

KGHM SA were located, the town derived no benefit from these natural resources and the profits flowed straight into the state budget<sup>27</sup>. Only with the beginning of the 1990s and the Act on Local Authorities of March 8, 1990<sup>28</sup> brought about changes. Over a year the budget of Polkowice tripled (1990 to 1991) and the local authorities faced the challenge of transforming the town in every respect and making up for years of neglect. The town council faced the dilemmas associated with planning a new and much larger budget. During the 1990s the town called the "Achilles' heel of the copper mining region"<sup>29</sup> gained a completely new image and became famous not only for mining copper ore, but also for spectacular investments; it was one of the first towns in Poland to build a water park — Aquapark (now called Aquapark Polkowice — Regionalne Centrum Rekreacyjno-Rehabilitacyjne S.A.). Another thing which made a huge impression on observers was the investment which involved overhauling and rebuilding the town's market square and old town, according to the guidelines of a monument restorer. On top of that came one of the most important economic achievements of Polkowice — the establishment of an economic subzone in Polkowice — a part of the Legnica Special Economic Zone. Within a few years the zone attracted many major investors such as: Volkswagen Motor z o.o., Sitech sp. z o.o., TCM Polska sp. z o.o., Sanden sp. z o.o., Royal Europa sp. z o.o. or NG2 SA (the owner of such brands as: CCC, Boti, Quazi). The town was also successful in developing culture (e.g. Polkowice Theatre Days) and sports (eg. top league women's basketball team CCC Polkowice, table tennis — MKSTS DWSPiT Polkowice or weight-lifting — KPC Górnik Polkowice). Currently, the local authorities are striving to make the town more independent of KGHM in view of the fact that the profitable copper ore deposits will run out some day.

The Strategy of Sustainable Development of the Commune of Polkowice for the years 2010–2015 assumes that the economy of the Commune of Polkowice will become more diversified, which means that the role of KGHM SA for the inhabitants and the authorities of Polkowice should gradually diminish. The authorities of the commune have been trying to prepare for this for years. According to the author of the strategy, Andrzej Sztando, the development of alternative forms of commercial activity will concern above all industry, construction, trade and services. Education,

science, farming and non-commercial services<sup>30</sup> will also play a major role. The fact that the local authorities are planning forms of commercial activity this way shows the will to build a particular territorial product, in which the university in Polkowice will also play a significant role.

One of the initiatives, which, it seems, was supposed to change the character of the town was the establishment of a university. The following part of the text will be devoted to this university.

The budget of Polkowice is among the biggest budgets not only in Lower Silesia, but also in Poland. The global economic crisis has not affected this region of the country much. In the rankings of the richest local governments in Poland Polkowice placed third, behind Kleszczów and Nowe Warpno<sup>31</sup>. The budget of Polkowice, which has over 20,000 inhabitants, is comparable in size to the budgets of neighbouring Lubin and Głogów (along with Legnica, two of the most significant towns of the copper mining region), which are three times bigger than Polkowice.

For the purpose of comparison, it is interesting to quote the size of budgets planned by the above-mentioned towns for 2011: Polkowice PLN 202.m<sup>32</sup>): Głogów with almost seventy thousand inhabitants — PLN 183.3m<sup>33</sup> and in the case of Lubin with more than seventy thousand inhabitants — PLN 229.4m<sup>34</sup>.

The change of the image of Polkowice and building a completely new look has been possible thanks to strong budget revenues, which in September 2012 substantially exceeded the budget spending planned for 2012. After an update of the budget, the income was raised to PLN 278m and the spending amounted to PLN 253m. Krystyna Kozłowska, the Treasurer of the Commune of Polkowice announced in the media that the "changes come mainly from higher income tax on legal entities, primarily KGHM. The planned share of the Commune in this tax is PLN 100m. KGHM's financial situation is good, and this makes the tax revenue high. This year's budget is a record high. The Commune has never had such a high income"<sup>35</sup>.

The breakthrough that took place in the development of the local government over the last 20 years is associated with the change in the way Polkowice was perceived, back at the beginning of the 1990's it was regarded as rather unattractive.<sup>36</sup> Polkowice is now regarded by the inhabitants of neighbouring towns as a perfect place for living and is named as an example that

should be followed, mainly thanks to the availability of work in the Polkowice subzone of the Legnica Special Economic Zone, in mines and other plants owned by KGHM Polska Miedź S.A. Over the last two decades the inhabitants' quality of life has also changed, thanks to the improvement of the aesthetic image of the town, regularly carried out renovations of infrastructure, renovation of buildings, as well as building new residential estates and marking out new grounds for the expansion of the town. The town has a rich social offer for its inhabitants, including health programs fully financed by the local government. All changes and renovations are implemented with care for highest quality and high level of local satisfaction. What shows the scale of efforts of local authorities in this respect is the implementation of prestigious client service certificates at the Communal Office of Polkowice, as one of the first local governments in Poland.<sup>37</sup>

Polkowice has gained the modern image of a dynamically developing town where world-class solutions are applied in daily life: free wireless access to the Internet and the so-called Internet kiosks in the town, street lamps using solar energy or bus stops powered with solar energy are some of the signals of an innovative approach.<sup>38</sup>

The promotional slogan of the commune, which is permanently combined with an official, attractive logotype goes like this: "Polkowice — Gmina na przyszłość" (Polkowice — The Commune for the Future", fully reflects the character of a developing town, which has been nicknamed "Supertown", which is a title given, apart from many other distinctions, to Polkowice by the "Rzeczpospolita" daily (2001, 2003, 2004). The inhabitants of Polkowice jokingly refer to their town as "Pokoriko", which can be regarded as a verbal reflection of the level of satisfaction.<sup>39</sup>

The inhabitants of Polkowice feel better and better in their town. Whereas at the beginning of the 1990's they expressed their disapproval of the place when talking about it and felt uncomfortable living there<sup>40</sup>, a public opinion poll conducted in 2009 by order of the Commune of Polkowice provided completely different results.<sup>41</sup> On their basis it is possible to conclude that life in the Commune of Polkowice is good and that the standard of living in this region is higher than in other places — this is the opinion shared by almost 80pc of those surveyed. An analogous group is proud of its region, because the town is developing, getting richer, and new jobs are being created;



the location of the town is attractive, it is well-maintained and pretty; living here is good; there is a friendly atmosphere.<sup>42</sup> Every third respondent thought that the standard of living in Polkowice was much higher than in other places.<sup>43</sup>

Małgorzata Skórska and Jan Wawrzyniak, who took care of the image of the Commune of Polkowice after 1990, said the following in one of the interviews for the branch news source PRoto Public Relations: "The message providing information and building the image targeted at each of these groups [ed. Inhabitants, investors, tourists] has to be and is diversified in form and content. The common element is certainly the logo of Polkowice with (...) a message (...). We are preparing informational materials, commercial offers, presentations. Numerous publications appear in the media. We take care of regular updates for websites. We pay particular attention to communication with the inhabitants. The Commune publishes a biweekly magazine ["Gazeta Polkowicka" — ed.], which informs about all ventures of the Town Council and the local government, but also reports on cultural and sports events in Polkowice, and deals with the problems of inhabitants. "Gazeta Polkowicka" is online at the [www.polkowice.pl](http://www.polkowice.pl) website. In cooperation with the commune, a local cable tv channel is produced<sup>44</sup>".

It is necessary to remark here that the Commune of Polkowice has in the recent years received numerous awards. Along with awards for investments and development there have also been awards for promotion of image from the Polish Press Agency — the title of "Najaktywniejsza Jednostka Samorządu Terytorialnego" (Most Active Unit of Territorial Administration)".<sup>45</sup>

Promotional programs conducted by the Commune of Polkowice for two decades are some of the most active programs in the region, which is certainly associated with budget funds that the administration has at its disposal. Nevertheless, now, looking back, it is possible to conclude that these measures have brought the desired results. People from the surroundings of Polkowice regard the town's "prosperity" with undisguised envy and there are real reasons for that. The current potential of Polkowice also attracts young people who, in these times of crisis, are looking for prospects and an idea for adult life, so they decide to study in Polkowice and later start work and settle down there.

## Local government university? It is really possible

The first organizational meeting concerning the establishment of a university by the authorities of Polkowice took place in June 1998 at the Polkowice school complex. It was planned that workshops and lectures would be conducted by scientific employees from Poznań, Wrocław and Częstochowa. Back then there were plans for two areas of study: administration and management with specialization in local administration, as well as international affairs with specialization associated with European integration.<sup>46</sup> The idea to establish the university was the initiative of Emilian Stańczyszyn, who for many years was the mayor of Polkowice and who recalls his inspiration for the decision this way: "As a student I sang in the Mining Choir of the Wrocław University of Technology. This was an excellent choir, which performed around the whole world. Thanks to this I saw many British, American towns and small academic towns, which developed well thanks to the fact that at one point in time universities were established there. This is what I remembered very well. I would like our young university to be associated more and more with a modern driving force behind the development of Polkowice".<sup>47</sup>

In September 1999 ZamPol SA was established. The company was supposed to take care of the organization of a university in Polkowice<sup>48</sup>, in December of the same year an appropriate application was submitted to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. 51pc of shares in the company which was supposed to manage the school, were given to lecturers, the remaining part was given to the Commune of Polkowice and the Powiat of Polkowice. Later, the Commune of Polkowice acquired a majority stake in the school. The decision was made to launch two faculties: international affairs and computer science on two levels — bachelor's and engineer's.<sup>49</sup>

After three years of efforts, in January 2002 the minister granted the right to open a university in Polkowice — the Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship and Technology in Polkowice.<sup>50</sup> This was the first university which was established in a small town in Lower Silesia. The budget of the school was financed with the subsidies of the commune and powiat.<sup>51</sup>

Professor Waław Kasprzak, former provost of the Wrocław University of Technology was appointed to the position of the first provost of the school. Scientific personnel came from universities in Wrocław, Poznań and Zielona Góra<sup>52</sup>. In total, DWSPiT was ready to accommodate just over 200 students. On October 26, 2002 210 students started studying at DWSPiT<sup>53</sup>.

On November 20, 2006 the first courses within the framework of Polkowicki Uniwersytet Trzeciego Wieku (Polkowice University of the Third Age) were launched. Over 100 people started their studies. Seniors could choose courses from the following thematic blocks: economy, humanities, medicine-psychology, tourism, culture, computer sciences, exact sciences and languages<sup>54</sup>. Currently, courses conducted in form of, among others, thematic sections and lectures are attended by almost 300 students from the territory of the Commune of Polkowice.

On November 28, 2007 at DWSPiT an examination centre for the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) offering language exams, was opened<sup>55</sup>.

At the end of 2009 the university in Polkowice obtained the Erasmus University Charter, which enabled international exchange of students and teaching personnel, as well as administration employees. DWSPiT signed agreements with universities from Cyprus and Romania and later with a university from Turkey<sup>56</sup>. It has also been cooperating successfully with universities from Russia and Ukraine.

In August 2010 the school authorities signed a contract for the construction of a new teaching building of the Lower Silesian University of Entrepreneurship and Technology. The new, fourstorey main building will be connected with the existing building of the university<sup>57</sup>. Construction of the new facilities will be completed in 2013 and the whole investment will be financed by the Commune of Polkowice.

Currently the school offers bachelor's and engineer's courses at four faculties: international affairs, administration, mechatronics, computer sciences — full-time and part-time courses. The university also offers various postgraduate courses and various other courses. In September 2012 the university was granted the right to offer 2nd degree studies, in particular — a Master's course at the faculty of international affairs.

DWSPiT carries out projects cofinanced with funds from the EU budget and in particular the European Social Fund. One of such already completed

programs is "Skuteczne służby na Euro 2012" (efficient services for Euro 2012) — a cycle of training sessions addressed to police, firefighters, healthcare sector and municipal police preparing for the task of handling and maintenance of security during the European Football Championships in 2012. Another project is titled "Boosting the potential of DWSPiT in Polkowice". Thanks to this program at DWSPiT paid internships are organized, a Career Office, and the Graduate Club were established. The program also made it possible to organize optional courses in maths, physics or self-presentation for the students<sup>58</sup>.

The attainment of a high level of education has been confirmed by university rankings prepared by such magazines as "Wprost", "Perspektywy" and "Rzeczpospolita". The results in rankings, which are in a way a reflection of the current image of DWSPiT, from May 2012 were as follows: DWSPiT placed second in the ranking of Wprost among non-public universities in Lower Silesia, in Poland the university placed 29th among non-public schools. Eighty four universities were listed in the ranking. In the joint ranking by "Perspektywy" and "Rzeczpospolita" DWSPiT placed second in Lower Silesia among all non-public vocational schools and public higher vocational schools. The university in Polkowice placed 23th among 72 schools in Poland listed in the ranking<sup>59</sup>.

The university in Polkowice is the initiator of many scientific conferences important for the region, since 2005 when the social debate concerning the strategy for Lower Silesia was started. Also in Polkowice, ways to exploit lignite deposits were discussed during the conference "Exploitation of non-renewable resources in the aspect of sustainable development and the requirements of the European Union" (2008). In the years 2009–2011 the debate on the transformation of local community following the reform of local administration was started. In association with the subject such conferences as: "Poviat authorities — experiences and prospects for development", "Polkowice — Lower Silesia — Europe", "Socio-economic changes in Polkowice following the administration reform" and "Local communities. These scientific events brought about a series of subsequent conferences devoted to local administration, coorganized by DWSPiT in Polkowice. The following conferences were organized: "Społeczności lokalne. Problemy — zmiany — rozwój" — "Local communities. Problems–changes–development"

(Polkowice 2011), "Społeczności lokalne. W perspektywie wyzwań współczesności" — "Local communities from the perspective of contemporary challenges" (Żary 2012), "Społeczności lokalne. Przestrzeń dla współpracy i rozwoju" — "Local communities. Space for cooperation and development." (Wrocław 2013), "Społeczności lokalne jako miejsca zmian. Teoria i praktyka" — "Local communities as the locations of changes". (Kłodzko 2014). The next conference will take place in November 2015, on the occasion of 25th anniversary of establishment of local administration. The conference will be held at DWSPiT in Polkowice.

It is worth mentioning here that the DWSPiT publishing house has published works concerning issues important for the local community "Regionalna strategia rozwoju. Wspólne dzieło społeczności Dolnego Śląska" (Regional strategy of development. Joint cause of the community of Lower Silesia) (2005), "Eksploracja złóż nieodnawialnych w aspekcie zrównoważonego rozwoju i wymogów Unii Europejskiej" (Exploitation of non-renewable resources in the aspect of sustainable development and requirements of the European Union) (2008), "Przemoc w społeczeństwie. Diagnoza, sposoby przeciwdziałania" (Violence in society. Diagnosis, methods of counteracting) (2008), "Energetyka alternatywna" (Alternative energy) (2011), "Polkowice w mojej pamięci" (Polkowice in my memories) (2011)

What has a unique value are the monographs created as a result of the above-mentioned series of conferences "Local communities...". Three volumes have been published by now, another one is being prepared<sup>60</sup>.

What was an exceptional phenomenon on the national scale, was the fact that in 2012 DWSPiT published nine volumes of monographs devoted to Polkowice. They were the result of research conducted at DWSPiT. The following works have been published:

1. Środowisko przyrodnicze Polkowic ed. Adolf Szponar and Jerzy Wyrzykowski.
2. Polkowice — historia współczesna (1945–2010) by Jakub Tyszkiewicz, Jana Walczak and Małgorzata Balicka.
3. Przemiany demograficzne i urbanistyczne w gminie Polkowice by Małgorzata Leśniak-Johann and Agnieszka Wałęga.

4. Rozwój gospodarczy Polkowic w okresie transformacji systemowej ed. Andrzej Graczyk.
5. Kapitał społeczny mieszkańców Polkowic. Studium socjologiczne by Stanisław W. Kłopot, Grzegorz Kozdraś and Paweł Trojanowski.
6. Instytucje edukacji, sportu i rekreacji elementami jakości życia polkowiczian by Włodzimierz Olszewski.
7. Samorząd jako kreator rozwoju społeczności lokalnej Polkowic ed.. Jan Boć.
8. Rozwój życia religijnego w Polkowicach ed. Jarosław Świącicki.
9. Perspektywy rozwoju Polkowic by Waław Kasprzak and Karol I. Pelc<sup>62</sup>.

An important event which has been taking place at DWSPiT since 2009 is the national "Forum Ekoenergetyczne" (Ecological Energy Forum) devoted mainly to renewable energy sources.

The first forum was attended by the chairman of the European Parliament, Professor Jerzy Buzek. In 2012, the "Forum Ekoenergetyczne" took place for the fourth time. The organizers of the event are Fundacja na Rzecz Rozwoju Ekoenergetyki "Zielony Feniks", Commune of Polkowice and DWSPiT. The aspect of effective cooperation on the organization of such events has been recognized by the mayor W. Wabik: "Care for a positive image is certainly very important. Communes pay more and more attention to this issue, as do universities. I would call joint, successful ventures a modern formula of partnership, which boosts the image of both sides. A lasting trend has formed in this respect and we are extremely satisfied with it"<sup>63</sup>.

DWSPiT currently also serves the role of a culture forming and opinion forming agent. The employees of the university participate in work on strategies for the Poviát and the Commune. An interesting initiative of the lecturers and students was a scientific and research expedition "Asia 3000" to China and Vietnam in 2009. The effects of the expedition were lectures, presentations and an exhibition of photographs. Students also participate actively in the life of the town organizing sports, charity, or educational events. The most important cultural event associated with the life of the town is Dewospitalis, that is, the holiday of students of DWSPiT<sup>64</sup>.



## A few words about mutual benefits

The establishment of the university in Polkowice is a reflection of the educational policy of the local government and completed the system of education in the Polkowice subregion through the functioning of Bachelor's, and Master's courses, post-graduate courses, as well as the Polkowice University of the Third Age, which makes it possible to educate local community at all ages (the concept of Life Long Learning). As Mayor W. Wabik points out: "Spending public funds on education and science makes a lot of sense. This is one of the investments which guarantee a satisfactory return, because they raise the living standard for the inhabitants. Both in the short and in the long term. The commune, by supporting the university, simply serves its role, especially in a situation where, just as in Polkowice, development goals are fully recognized and accepted by the local community"<sup>65</sup>.

W. Olszewski, in the article titled "W poszukiwaniu modelu uczelni lokalnej" (In search for the model of a local university) refers to the opinion of A. Marszałek, who thinks that certain areas have specific characteristics which make it possible to categorize them as learning regions. These conditions include an appropriate location of a university or research unit, the presence of a large number of companies running innovative activities based on modern technologies and management, local government support for educational initiatives for the local community within the framework of the abovementioned model of life-long learning. According to W. Olszewski the Commune of Polkowice is a "learning region" and has the characteristics described by A. Marszałek. The key element of such a region is the existence of a school playing a major role, constituting a centre for various activities, as a creator of educational, innovative, advisory actions, which at the same time is an important partner for the local government in the process of development of the subregion where it is located. What's more, the authorities of DWSPiT in Polkowice have attempted to create a new image for a higher education institution — that is a "local government university" acting for the benefit of the local community and co-financed by the local government<sup>66</sup>.

This is an interesting solution, because Polish law concerning higher education provides for dichotomous division into public and non-public (private) universities. The model of a local administration university to a large extent co-financed with funds from the budget of a territorial administration unit is unique in Poland. At the same time it is so interesting and important for the development of the local community, that it is worth following this example. Through mutual coexistence in such a form, both the university and the local administration strengthen their mutual image.

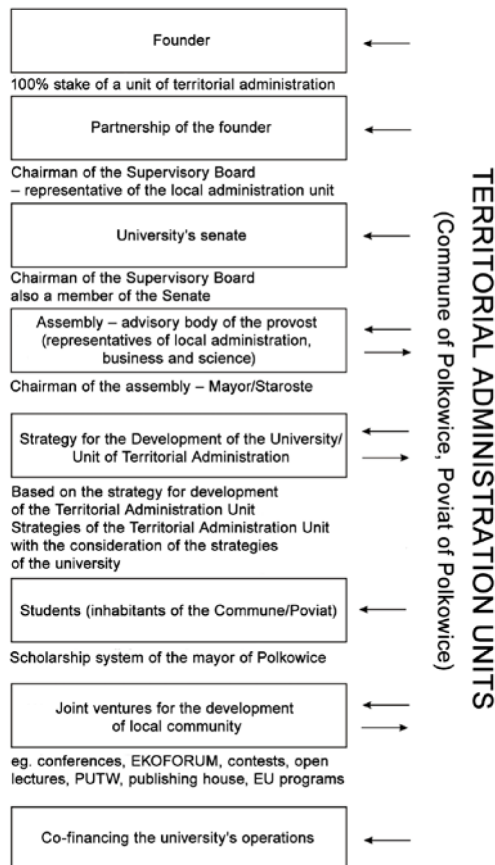
Both participants of the relationship want to build strongest possible ties and act for the common good, which concerns not only the local authorities, but also the whole local community of the subregion of Polkowice, which identifies itself more and more with "its" university — accessible, within reach. Among factors influencing the choice of a higher education institution we could name, among others: the subject of studies, economic motives, character of the university (public or non-public), terms of recruitment, the quality of education and a good location.

The last criterion, according to A. Kulig and G. Nowaczyk — highlighted by 24pc of those surveyed — may have an impact on the final decision on the choice of studies. The location of a university is associated with the necessity of commuting, sometimes also with the need to find accommodation in an academic centre. It turns out that the location of a university is more important, according to the surveyed, than its position in rankings, the opinions of friends and even prestige<sup>67</sup>.

The academic aspect and the fact of presence of a higher education institution on its territory and thus the associated intellectual capital, is naturally not the only and not the most important element making it possible to create a positive image for the local government in Polkowice. However, in comparison to other local governments, it distinguishes the Commune of Polkowice. What makes Polkowice exceptional is not so much the very presence of a university on its territory, as higher education institutions are functioning also in Głogów, Lubin and Legnica, but the active involvement of local authorities in the development of the university, and mutual above-standard relations between local authorities and the university. The

may or of Polkowice describes this cooperation in the following way: "The assessment is very positive. At the same time we are aware of the high potential of DWSPiT in Polkowice and that we should take advantage of this potential for the benefit of the town and the commune. However, in this respect much depends on the local administration. We need to search for new planes of cooperation. Formulate goals in both an attractive and realistic way".

Picture 1. Relations between the territorial administration on in Polkowice and DWSPiT — an outline of the model



Source: W. Olszewski, W poszukiwaniu modelu uczelni lokalnej,  
[in:] Społeczności lokalne. Problemy — zmiany — rozwój, collaborative work  
edited by M. Adamczyk, A. Chmiel, Polkowice 2012, p. 65

The role played by DWSPiT in the region and for the benefit of the local community of Polkowice corresponds to the thirteen social-educational functions named by T. and Z. Kruszewski quoted and discussed at greater length with regard to the university of Polkowice by W. Olszewski<sup>68</sup>. Here, they will only be mentioned in order to illustrate the role of DWSPiT and they are the following: 1) developing the school network and providing the opportunity for studying to a greater group of people; 2) change of structure of background of students; 3) development of the system of part-time studies; 4) non-public schools don't draw students and graduates away from the territory of their small homeland; 5) non-public school in a local environment makes it possible to not only study, but it also reveals scientific talents; 6) creating a scientific environment in a town and a region; 7) cultural influence on the local environment; 8) creating new jobs; 9) relations between students and youth living in a particular environment; 10) education open to the people in the region; 11) propagating and conducting bachelor's courses; 12) introducing and popularizing new forms of work, 13) creating a new type of relations between teachers and students<sup>69</sup>.

At the same time H Bednarski writes the following about the functions of universities important for the local community, "universities serve exceptionally important culture-forming and city-forming functions in the local environment where they operate. This is expressed by the cultural activation of local environments, by expanding the range of education, creating new jobs, by promotion of towns and broader regions, where higher education institutions are located"<sup>70</sup>. The very establishment of a university in Polkowice on the initiative of local administration was associated with the necessity to provide the region with highly skilled workforce to satisfy the needs of the rapidly developing Polkowice subzone of the Legnica Special Economic Zone. The automotive industry active in the region, associated with the production of Diesel engines, car seats, airconditioning units, as well as shoe-making branch and others require highly skilled specialists. The areas of study offered by DWSPiT are to some extent an answer to the needs of the local market: mechatronics, computer sciences, but also international affairs and administration. What helps adapt the program of education to the current, real needs of employers in particular areas of study, are consultations between the authorities of

DWSPiT and the Assembly of the University, which gathers representatives of major companies and institutions in the region, as well as employees of local administration. The Assembly is headed by the mayor of Polkowice.

The presidency of the mayor in the Assembly of the University supports the image of the commune as a competent government taking care of the education of the local community, creating a favourable atmosphere for commercial activities. Additionally, strengthening the cooperation of the university and the local government supports the authority of the commune's administration. The research concerning the development of Polkowice after 1990 conducted by 9 scientific teams at DWSPiT over the recent years are fully financed by the local authorities. The effect of the work will be nine volumes of monographs concerning social and economic changes. They will depict and document the current state of development of Polkowice. This kind of venture is unique in Poland. Scientists from DWSPT and the biggest Wrocławbased universities, among others, University of Wrocław, Wrocław University of Technology or Wrocław University of Economics are involved in the project.

Right now, DWSPiT is a thriving, modern university, where almost 500 students from the region are studying. The number of recruited students has for a few years been stable at the level of 150–200 people. Courses are conducted in small groups enabling easy access to lecturers. They come mainly from Wrocław-based universities, but over recent years the local academic staff has been growing rapidly. Moreover, the tuition fee is one of the lowest in Poland. The first year of full-time studies is free of charge. The university offers a rich scholarship program to the students. It includes the scholarship of the mayor of Polkowice for the highest grade average.

The positive image of the university for the authorities of Polkowice is the determinant of a modern town, which develops based on knowledge. The university gives the chance to keep young people, who would normally travel to study in big academic centres and in many cases settle there, in the town. Polkowice has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Lower Silesia (April 2012 — 9.5%), which in combination with strong economic and social development of the commune as well as good educational offer creates the image of a good place for living<sup>71</sup>.

The Commune of Polkowice is now often mentioned as an example of application of successful marketing strategies and an unquestionable success in the area of territorial marketing<sup>72</sup>. What proves this are the domestic and foreign investors attracted by Polkowice and the comparably high recognizability of the brand of Polkowice in the region and the country.

For a number of years, DWSPiT has been using the positive image of the local government in its marketing activities, not only because the local government is its founder, but above all for pragmatic reasons. The juxtaposition of the brand of Polkowice with the brand of the University makes it possible to stimulate positive associations with such things as work, the economic zone, the Aquapark, and sports clubs recognized nationwide.

In consecutive promotional campaigns by DWSPiT, the educational offer was promoted with the slogans: "Supermiasteczko–Superuczelnia" (Supertown–Superuniversity), "Studiuj w Supermiasteczku" (Study in the Supertown) or "Pozdrowienia z akademickich Polkowic" (Greetings from the Academic Town of Polkowice). This shows that the university is promoting itself taking advantage of the positive image of Polkowice. However, at the same time the Commune of Polkowice also draws real benefits for its image from this relationship.

The university in Polkowice also attracts students because it is not focused entirely on making profits, but rather on achieving measurable effects of its activities and education. Subsidies from the commune secure financial liquidity for DWSPiT, which makes it possible to create an educational product of the highest quality. This in turn satisfies students and allows the university to gain recognition on the education market.

To sum up, it is necessary to point to the most important factors — according to the author — influencing the contribution of DWSPiT to strengthening the image of the Commune of Polkowice and on the other hand important factors influencing the contribution of the Commune of Polkowice to strengthening the image of the university in Polkowice. This will make it possible to outline the image of common benefits for image derived from a decadelong cooperation.

The contribution of DWSPiT to strengthening the image of the Commune of Polkowice:



- The opportunity to obtain education at many levels in the Commune of Polkowice, following the establishment of DWSPiT in 2002. Along with day nursery, kindergartens, elementary schools, and high schools, there is also a university offering bachelor studies, engineer courses, master studies (full-time and part-time), post-graduate courses, University of the Third Age, as well as courses and training. In practice, this means the implementation of the Life-Long Learning model, which is the basis for the creation of modern "learning" communities.
- Boosting the scope of the offer targeted at investors by educating skilled professionals on the territory of the Commune of Polkowice — specialists from the areas of mechatronics, computer sciences, office workers, specialists in international relations for the needs of, among others, the Polkowice subzone of the Legnica Special Economic Zone. Additionally, there is a continuous dialogue between the representatives of the university, local authorities and the representatives of the business sector thanks to the Assembly of the University functioning at the DWSPiT as the provost's advisory body.
- Showing the changes and development of the Commune of Polkowice over the last two decades by means of scientific research conducted at DWSPiT. The results of work by nine scientific teams will be published in 2012 in form of monographs and are now being prepared for printing. DWSPiT and the Commune of Polkowice jointly organize scientific conferences devoted to local administration and local communities. The accompanying thematic publications issued by the publishing house of DWSPiT are equally important for the positive perception of the authorities of Polkowice.
- The development of the social-intellectual capital of the town. Creating a scientific environment in the town and the region. The chance that the graduates of DWSPiT and people associated with the university will settle down in Polkowice. The university becomes a city-forming factor.
- The presence of the university as a source of prestige for a community of 26,000 inhabitants. In particular, the multilayered relation of the commune with the university distinguishes Polkowice from other local governments which also have universities on their territories (including Legnica, Lubin, Głogów, Leszno).

- Activation of the local community by means of educational and cultural offer of DWSPiT among others, in form of the Polkowice University of the Third Age, Festival of Science, popular science lectures, the day of students of DWSPiT — Dewuspatialia, contests, competitions, meetings with well-known people and special events etc.
- Promotion of the commune by DWSPiT during educational fairs, scientific meetings, conferences, debates, promotional trips of the university to high schools, by means of the website, dissemination of the logotype of Polkowice on the promotional material of the university etc.

The contribution of the Commune of Polkowice to strengthening the image of DWSPiT:

- University as an element of sustainable development of the Commune of Polkowice. Thanks to this stable and planned development of DWSPiT is possible. Currently, the construction of the new main building of the university, fully financed by the Commune of Polkowice, is in progress. According to the strategy of "Sustainable Development of the Commune of Polkowice in the years 2010–2015" the development of forms of commercial activity alternative to KGHM Polska Miedź SA will concern above all industry, construction, services and trade. Education, science, agriculture and non-commercial services will also play a major role.
- Promotion of the university by the Commune of Polkowice on a broader forum (among others, brochures, fairs, meetings). The local government promoting its territorial subproducts, including educational-social products, also contributes to the promotion of DWSPiT, which as a university established by the local government and co-financed with funds from its budget, constitutes an important product and a product positively distinguished on a national scale, which satisfies significant needs of the local community.
- The university carries out projects commissioned by the local authorities, which are significant for the local community: research, conferences devoted to local administration, training. The Polkowice University of the Third Age (about 300 students), the academic publishing house (including the publication of a volume of postwar

memoirs "Polkowice w mojej pamięci"). Thanks to this DWSPiT can be regarded as a socially useful university or even as a common good above disputes concerning various issues.

- The positive image of the commune may have an impact on the decision to study in Polkowice — an attractive town with an interesting social, cultural, economic offer can convince candidates who find it hard to decide to study in Polkowice.
- Satisfaction of students with the high quality of education. Profit doesn't always have to be the priority. This is possible thanks to the economic support provided by the local administration. As a result, the first year of full-time studies is free of charge for everyone and the tuition fees are among the lowest in Poland. Additionally, the university offers a rich scholarship program.

## Conclusion

The positive image of the local authorities and the university is a common good, which facilitates the development of this special university, which could be called a "local government university", which is a common asset for this "small homeland". The university doesn't only educate students, but it also initiates progrowth ventures for and with the participation of the local authorities, which have a real influence on their university and their own image. The partner model of a "local government university" can be treated as an alternative to the dichotomous division into public and non-public universities<sup>73</sup>. Thus, supporting mutual image seems to be a necessity.

The abovementioned chosen examples of activity of the local administration-founder of the university, in cooperation with DWSPiT can be regarded as evidence of strong involvement of the authorities of Polkowice and the will to take action together with the university, to promote oneself through initiatives organized on the regional and nationwide arenas (Forum Ekoenergetyczne). The benefits of cooperation are mutual. The Commune where the university it finances is located boosts its own image and at the same time the university maintaining high level of cooperation with the local authorities, involved in its matters, builds its image on solid foundations of

acceptance and bond with the local authorities, fitting in the identity of the inhabitants of the town, commune, powiat and the region. The inhabitants recognize the practical dimension of the university in their neighbourhood and its presence becomes something completely natural, thus it is easy to make a decision whether to take advantage of its services.

Cooperation allows mutual promotion and building a strong image of both the university against the background of a strong, modern, economically thriving commune as well as the strong image of the commune against the background of the university — the image of an academic town, a developing academic centre, full of active people. This gives the effect which makes it possible to create a Supertown with a Superuniversity — a place where you want to study, live and work. What's important is that the mayor of Polkowice views this cooperation from a long-term perspective, "(...) in 10–20 years our university will still be the source of many social benefits, an intellectual centre, an advantageous inspiration for adults of all ages to gain and expand their knowledge." With regard to the issue of building common positive image of the university and the local government, he emphasizes that "we are dealing with a common cause and that's why we need to face all most important tasks most efficiently. Everything suggests that we are on the right path."

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- <sup>4</sup> Stanowicka-Traczyk, A. (2008). *Kształtowanie wizerunku miasta na przykładzie miast polskich*. Bydgoszcz–Olsztyn, 13.
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- <sup>8</sup> Stanowicka-Traczyk, A. *Kształtowanie...*, op. cit., 16–17.

- <sup>9</sup> Iwankiewicz-Rak, B. (2007). Public relations w instytucjach publicznych i organizacjach pozarządowych. In: J. Olędzki, D. Tworzydło (red.), *Public relations. Znaczenie społeczne i kierunki rozwoju*. Warszawa, 94.
- <sup>10</sup> Stanowicka-Traczyk, A. *Kształtowanie...*, op. cit., 21.
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- <sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 55.
- <sup>13</sup> Cenker, E.M. *Public...*, op. cit., 42.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 45.
- <sup>15</sup> Iwankiewicz-Rak, B. *Public...*, op. cit., 100. See also: Zeman-Miszewska, E. (2005). Kreowanie konkurencyjności i regionów przez samorzady terytorialne. In: H. Szulce, M. Florek (ed), *Marketing terytorialny: możliwości aplikacji, kierunki rozwoju*. Poznań, 135.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 100.
- <sup>17</sup> See: Stanowicka-Traczyk, A. *Kształtowanie...*, op. cit., 105.
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- <sup>19</sup> Ibidem. p. 101.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 102.
- <sup>21</sup> Interviews with the inhabitants of Polkowice were conducted by J. Walczaka w 2011 i 2012 r. 2012 for the purposes of a mono-graph: Tyszkiewicz J. (ed.) (2012), *Polkowice — historia współczesna (1945–2010)*. Polkowice: Wydawnictwo DWSPiT w Polkowicach.
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- <sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 98.
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