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The evolution of small towns in south-western Poland

Introduction

Small towns matter greatly in the settlement network; they would receive town charters and during their prosperity they would climb up in the hierarchy of the settlement network. Frequently, they would lose their township status temporarily or sometimes for ever, becoming villages. New towns would be established very rarely without any township traditions.

Transformations of small towns which lost the status of towns and became villages had many reasons such as wars, plagues, fires, no more minerals [6]. Some towns

are currently trying to regain their lost town charters, whereas other have been incorporated to nearby bigger towns, and still many other villages do not aspire to become towns again [4, pp. 41–47; 5]. It is evident that the landscape of small towns retains its individual features regardless of where those small towns currently are in the settlement network. Each of them has their own history, often valuable historic sites or buildings, characteristic spatial design with a market and a town hall which provide their identity [3, pp. 15–22; 8].

Transformations of small towns

Research has been conducted on selected small towns from Lower Silesian, Opole, Silesian and Lubusz Voivodeships (*Provinces*). The analysis included towns with population up to 20 000 which have undergone transformations caused by the interaction of two municipal units. The selected examples from that area illustrate some of those specific processes. Certain specific phenomena have been observed over the years in this area e.g. concentration in the form of incorporation of small towns to neighboring bigger towns, merger of two towns, and secondary separation of small towns from a large municipal center. Consequently, three groups have developed:

- first – small towns incorporated to large municipal centers e.g. Brochów, Psie Pole, Leśnica to Wrocław, Cieplice, Sobieszów to Jelenia Góra,

- second – small towns merged together that retained two names corresponding to their former names e.g. Boguszów-Gorce, Kędzierzyn-Koźle; and towns that retained only one of their former names, usually that of a bigger town e.g. Nowogród Bobrzański that was incorporated to Krzystkowice,
- third – towns that at some moment of their existence were incorporated to bigger towns and then over the last twenty years gradually separated from them e.g. such self-administered towns as Bieruń, Imielin, and Łędziny that for some time functioned as one town with Tychy, Będzin with former district of Wojkowice, Tarnowskie Góry with Miasteczko Śląskie, Bytom with separated Radzionków and Wodzisław from which Pszów and Rydułtowy separated.

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First group – small towns incorporated to big towns

The literature on the subject has dealt with the concentration and deconcentration of suburban areas as a result of two opposite forces operating in the villages around towns [9, pp. 65–80; 12]. Migrations of population for their permanent residence between towns and villages before World War II demonstrated a constant inflow of population from villages to towns. It was only in the last decade of the last century in the area near big towns that more people moved from towns to villages [2]. This resulted from the fact that cars became more and more popular as an individual means of transportation. These processes were parallel to the incorporation of next villages to bigger towns or sometimes to nearby small towns.

The relatively big towns in the area in question include e.g. Wrocław, Jelenia Góra, Tychy, Wałbrzych. Individual small towns and villages were incorporated to them, creating large municipal structures. Three small towns were

incorporated to Wrocław: in 1928 – Psie Pole and Leśnica, both towns with Medieval origin and Brochów in 1951 which received a town charter just before World War II in 1939 [1].

Jelenia Góra, which was smaller than Wrocław, was for some time also the seat of Voivodeship. At present, together with the towns incorporated in 1976: Cieplice Śląskie-Zdrój and Sobieszów and villages of Maciejowa and Goduszyn, it has over 85 thousand residents. In this case, the small towns which were incorporated to Jelenia Góra create a chain of towns spread out in the mountains (Fig. 1) with the village of Jagniątków incorporated to Jelenia Góra in 1998 in the south.

Cieplice Śląskie-Zdrój mentioned above is one of the oldest resorts in the Sudety Mountains located by the Kamienna and Wrzosówka Rivers. Some rich thermal waters have their springs in Cieplice, and swimming pools used in therapy are built around them. The first such facilities were built in the middle of the 15th century as wooden pavilions. Later they were remodeled as masonry structures with typical architectural features. Today the springs located 1300 m under the ground are used in the resort, and there are plans to deepen them. Cieplice belonged to the Schaffgotsch family since the 14th century. The town received its charter in 1935 and since 1976 it has been one of the districts of Jelenia Góra.

At present, apart from the resort, Chemical Plant (former Celwiskoza factory) and Paper Machine Plant are located in that district. Piastowski Square is the main development axis in Cieplice with one- or two-floor houses. It goes from the north from the Baroque Church of St. John the Baptist to the Lutheran Church. There are two parishes in Cieplice – Roman Catholic and Polish Catholic. The north side is occupied by the Schaffgotsch Palace and a large resort park with a theater, five-storied hotel “Cieplice”, and a restored Norwegian pavilion with a large pond. On the south side, which is well exposed to the sun, there are sanatoria and residential houses as well as hotels [14] (Figs. 2 and 3).

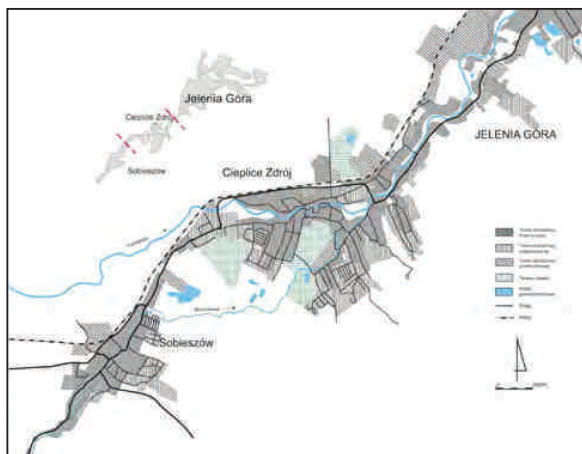


Fig. 1. Cieplice Zdrój and Sobieszów incorporated to Jelenia Góra (ed. by L. Zielińska, 2012)

II. 1. Przyłączone do Jeleniej Góry miasta Cieplice Zdrój i Sobieszów (oprac. L. Zielińska, 2012)



Fig. 2. Main street in Cieplice (photo by Z. Borecz, 2011)

II. 2. Główna ulica w Cieplicach (fot. Z. Borecz, 2011)



Fig. 3. The Schaffgotsch Palace in Cieplice (photo by Z. Borecz, 2011)

II. 3. Pałac Schaffgotschów w Cieplicach (fot. Z. Borecz, 2011)



Fig. 4. Street in Sobieszów (photo by Z. Borcz, 2011)

II. 4. Uliczka w Sobieszowie (fot. Z. Borcz, 2011)

Similarly, Sobieszów, established in the 14th century, is located along the Wrzosówka Stream at the foot of Chojnik Castle. From the 14th century to 1945 it was a village. Sobieszów received a town charter in 1962, and in 1976 it was incorporated to the administrative area of Jelenia Góra. In the past, its residents worked in weaving industry or manufactured souvenirs for nearby Cieplice; there was a factory of milling machines, a foundry, and a glass and stone grinding plant there. Sobieszów has been a tourist and recreation center for years. Its architecture includes mainly villas as well as boarding and guest houses sometimes located by beautiful steep streets (Figs. 4, 5). Excursions to Chojnik Castle located nearby are the main tourist attraction (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Houses in Sobieszów (photo by Z. Borcz, 2011)

II. 5. Domy w Sobieszowie (fot. Z. Borcz, 2011)



Fig. 6. View of Chojnik Castle from Sobieszów (photo by Z. Borcz, 2011)

II. 6. Widok na zamek Chojnik z Sobieszowa (fot. Z. Borcz, 2011)

Second group – small towns merged together

Some small towns which lost their town charters want to regain their town status. One of the methods is incorporation of neighboring villages, which strengthens the original town e.g. Prusice with the village of Górkowice¹,

¹ Prusice is one of the smallest towns in Lower Silesian Voivodeship; it regained a town charter in 2000. The village of Górkowice was incorporated to Prusice in 1975 [11, p. 98]



Fig. 7. Street in Nowogród Bobrzański (photo by Z. Borcz, 2011)

II. 7. Ulica w Nowogrodzie Bobrzańskim (fot. Z. Borcz, 2011)

or merging with another small town. A good example of such a merger is Nowogród Bobrzański and Krzystkowice in Lubusz Voivodeship – two small towns which lost their

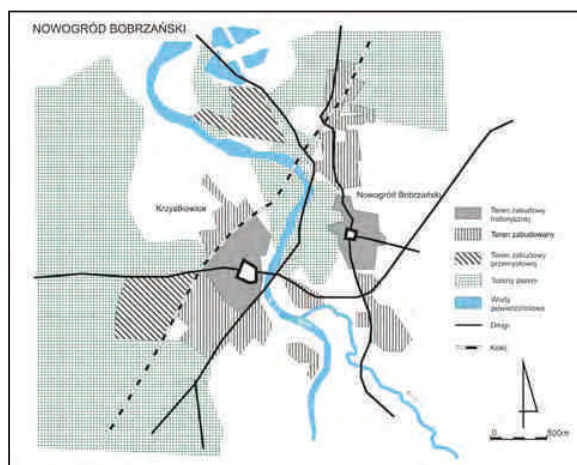


Fig. 8. Plan of Nowogród Bobrzański (ed. by P. Filipiak, 2012)

II. 8. Plan miasta Nowogród Bobrzański (oprac. P. Filipiak, 2012)

town charters in 1945. Nowogród was first mentioned in 1202. In 1217, Prince Henryk the Bearded brought the Augustinians there. The town received a charter in the 13th century². In the place of original settlement a castle was built which survived until World War II. In the 19th century, mineral water springs were discovered in the town, which marked the beginning of the resort (Fig. 7). Although the town had a market, it still had many features typical of a village e.g. the location of the church far from the market [7, p. 441].

Krzystkowice, a younger town which received a town charter in 1659, has a market with townhouses around it and a railroad station. Both towns are located by the Bóbr River: Nowogród Bobrzański on its right and Krzystkowice on its left bank. They are separated not only by the

² In the opinion of Eysmontt, its town charter was regained before 1263 [7, p. 440].

Third group – small towns incorporated to big towns and then separated from them

The third group includes small towns which for some time after 1945 were incorporated to new, emerging agglomerations, and over the last decade have been trying to become independent. Some of them have already separated themselves and are at the moment self-administered units, holding the status of towns. That phenomenon is

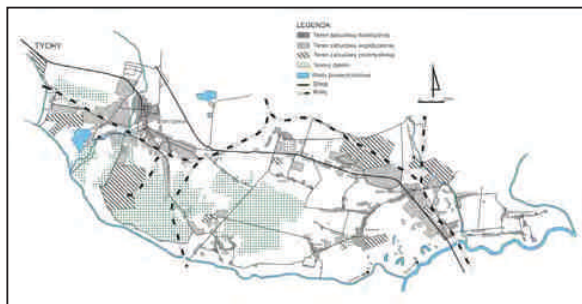


Fig. 9. Plan of Bieruń (ed. by L. Zielińska, 2012)

II. 9. Plan miasta Bieruń (oprac. L. Zielińska, 2012)



Fig. 10. Fountain on the market square in Bieruń Stary (photo by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

II. 10. Fontanna na rynku w Bieruniu Starym (fot. I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

river, but by a railroad track too. Furthermore, they have different histories. In 1988, the towns merged, retaining the name of one of them – Nowogród Bobrzański and in spite of the fact that administratively they constitute one town, they actually do not constitute one unit (Fig. 8).

Another example of two small towns merged in one administrative unit is the town of Boguszów-Gorce which was established in 1973 from Boguszów, Gorce and the village of Kuźnice Świdnickie. In this case, the name was created by combining two of the three original towns, although Boguszów, which received a town charter in 1499, seems more prominent than Gorce, which in 1954 was granted the status of a settlement, and received a town charter in 1962. The spatial layout of the town is rather spread out and fragmented, which results from the fact that the original towns are located on different sides of Mount Chełmiec which is a natural barrier preventing the close merger of both units [13].

quite common in Upper Silesia, with such towns as Tychy with separated Bieruń, Imielin, and Łędziny as good examples.

The town of Bieruń, with 19 626 residents, is at present a rural powiat (*county*). It was first mentioned in 1376 when there was a heap with a watch tower and a customs duty checkpoint on the commercial route. Bieruń received a town charter in 1387, and in 1517 it became part of the Pszczyzna Free State Country. The town had a large pond and fishery but in the 19th century the pond was filled in and dried out. In 1743, Bieruń lost its town charter and in 1865 it regained it. In 1970, the town was incorporated to Tychy, and it regained its status of town again in 1991 and became an independent administration unit.

Currently, the town has two parts Bieruń Stary and Bieruń Nowy located about 7 km apart from each other (Fig. 9). They have different spatial layouts and different architecture. Bieruń Stary has a typical layout of an old town with a square market. In the market, there is a monument of the Silesian Insurgents and a well with the sculp-



Fig. 11. Multi-family buildings in Bieruń Nowy with "Piaś" mine shaft in the background (photo by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

II. 11. Zabudowa wielorodzinna w Bieruniu Nowym, w tle szyb kopalni „Piaś” (fot. I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)



Fig. 12. Panorama of Łędziny from Mount Klimont (photo by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

II. 12 Panorama miasta Łędziny z góry Klimont (fot. I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

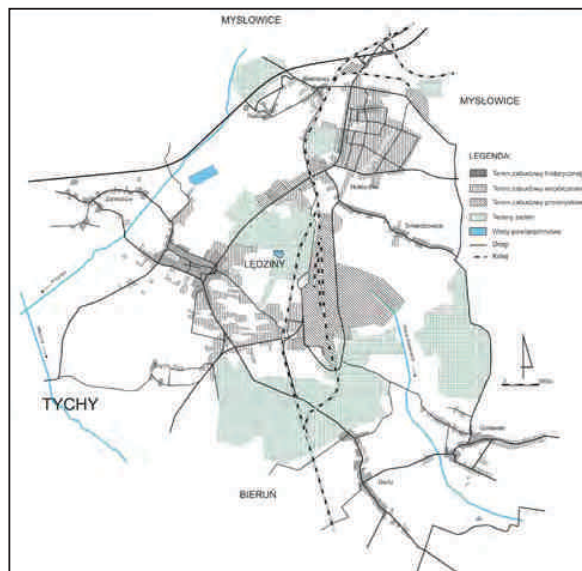


Fig. 13. Plan of Łędziny (ed. by L. Zielińska, 2012)

II. 13. Plan miasta Łędziny (oprac. L. Zielińska, 2012)

tures of “water demons” (Fig. 10), alluding to the legends connected with the town history. Bieruń Nowy has in the center multi-family buildings and coal mine buildings. They are the landmarks, e.g. “Piaś” coal mine shaft, visible in the town as well as from outside (Fig. 11).

The town, as an independent administrative unit, is developing very dynamically; its market square has been renovated; a park has been designed in the place of former ponds which were degraded by mining activity³. The town is developing also because of the location of Katowicka Special Economic Zone.

The history of Łędziny, another town in that group, is different than that of Bieruń. It received the first town charter only in 1966. Earlier, after it was established in the 12th century, it was a village with clearly separate monastic and princely parts. Originally, it was a typical farming village, and it was only in the first half of the 19th century, when hard coal mining began between Łędziny and the settlement of Hołdunów, that it totally changed its character and the non-farming population grew.

After World War II, Łędziny was a huddle of settlements; in 1961, it merged with Hołdunów to create one

³ Recreation Park “Paciorkowce”, with the area of 36 ha, developed by “Piaś” coal mine with the use of post-mining waste (after it was tested for suitability) which was used to build five heaps, providing the main axis of the design.



Fig. 14. Plan of Imielin (ed. by L. Zielińska, 2012)

II. 14. Plan miasta Imielin (oprac. L. Zielińska, 2012)

settlement, and then in 1975 it was incorporated to Tychy. There are two clear centers in the town separated by coal mining buildings. There is no typical market. Old Łędziny, with single-family houses, spreads out lazily, whereas Hołdunów is a compact structural unit (Fig. 13). Mount Klimont with St. Clement’s Church is its natural landmark (Fig. 12).

Imielin is another town which in 1975 separated from a big town and regained its town charter. It was first mentioned in written accounts only at the end of the 14th century [15, p. 22]. The town belonged to Poland from the middle of the 15th century until partitions in 1772. After liquidation of the Duchy of Warsaw, it was within the borders of Prussia until 1919 when the First Silesian Uprising broke out⁴. In 1957, Imielin became a settlement and in

⁴ More information about the political and economic history of Imielin in: [15].



Fig. 15. Center of in Imielin (photo by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

II. 15. Centralny plac w Imielinie (fot. I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2011)

1967 it received a town charter. In 1975, it lost its charter and it was incorporated to Tychy, and then in 1977 to Mysłowice. In 1995, Imielin regained its town charter, became independent and it began to develop dynamically and invest in its infrastructure.

Due to its history, the town does not have a traditional spatial layout with a market, however, it has a clearly developed center. It is a square with public buildings located

nearby. The place is well maintained, with parking lots and green areas as well as street furniture, including a monument commemorating the Silesian Insurgents (Fig. 15).

The town has a natural barrier for its development – it is Dzieńkowice Reservoir which built in the 1970s in the east part of gmina (*local district*). Originally, it was built for the needs of Katowice Steelworks but since 1983 it has been tested for use as a drinking water reservoir (Fig. 14).

Conclusion

A lot of small towns in so called the Western Lands lost their town charters in 1945 because of too small number residents and war damage [10, p. 62]. Some of them did regain their town status or were incorporated to neighboring big towns, however, many of them are still villages. There are cases of two small towns merged into one, which didn't always mean one uniform structure. Both Boguszów-Gorce and Nowogród Bobrzański still have natural barriers such as rivers or mountains, preventing their closed integration.

As demonstrated, the reason of the loss of town charters by small towns was also their incorporation to nearby big towns. That phenomenon seems irreversible. However, the examples from Silesian Voivodeship can indicate that such incorporations should benefit the whole structure, or otherwise small towns strive to separate themselves and regain their administrative independence. Bieruń, Imielin, and Łędziny regained their town charters and that facilitated their significant development and investments in technical as well as social infrastructure by developing culture and recreation.

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Tadeusz Szalamacha

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Ewolucja małych miast w Polsce południowo-zachodniej

W artykule przedstawiono częściowe wyniki badań, które obejmują małe miasta powstałe przed i po 1945 r. w województwach: lubuskim, dolnośląskim, opolskim i śląskim. Miasta te przechodziły dość zróżnicowane koleje losu. Znaczna część małych miast z tego terenu ma pochodzenie średniowieczne i charakterystyczny układ przestrzenny z rynkiem, czasem ratuszem i dominantami wież kościołów. Po II wojnie wiele z nich utraciło prawa miejskie, czasem bezpowrotnie, ale niektóre odzyskiwały je po pewnym czasie. Zaobserwowano również,

że dochodziło do przyłączenia się małych miast do aglomeracji miejsko-przemysłowych, także do łączenia się małych miast między sobą. W województwie śląskim w ostatnich latach notuje się odwrotną tendencję, dzielnice – dawne samodzielne małe miasta, które wcześniej przyłączono do dużych miast – oddzielają się i uzyskują lub starają się o ponowne uzyskanie praw miejskich. Zjawiska te mają wpływ na układ przestrzenny miejscowości i ich rozwój.

Key words: small towns, transformations, civic rights

Słowa kluczowe: małe miasta, transformacje, prawa miejskie