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## Education as Cultural Migration: Organic Transformations in the Developmental Knots of Activity

**ABSTRACT:** Despite the growing appeal of the cultural-historical approach, there are still many of Vygotsky's ideas that remain unrecognised and unexploited in educational practice. One such idea is the concept of developmental activity knots. The article addresses the process of formation of activity knots and the developmental transformations occurring in them. The example analysed is an extract from one of the sessions conducted in a youth club where we worked with teenagers at risk of social exclusion. They experienced cultural migration when they had to find themselves in a system of social relations that was new to them after being placed in an educational centre. The analysis of the changes occurring in the process of establishing knots of activity between adolescents and adults enabled us to identify the characteristics of the knots and the conditions in which they take on a developmental character.

**KEYWORDS:** knots of activity, cultural migration, development

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of education in the development of individuals and societies has an unequivocally positive function. Without it, the transmission of socio-cultural achievements is impossible. Concern for education, therefore, gives rise to many discussions and new reforms and also initiates disputes over control of the content provided. It is thanks to education that we can see, perceive and learn about people and things hitherto unseen. We change not only our own viewpoints but also those of others by giving them access to our observations, thoughts, and experiences. Education appears to be a kind of journey during which we “visit” others on the one hand and invite them into our world on the other. We discover new horizons and perspectives, but also people and ourselves when we “look at ourselves through their eyes.” It allows the past to become the present and the present to become the future. This is the beauty of all forms of educational migration into the world of other people and societies (emigration) and the inclusion of others into one’s own world (immigration).

It should be, however, remembered that just as not every “migration” is of a positive nature, education not only often fails to fulfil its most important function but may also have a negative impact on the process of the child’s development to date. Such is the instance when education is consciously used for political, ideological, religious, or even military purposes, when, instead of acquiring the competence to build “knots” with other people and societies, differences and antagonisms are strengthened, and not infrequently also the child is “disconnected” or “uprooted” from its natural environment of life, which includes not only geographical space-time but also cultural-historical space-time. In place of development, there is a pathological state of alienation and isolation. Not only are new “knots” not created, but those already existing are “severed.”

The perception of education as a journey has taken on particular significance in recent years. Human history is marked by various migrations caused by the urge to solve problems faced by both individuals and entire communities. Today we are talking about a deepening migration crisis caused by climate change, economic poverty, and political and armed conflicts. In our part of Europe, we are experiencing the

drama of the forced and violent abandonment of homes by millions of Ukrainians fleeing the atrocities of the war that has gripped their country. Migration is always motivated by a desire to improve the situation, obtain better, safer living conditions, and expand educational, livelihood, or professional opportunities. The multitude of complex issues related to migration is a “hot” topic of broad social and political discourse and numerous action projects undertaken at international, state, and local levels. In this form of the “new world” there is also the issue of education and its functions enabling the creation of cultural and historical “knots.”

This is why, by joining this discussion, we would like to go beyond viewing migration in a geographical context. The temporal dimension of migration also characterises the inner world of human. While the former describes easily apprehensible physical dimensions and mechanical relations, the latter concerns the world of the psyche, imagination, intellect, emotions, and, more broadly, cultural-historical conditions that go beyond the externally perceived “hic et nunc.” The first dimension describes the physical presence of people and objects, while the other refers to their psychological presence. However, the relationship between the two is not quite as simple as the colloquial saying “a healthy spirit in a healthy body,” suggesting that the material aspects of existence directly and almost immediately trigger their transfer to the “inner life.” Research on children clearly demonstrates that not every external human presence evokes a psychological presence (Spitz & Wolf, 1946). Popular culture even perceives an inverse relationship that “the more of you, the less” (Kukulka, 1997). This means that strong external commitment may not, in every instance, have a positive effect in psychological terms. On the contrary, such a situation may lead to breaking social bonds, deep alienation, loneliness, and “uprooting” from social life.

We intended to make this theme the focus of our article by posing the question: How does the transition and fusion of the mental and physical, the individual and the social worlds occur? The cultural-historical approach provides us with a clue, which is the genetic law. Vygotsky explains it using the metaphor of a theatre scene depicting development. The higher mental function appears on two planes in one stage of development as a social relationship. The first plane inter-psychologically takes place between people, then intra-psychologically on the second internal, individual plane (Vygotsky, 1997c, p. 106; Veresov, 2010, pp. 267–295).

Formulating the genetic law, Vygotsky left us at the same time with a puzzle of transformative conversion in/on the transition from interpsychological to intrapsychological actions. If education, both formal and informal, is to serve the full development of a human being who will be able to create a new, good future for himself and the world, then it must solve this puzzle (Hakkarainen, 2010; Zuckerman, 2014).

In seeking an answer to this question, we will use the dialectic method, characteristic of the cultural-historical approach, in which human development is seen as a unity of opposites (Vygotsky, 2019, pp. 25–26). The attractiveness of Vygotsky’s thought in creating the education of the future consists, in our opinion, of overcoming emerging crises by insightfully identifying contradictions and developing a new, holistic view of them as unity. In the processes of education, the child is introduced

to the system of social relations, and the individual sense given to social reality is confronted with objective meaning. We can speak here of cultural migration, when an individual rooted in one environment (e.g., local, family, institutional) moves to another, in which social relations are significantly different from what was known before. The entry into the system of new relations is made through knots, in which the activity of the individual is crossed with the activity of other people. It is in the knots of activities that the contradictions come to the fore, not only between the individual and the community but also in the psychological world of the individual and his or her emotional life.

Formulating the concept of “unity of opposites,” Vygotsky developed a research method consistent with it, the fundamental principle of which is to identify an indivisible unit of analysis that contains all the characteristics of the properties of a given phenomenon (Vygotsky, 2019, p. 25–29). In our attempt to look at the education of the future in light of various cultural migrations, we focus our attention on the processes that occur in the knots of activity that are established. The example we use to analyse the process of tying a developmental knot comes from the practice of a youth club. We are aware of the uniqueness of each knot, according to A. N. Leontiev’s fundamental assumption that “knots” that connect separate activities are tied not by the action of biological or spiritual forces of the subject which lie within it but by that system of relationships into which the subject enters [...] multifaceted activities of the subject are intertwined one with another and connected in knots by objective relationships, social in their nature, into which it necessarily enters. These knots, their hierarchies, also form that secret “center of personality,” which we call the <<I>>” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 159, 188). Knots are social relations, the existence and entering into new, objective social relations, which are connected in a specific and unique way because each person’s life is unique. They live in a unique cultural and historical moment and conditions in which no one else has lived and will not live.

However, we are not aiming to explain the diversity of knots formed by individuals and communities in the course of cultural migration but to a holistic account of the relations that occur in the processes of knot formation. The method of research left to us by Vygotsky and Leontiev shifts our attention from the elements that create the uniqueness of a particular knot to its typical properties. The objective of the following analysis of a specific piece of educational practice in which the problem of cultural migration is strongly visible is to identify the regularities and conditions in which knots of activities are formed between people from different cultures. We are particularly interested in the process of the formation of developmental knots of activity and the developmental transformations in the knots of activity. How do teenagers and adults co-create conditions in the process of tying and transforming their knots of activities? What changes take place in the knots of activity that make the knots gain developmental character?

## THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVITY KNOTS IN A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH

The conceptual basis of this article is the cultural-historical activity theory pioneered by L. S. Vygotsky (1997a, 1997b), S. L. Rubinshtein (1989; Brushlinskii, 2004; Sokolova, 2013), A. N. Leontiev (1978, 2005), and further developed by Y. Engeström and his co-workers. In this approach, the guiding principle of development is the genetic law, which states that each developmental change, before it becomes an immanent characteristic of the individual, must previously occur in social relations. However, this is often understood as the predominance of the social world over the individual and the supremacy of the material world over the mental one. The genetic law is then reduced to the behavioural influence of the material and the social aspects on the mental and individual features.

Vygotsky described the genetic law as a principle of internalisation, not in the sense of the external and physical presence and influence of something to be transferred to the inner world, but as a social relationship that is internalised: “every higher psychic function in a child’s development makes its appearance twice - first, as a collective, social activity, i.e., as an inter-psychic function; secondly, as an individual activity, as the inner ability of the child to think, as an intra-psychic function” (Vygotsky, 2017, p. 368).

It is not a process of duplication or imprinting but of creating, or rather co-creating, a zone of proximal development that is created when two people work together to solve a problem that is important to them. For the child, the main task is a specific and objective difficulty, and for the adult, it is the fact that the child is unable to solve the relevant issue, experiencing helplessness and loneliness. The adult decentres and “incarnates” himself in the child and his *perezhivanie*, and thanks to this, the child “incarnates” and learns to take on the perspective of the adult, together with his understanding of the situation and his competences.

An adult and a child dialectically combine their activities and cognitive perspectives into an organic knot. The knot of activity is the dialectical unity of the individual and the social. The emergence of new knots, which connect the activities of the individual with the activities of others, develops both the structure of human and community activity. The formation of a knot of activity changes not only the individual but also the community as a whole. Knotworking is a method that aims to connect people so that they can act together in new ways.

The knot, by its very nature, is not a mechanical strand that represents the joining of two ends of a shoelace in a shoe. It is a qualitatively new phenomenon not only because of the uniqueness of the people who tie it but also because of the uniqueness and untranslatability of the situation and the context in which it occurs.

Education, conceived as social conditions, and the child’s development taking place within it, is organic, not mechanical. Vygotsky believes that “development is not simply a function that can be determined entirely by X units of heredity and Y units of environment. It is a historical complex, which at any stage reflects its past content. In other words, the artificial separation of heredity and environment points

us in a fallacious direction; it obscures the fact that development is an uninterrupted process which feeds upon itself; that it is not a puppet which can be controlled by jerking two strings” (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 253).

The organic nature of education and the knot of activity that emerges from it is also expressed not so much in structure as in function, and consequently, the extinction of function leads to the disappearance of the knot. The sustainability of knots is, therefore, closely related to the stability and functionality of the social situation for both the individual and the community. The functional character of knots reveals not only their unique, inimitable but also their often unpredictable nature. The trajectories and forms of transformation of knots are dynamic and dependent on the historical conditions of their origin and development. This means that education and every knot of activity created during it is and must be creative in its essence because every human and community activity is creative. There is no reproductive activity, just as there is no identical knot of activity as “the subject in his actions, in the acts of his creative self-activity is not only revealed and manifested; he is created and defined in them” (Rubinshtein, 1989, p. 15).

An organic view of the nature of knots may lead to the hasty conclusion that if the shape of the knots is unpredictable in nature and therefore, its formation requires no external intervention or, moreover, that intervention may be detrimental. The organic nature of activity knots is not the same as educational naturalism. Therefore, the image of the individual as a person primarily acting and creatively developing becomes the basis for a specific vision of education in cultural-historical terms, as a process that “must be based on the student’s individual activity, and the art of education should involve nothing more than guiding and monitoring this activity. In the process of education, the teacher must be like [...] a gardener who affects the germination of his flowers by increasing the temperature, regulating the moisture, varying the relative position of neighboring plants, and selecting and mixing soils and fertilizer, i.e., once again, indirectly, by making appropriate changes in the environment. Thus, it is that the teacher educates the student by varying the environment” (Vygotsky, 1997b, pp. 48–49).

Education is thus the site of the creation of activity knots, understood as the organic unity of the child and its environment. The knot of activity is the expression that the social environment has taken on the child, internalised, but also the child has taken on and internalised its social environment. The child and the adult acquire the capacity to take on perspectives from the outside and the inside (Fleer, 2011).

Consequently, those who undertake formative interventions aimed at creating knots find themselves in a special role as they have to avoid putting themselves in a position of authority. Their task is not so much to design the knots as to create the context for tying them, not so much to tie them as to stimulate the natural, organic processes of their formation (Gołębniak, 2021; Yamazumi, 2010).

The object of activity of the individual and his or her community, as well as the cultural tools, rules, and collective actions taken, play a key role in the process of knot formation. The object of the activity itself is already an organic synthesis of the

individual and the social, the material and the ideal. It is not static and mechanical but dynamic and organic, like a knot. Reducing the object of activity, confining it to a structural dimension, deprives it of its chief property: the dynamic, organic, and adaptive function of creating a 'living' knot. Like the knot itself, the object of activity, an integral element of it, has the character of a phenomenon constantly developing in its ideal and material dimensions, developing its function for the individual and society (Engeström, 2001).

The object is the ideal form of the motive for human activity. The motive for the development of an individual's activity arises when human needs meet a stimulating object. It is closely dependent on the social context of individual development: social roles, division of labour, available tools and their complexity, and social relations (gender, age, education, social status). Thus, each person may undertake a social activity because of a different motive while sharing with others the object of that activity in its material and ideal form (Engeström, 2008, 1999; Engeström & Blackler, 2005; Gołębnik 2021). The effect of tying the knot of activity is the creative materialisation of the motive in the object of social activity. It is the incarnation of the motives and needs of the individual and society in a creative and, therefore, also unique object (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 41).

#### THE FORMATION OF DEVELOPMENT KNOTS OF ACTIVITY

In analysing the transformative processes taking place in the knots of activity, we refer to the formative interventions we conducted in the youth club. It was inspired by a summer workshop that students ran for boys living in the juvenile rehabilitation centre (JRC). The boys (aged 12–18) had been referred to the JRC by the family court because of prolonged educational failure linked to various types of difficulties experienced by their families and often as a consequence of minor breaches of the law by the boys.

In their case, we can talk about socio-cultural migration. The boys were transferred from their previous living environment to an educational institution. The physical change of location was linked to the entry into the culture of a new community, different from what they had known and taken for granted so far. Apart from adapting to new formal and informal rules and expectations and the rhythm of the day, they had to cope with a new set of cultural tools made available to them. The difference they struggled with was also language. Although they used Polish like everybody else, they had to build up a linguistic understanding with new people, sensing what was suitable and what was not. They were also expected to be correct in their choice of words, phrases, and the very way they communicated.

The most common theme in our conversations with educators was a desire to break the boys' indifference to the good conditions created for their development. The boys came from low-income families where their basic needs, both material and psychological, were rarely met. The educational centre provided the boys with a good material standard of living on a daily basis. They lived in nice, well-furnished rooms,

had access to new technologies (computers with Internet connection, educational software), had regular and healthy meals every day, and received some pocket money. Teachers and tutors made numerous attempts to awaken in them the motivation to take up challenges, finish primary and secondary school, and become interested in something they could pursue in adult life. They offered them attractive activities that had hitherto been unavailable to boys: sailing on a yacht, fencing workshops, winter skiing courses, trips around Europe, and regular meetings with interesting people who had achieved success in various walks of life.

The indifference demonstrated by the boys and, not infrequently, their unwillingness and resistance to these efforts were perceived by the form teachers as ungrateful and caused frustration. Passive adaptation to the conditions was evident in the observed behaviour of the boys. The boys recognised the expectations directed at them and carried out the tasks assigned to them. However, their adaptation to the new conditions was clearly of a mechanical nature, manifesting itself in the formal fulfilment of successive points of the rules and regulations. The boys spent their free time watching TV or cycling around the premises of the centre. At the same time, they expressed a definite reluctance to devote that time to other activities which were attractive, according to the instructors.

The aim of the club was to extend the adolescents' development space by co-creating new areas of engagement with them. The club was located in a separate wing of the school the boys attended. Participation was voluntary. The club was open to all. Our attention was drawn to the variation in the way boys interacted with visitors to the club. With some visitors, they easily struck up a conversation and then entered into joint actions; with others, it took them several meetings to establish contact, and some they ignored altogether. Among those with whom the boys quickly built relationships was Gregory, a Polish language teacher at a prestigious secondary school who had previously worked for several years as a cameraman at one of Poland's largest television stations.

We were interested in the way Gregory and the boys work together. We wondered why the knots of activity that they establish with each other while working on the project become organic and evolving, as opposed to other activities that quickly die down, often before the task is even completed.

For the analysis, we have chosen a snippet from one of the club meetings when Gregory proposes to the boys to start a new project. A few weeks earlier, Gregory had run a film workshop with the boys, which they were interested in. During all the meetings at the club, two cameras were turned on, which the boys set up themselves. The following transcription of the discussion is from the camera recording. The boys' names have been changed. The participants were Gregory, Beata (teacher), Paul (volunteer), Adam (l.15), Mark (l. 17.), and Dennis (l.17).

(1)Gregory (G.): Listen, do you know what I would suggest to you? A project, a serious one, that we, but mainly you, will make a film about yourselves.

(2) Adam (A.): Holy shit! Wouldn't it be better to...



- (3) G.: Let me, let me tell you. Your life is hard  
(3) Mark (M.): It sucks  
(4) G.: I agree, it's hard  
(5) Dennis (D.): meaning it sucks  
(6) G.: No  
(7) A.: I can record when I light up [he says, laughing]. But I'm telling you that we can record how we do marijuana. I would take a drag, we would play junkies, and K [Dennis's nickname] would record it.  
(9) D.: I want to play a junkie, too  
(10) A.: You would be a dealer [points to Piotr]. You would be our mother [points to Beata]  
(11) Paul (P.): I don't want to be a dealer  
(12) D.: Why?  
(14) M.: [turns to the boys] You bitches get the fuck out of here, you don't live here anymore! [points to the door, speaks loudly, with emphasis and with purpose] [Mark and Adam are laughing loudly, Dennis is serious, he is eating an apple]  
(15) A.: This movie would be so cool!  
(16) G.: Your life is hard.  
(17) A.: Who told you that?  
(18) G.: Most people, you know how they live? In the Bermuda Triangle, which means: they go to school, come home, and then sit in front of a computer  
(19) M.: Or they dope  
(20) G.: Or they go to the pub and have booze. They go to work again. They work like that: home, school or work, pub (he is drawing a triangle in the air)  
(21) A.: They don't let me go  
(22) G.: And they know nothing about life at all. And they, er create such er, they watch "Judge Maria Wesołowska" [a popular TV para-documentary] or any such TV shows  
(23) M.: These are good shows.  
(24) D.: I watch it  
(25) M.: These are good shows  
(26) D.: I watch "Judge Maria Wesołowska" [he is reaching out his hand and counting on his fingers]  
(27) M.: "Police Officers"  
(28) D. I watch "Family court," I watch  
(29) M.: "Police Officers"  
(30) D.: "Policemen," "With Lights and Sirens," "28 Seconds," "Hospital"  
(31) M.: "Nurses"  
(33) Beata (B.): Daniel, when do you watch them?  
(34) M.: At night  
(35) D.: What? I watch at night, Miss  
(36) M.: Miss, I hear sirens from his phone all night  
(37) D.: I watch how people work, how they learn

(38) G.: You have to start somewhere. There is a saying: may you live in interesting times, and this is a curse. That is, if someone has an interesting life, unfortunately, it is not calm. And the second thing is that your life is interesting and therefore it is not peaceful. And this is a cool topic. If you watch TV shows like “Detectives”

(39) M.: O, “Detectives” are great!

(40) G.: This is not entirely true; it is controlled, it feels, and it shows

(41) A.: I would push you, and you would strike back

(42) D.: I watch “28 Seconds” how it is burning, and it’s not real?

(43) G.: I don’t know, I haven’t watched it yet.

(44) D.: “28 Seconds” on YouTube

(45) G.: Do we have it? [he is looking at the computer]. We can watch. Look for it. We will see how it is edited.

(46) D.: The house is really on fire!

(47) M.: With a camera, they get in as it’s on fire? [he is saying with mockery]

(48) D.: Wanna bet?

(49) M.: They wouldn’t let the cameraman in

(50) G.: Have you watched it?

(51) M.: No

(52) G.: If you haven’t watched it, wait until we watch it.

(53) M.: But that’s a stretcher!

[Mark and Dennis start arguing, Beata provides an internet connection from her phone and Dennis takes his laptop and searches for the video]

(54) G.: And imagine that you are filming what will happen to you

(55) M.: Doping too?

(56) G.: If it was to be fair, then you are filming everything. At the editing stage, you will choose what you want to show. But it’s not always worth showing everything.

The quoted passage features a dynamic interaction in which gradually Gregory and the boys create a common object of activity. After Adam’s spontaneous reaction in which he tries to question Gregory’s proposal, the boys take up the subject of creating their film. It takes the form of a free-flowing story that all the boys identify with. This can be seen in their emotional involvement as they add to one another’s storylines, the content of which is so obvious to them that it requires no definition. The story developed by the boys seems to be a ready-made script with roles and dialogues which they unhesitatingly assign to the people present in the club. The unambiguousness of its negative and violent overtones is reflected in the phrase “It sucks,” with which Mark (3) and later the other boys (5) sum up their lives.

Gregory contrasts their experience of a difficult life with the unreflective everyday life of many people who live passively (18-22). In doing so, he uses the metaphor of the ‘Bermuda Triangle’. Just as ships and planes disappear in the legendary region of Bermuda, people lose their agency in everyday routine, stimulants, addictions, and watching other people’s lives on TV screens. Gregory points out the shallowness

of popular docudramas showing imaginary and distorted social problems, whose viewers have a false sense of reflection on life.

The Bermuda Triangle, described by Gregory, is the boys' everyday experience, which is largely filled with routine and docudramas. In the course of the conversation, the teenagers repeatedly return to the theme of docudramas, as they not only spend their free time watching them but are convinced of their value and boast about their knowledge of them.

Here we observe the process of tying the developmental knot between the adult and adolescents. Gregory stops at the point where he perceives a discrepancy between his proposal and the meaning the boys give to the reality they experience. His attempt to show the boys a new perspective on creating an interesting story about their lives clashes with the boys' conviction about the value of stories shown in docudramas. Following the events depicted in them gives them a surrogate sense of participating in the lives of the characters and their successes: "I watch how people work, how they learn" (37). In their opinion, this is a good, ordinary life from which they themselves have been excluded.

Although Gregory expresses his negative opinion about the credibility of the stories presented, he shows genuine interest in what is important to the boys. He suspends his own certainty and proposes they watch a film they value together. At the same time, he gives them a criterion, new to them, for evaluating the film: "We will see how it is edited" (45).

This is a turning point in the discussion. The very shift in Gregory's attention from the storyline, which the boys are fascinated by, to the various elements of the making of the film makes Mark doubt the credibility of a docudrama.

The stopping of superficial judgement and adoption of other people's opinions introduced by Gregory pertains here also to Marek. The boys have repeatedly migrated between different social environments, and in each of them, they have received a set of ready-made ways of thinking, perceiving the world, and acting correctly. They have a trained mechanical adaptation to external expectations.

Gregory's intention, however, is not for Mark to adopt his way of seeing, even if it is the right, better approach. The pointing gesture that Gregory directs towards the film is an invitation to shared source viewing through new questions. It requires a willingness on the part of the boys to identify with Gregory in order to adopt his point of view. We can speak of mutual identification here because Gregory also looks at reality from the perspective that the boys show him.

The story the boys want to tell in the film is a poignant portrayal of their experiences, told in the vulgar language in a seemingly playful tone. Gregory does not correct or admonish them. Instead of the typical reading of their story as a picture of marginalisation and social exclusion (drug use, being made homeless, living on the streets), Gregory shifts it to a new interpretative context. This is the well-known old proverb about the curse of living in interesting times (38). Looking at the boys' lives in the light of hard times links their experiences to previous generations who lived in hard times. Gregory replaces the expression the boys use to describe their lives, "It

sucks” (3, 5), with “It is hard and interesting” (38), and once again contrasts their difficult but real experiences with stories about other people’s lives, invented according to the rules governing shallow film productions.

By highlighting the opposites between the passive experience of everyday life and pseudo-documentaries about social problems on the one hand, and the boys’ difficult experiences on the other, Gregory invites them to create in their imagination a real, serious film about themselves (54). Gregory’s dialectic enables both himself and the boys to see a completely new solution. It is not a simple registration of their sad everyday life, nor a re-coloured story told according to the typical one-dimensional interpretation of a docudrama narrator. The imaginary object of their activity gradually acquires specific features. It is meant to be an honest story about their difficult but interesting life. Gregory confronts the boys with a double task: to enter the middle of the story as a protagonist and actor and as a director who looks at the story from the outside, reflects on the whole, values its content, and evaluates and chooses the scenes he thinks are worth showing.

#### CONCLUSION

By contributing to the discussion on education of the future, we proposed to look at it in the light of one of the interesting leads we found in cultural-historical activity theory. It is the process of integration of the individual into the system of social relations. The founders of this approach left us not only important hints but also warnings that set the course for our research. One of the possible dangers indicated by them is introducing the child into the environment, areas of culture, and knowledge according to ready-made educational programmes and one-sided activities belonging to adults. This was the case in the described situation at the JRC. We observed a very high involvement of educators in introducing boys to a cultural environment new to them, filled with interesting, attractive offers. Paradoxically, the greater the educators’ efforts to involve boys in worthwhile activities, the deeper the sense of “uprooting” the young people became. Boys were uprooted from their previous living environment and transferred to a new one, objectively and in many respects “much better,” in which they received the socially expected “rules of correct action.” The result was their passive adaptation to adult expectations.

Meanwhile, Leontiev (1978, pp. 188–189) stressed that: “It is only necessary to emphasize here that inclusion in the system does not at all mean being dissolved in it but, on the contrary, means finding and disclosing in it the force of one’s action.” We were intrigued by the determinants of the formation of developmental activity knots. Following Vygotsky’s footsteps (2019, pp. 11–12), we differentiated the specifics of mechanical and organic knot formation. Their analysis in the light of the education taking place in the zone of proximal development of all those involved opened new perspectives for us to seek an answer to the question: What changes do take place in the knots of activity that make the knots gain developmental character?

Being aware of the uniqueness of each human relation with the social environment, we tried to identify those features of the analysed knots that give them a developmental character. These features, according to Vygotsky's method of research, can be seen in the various knots established between the individual and the community.

The most characteristic feature of developmental activity knots is their synthesising nature. The knots establish a relationship between an individual's activity and the activities of others. However, it is not about the unification of actions or their mechanical matching as in a jigsaw puzzle. Unity between the individual and the social environment is a qualitatively new, living, dynamic and organic relationship. In the analysed case, which was registered in a youth club, the process of tying the knot does not run smoothly; there are tensions, stops, and turning points in its course. The regularities that emerged in the course of the analysis concern the creative process of creating a common object of activity.

When creating a new object of joint activity, the participants start from the familiar context by working together on a new, imaginary object and only then direct the joint activity towards a new object that takes the tangible form of realization. In the recorded discussion, the starting point for the film work is the boys' experience of their harsh lives, which they describe as 'it sucks,' the opposite of which is the paradoxical television documentaries, which show invented stories that have little to do with everyday life. These mutually exclusive contradictory images of life present in the boys' experiences find their synthesis in the new project. Tying the knot of joint activity is a creative process for both the boys and Gregory. They have to go beyond what is familiar to them and first create together in their imagination a new story about life. The next stage is working on the film, which culminated in a premiere open to the public at the local cinema.

Making the film would not have been possible without the ability of the young people participating in the project to adopt the perspective of the viewer. It is due to the developmental knot that reciprocal internalization occurs when the participants in the established relationships mutually adopt their perspectives of perceiving reality. What triggers decentration, according to Vygotsky, is the pointing gesture and symbolic tools (Vygotsky, 1999; El'konin, 2001). We see this gesture when Gregory points out to the boys a new perspective on their lives as difficult but interesting embedded in the interesting history of other people. The boys also make the gesture of pointing to the world as they see and live it. The difference in viewpoints and experiences generates cognitive conflict but also interest, which initiates a process of learning about the other person's perspective. The activated inference socially recursive leads to the mutual internalization of cognitive perspectives in the form of joint intentionality and activity (Tomasello, 2014, 2015, 2019).

One can clearly see here the phenomenon of a new knot of activity forming when, as El'konin and Vygotsky believe (El'konin, 2001, p. 15) "an adult's action is never carried through to completion: there is always some gap in it, a place where the child can step in and act in concert. One might say that, in this case, the zone of proximal development is bare to the extreme and becomes a zone of proximal movement.

The knot of development is mutual internalization, where the adult makes space in himself and in his actions for the actions of the youth, and the youth incorporates the meanings and actions of the adult. The actions resulting from the developmental knot between the adult and youth are, therefore, not strictly linear and imitative (Zuckerman, 2007). Orienting actions develop Gregory's joint activity with the boys. This is reminiscent of dance, which has a cultural-historical background, but the dynamics and form are dependent on the people dancing. They are mutually tuning each other and the socio-cultural conditions of their actions. El'konin calls such adult actions incomplete as they are complemented by the actions of children. The complementarity of Gregory's actions with the youth creates a developmental knot: "incorporating the actions of one person into the actions of another, i.e., special conditions and a special means for 'finding a place' in the action of another person" (El'konin, 2001, p. 13; Goldsmith, 2010; Raikes et al., 2009).

The dialectical way of obtaining unity allows us to see dynamic temporal connections in the knots. In contrast to the linear passage from past to present and then to future in the knots of activity, temporality includes not only continuities but also ruptures, leaps, and unusual paths that allow us to gain distance from the experienced present. These can be links between an individual's present and past in new socio-historical contexts. In the analysed discussion, Gregory links the boys' present and past with the experiences of past generations. This link allows them to go beyond their previous adaptation and to look at reality in terms of change. The imaginary journey through time opens up a new perspective for the boys. They cannot continue to see themselves as "uprooted," because their lives are integrated into a wealth of important but difficult experiences of other people, including previous generations. The aim of this process is not to alienate or negate the "old reality" by the "new" one, nor to mechanically combine or mathematically add them together, but it is a process of mediation, creatively constructing a completely new psychological situation.

The process of socio-cultural mediation provides tools and supports the development of agency and self-regulation, both intrapsychically and socially. By re-interpreting and showing the possibilities of using one's own experiences and those of the surrounding world, the adult reinforces the children's agency. It can be said that the global has become local, the historical has become current, the social has become individual, and vice versa. The developmental knots created by "incomplete orientation activities" can serve as an example of organically inclusive education, mutually embodying the world of children and adults.

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**EDUKACJA JAKO KULTUROWA MIGRACJA: ORGANICZNE TRANSFORMACJE  
W ROZWOJOWYCH WĘZŁACH DZIAŁALNOŚCI**

**ABSTRAKT:** Pomimo wzrastającej atrakcyjności podejścia kulturowo-historycznego, nadal wiele idei Wygotskiego pozostaje nierozpoznanych i niewykorzystanych w praktyce edukacyjnej. Jedną z takich koncepcji jest koncepcja rozwojowych węzłów działalności. W artykule omawiamy proces formowania się węzłów działalności i zachodzących w nich rozwojowych transformacji. Analizowanym przykładem jest wycinek jednej z sesji prowadzonych w klubie młodzieżowym, w którym współpracowaliśmy z nastolatkami zagrożonymi wykluczeniem społecznym. Doświadczyli oni migracji kulturowej, gdy po umieszczeniu w ośrodku wychowawczym musieli odnaleźć się w systemie nowych dla nich relacji społecznych. Analiza zmian zachodzących w procesie zawiązywania węzłów działalności pomiędzy nastolatkami a dorosłym umożliwiła nam zidentyfikowanie właściwości węzłów oraz uwarunkowań, w których nabierają one rozwojowego charakteru.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** węzły aktywności, migracje kulturowe, rozwój